

**Implementing the Rural Development  
Regulation in South West England:  
exploring the potential for sustainability in  
rural land use through policy design**

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## Abstract

The first concern of this thesis was to explore the extent to which implementation of the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) in South West England reflected a genuine move towards greater integration and discretion, and thus a more sustainable approach to rural land use in the regions. The second concern focused on the implementing structures and mechanisms of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) and their capacity to deliver sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU). These concerns highlighted the normative/empirical dilemma of policy formulation and implementation, where the rhetoric of policy is rarely mirrored in practice. Exploration using a policy design framework rooted in a critical methodology revealed a multiple normative/empirical problem where the three main policy documents concerned (the RDR, the ERDP National Plan and the ERDP South West Regional Chapter) each had very different and sometimes conflicting goals for rural development and inadequate means for ensuring commensurable outcomes. The exploration also revealed that the policy design process in this case exacerbated the normative/empirical dichotomy in four main areas: *policy goals and objectives*; *communication*; *the assumptions of policy makers*; and *interpretation*.

The thesis was situated in the context of the evolving European rural development agenda, where factions were competing over different definitions of rural development, and sustainability as a policy issue had receded. Identification of the research problem drew out the differences between the Agenda 2000 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and previous CAP reforms, highlighting the opportunities potentially offered by the RDR for sustainable rural futures, and the risks involved with the interpretation of the Regulation in England by a largely agriculturally-based department in a strongly market-based economy. The thesis concludes that integration and discretion, elements identified as being tenets of SiRLU, will not play a central role in the delivery of rural development through the new RDR proposals for 2007.

**Author’s Statement**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the college.

Signed.....

Date.....

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## Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
AAPS	Arable Area Payment Scheme
ACRE	Actions with Communities in Rural England
ADAS	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service
AE	Agri-environment
AER	Agri-environment Regulation
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
CA	Countryside Agency
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CASE	Collaborative Award for Science and Engineering
CCT	Community Council Training
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CLA	Country Landowner's Association
DCC	Devon County Council
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Defra	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EA	Environment Agency
EAFRD	European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development
EAGGF	European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
EEDA	East of England Development Agency
EH	English Heritage
EN	English Nature
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERDP	England Rural Development Programme
ERE	European Rural Exchange
ESF	European Social Fund
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
EUS	European Union Strategy
FBS	Farm Business Survey (Defra's survey of sample farm accounts)
FC	Forestry Commission
FfF	Forum for the Future
FMD	Foot and mouth disease
FRCA	Farming and Rural Conservation Agency
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
FWPS	Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
GA	Government agency



GCC	Gloucestershire County Council
GO	The Government Office
GOD	Government Office Director
HFA	Hill Farm Allowance
IEEP	The Institute for European Environmental Policy
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
LAG	Local Action Group
LB	Land Based
LFA	Less favoured area
LUC	Land Use Consultants Limited
LUPG	Land Use Policy Group (the GB statutory conservation, countryside and environment agencies)
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MTE	The Mid-Term Evaluation of the ERDP
MTR	The Mid-Term Review of the Common Agricultural Policy
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NFU	National Farmer's Union
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NORD	Dwyer <i>et al</i> 2002. <i>Europe's Rural Futures: The Nature of Rural Development II</i> . Institute for European Environmental Policy
NPA	National Parks Association
NSG	National Strategy Group (of the ERDP)
NT	National Trust
PB	Project Based
RA	Regional Assembly
RAP	Regional Appraisal Panel
RCG	Regional Consultation Group (of the ERDP)
RD	Rural development
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDP	Rural development programme
RDR	The Rural Development Regulation
RDS	Rural Development Service
RES	Rural Enterprise Scheme (of the ERDP)
RM	Regional Managers
RPG	Regional Programming Group (of the ERDP)
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of birds
RTS	Regional Targeting Statement
RWP	Rural White Paper
S&I	Schneider, A.L. and Ingram, H., 1997. <i>Policy Design for Democracy</i> , Kansas, University press of Kansas.
SD	Sustainable Development
SDU	The Sustainable Development Unit (within Defra)
SEA	The Single European Act
SIRD	Sustainable integrated rural development
SiRLU	Sustainability in rural land use

<b>SQW</b>	<b>Segal Quince Wicksteed Limited</b>
<b>SRD</b>	<b>Sustainable rural development</b>
<b>SSSI</b>	<b>Site of Special Scientific Interest</b>
<b>SWAN</b>	<b>South West ACRE Network</b>
<b>SWOT</b>	<b>Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats</b>
<b>SWT</b>	<b>Somerset Wildlife Trust</b>
<b>SWTB</b>	<b>South West Tourist Board</b>
<b>TA</b>	<b>Technical Assessor</b>
<b>TIFF</b>	<b>The total income from farming</b>
<b>ToR</b>	<b>Treaty of Rome 1957</b>
<b>UK</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>
<b>UNCED</b>	<b>United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the ‘Earth Summit’ held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992</b>
<b>VTs</b>	<b>Vocational Training Scheme</b>
<b>WGS</b>	<b>Woodland Grant Scheme</b>
<b>WDDC</b>	<b>West Dorset District Council</b>
<b>WLT</b>	<b>Wildlife Trusts</b>
<b>WTO</b>	<b>World Trade Organisation</b>
<b>WWF</b>	<b>The World Wide Fund for Nature</b>

# **PART I THE CONTEXT AND THEORY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

## **Chapter 1 Context**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Agriculture within Europe has been supported for nearly half a century by the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). The CAP was established under Articles 38 to 45 of the Treaty of Rome (ToR) in 1957 to increase agricultural productivity, ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community, stabilise agricultural markets, ensure the availability of food supplies to consumers and ensure that supplies reached consumers at reasonable prices (CEC 1992; Clark *et al.* 1997; Grant 1997). As the first ‘working’ common market policy of the European Union (EU), the CAP became the cornerstone of Community policy (Grant 1997). Based on the perceived necessity of maintaining the agricultural populations in Member States (Potter 1998a), the centrepiece of the legislation was the policy on markets and prices. Crucially for the sustainability of the CAP, structural policy was neglected at an early stage through a lack of political will (Kay 1998). An integrated policy combining market and commercial policies with structural and social policies was a bold idea, according to Fennell (1997), but one with no real chance of success (*ibid*), providing instead an inherently unstable framework that subsequently required frequent reform (Kay 1998). The latest of these reforms, contained within the Agenda 2000 proposals, differed from previous ones, linking reform of the Structural Funds and changes to the agricultural policy with plans for enlargement and a new budget framework for the period 2000-2006 (see Appendix 1 – History of the CAP).

The main thrust of the proposal was the further reduction of price support towards world prices while increasing direct compensation payments, but the radical part was the proposal to combine agri-environment (AE), Less Favoured Area (LFA) and rural development (RD) in one new instrument to support the integration of agriculture and RD within the EU – the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) (European Commission 1999c), presented in



Commission rhetoric as “the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of the CAP” (European Commission 1999b) (Lowe and Brouwer 2000; Lowe *et al.* 2002). In spite of considerable dilution during negotiations, these proposals were widely perceived by stakeholders to have the potential to promote the development of new integrated and sustainable rural policies through modulation<sup>1</sup> (Lowe *et al.* 1996; Rutherford and Hart 2000). Sustainability, however, could be heard only as a ‘quiet voice’ during the Agenda 2000 negotiations in the face of competing interpretations of RD, and the fear was that the RDR might fail to achieve its potential for sustainability in rural land use if policy goals and mechanisms were not properly coordinated to produce the desired outcomes (Winter, M. 2000). There was also concern that providing a symbolic legitimacy for agricultural support through the provision of public goods might override the practical realisation of hitherto unfulfilled environmental objectives for agriculture (Buller 2001).

CAP reform and its effects have been widely studied from a variety of perspectives. These perspectives fall roughly into three broad categories: rational economics, political economy, and implementation. The majority of CAP literature has its roots in rational economics, being written by academics to influence policy makers and being underpinned by the professional analytical discipline of agricultural economics (Hubbard and Ritson 1997). The academic reform argument evolved and remained fairly constant through the Wageningen Memorandum in 1973<sup>2</sup> to the early 1990s, emphasising the need to lower support prices (*ibid*). Diverging from academic orthodoxy, a parallel debate developed in which the central concern was the budget cost of the policy, a concern that ultimately underpinned the 1992 reform of the CAP. However, this formal, analytical approach could not account for the ‘politics’ of agricultural policy, which required, according to Josling (1969), the use of public choice theory<sup>3</sup>. The real problem in the 1980s appeared to be that the reformed CAP policy instrument was required to attain more than one objective, when

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<sup>1</sup> The diversion of funds from Pillar 1 (the commodity regimes) to Pillar 2 (the RDR) of the CAP at the discretion of Member States.

<sup>2</sup> Wageningen Memorandum (1973) Reform of the European Community’s Common Agricultural Policy, *European Review of Agricultural Economics*, 1(2).

<sup>3</sup> The application of economic principles to politics and the analysis of the appropriate choice of policy in terms of objectives, constraints and instruments.



the priority of objectives and the relationship between objectives and constraints were largely political issues (Fennell 1997; Hubbard and Ritson 1997).

While Buckwell (1997b) acknowledges the impossibility of analysing structural policy through conventional microeconomic models, Harvey (1997b) and Lowe *et al* (Lowe *et al.* 1994) investigate what additional analysis is required for policy to change from a broader political economy perspective. Exploring a general equilibrium analysis, Harvey (1997b) shows how this model encompasses the effects of policy change throughout the whole economy, but concludes that this method also fails to capture the complexity of CAP policy development and change. Likewise, he concludes that the contribution of formal public choice analysis to an explanation of the CAP remains marginal, offering ... “very little clue about the need for or fact of the 1992 CAP reform package” (ibid, p174). Summing up the different approaches to CAP analysis, he observes:

The complex additional decisions, especially connected with the environment ... and rural development, are not easily catered for in such models ... the present state of public choice theory and derived explanations of farm policy do not seem capable of providing clear indications of the circumstances or conditions under which we would expect policy to change (ibid, p175).

Offering an alternative to these analyses, and concurring with Moyer and Josling (1990), Harvey (1997a) suggests future analysis of CAP reform should be based on evolutionary economics which allows for the influence of terrain and climate change and for these to feedback to changes in the structure and institutions of the decision making process.

Attempting to bridge the gap between formal economics and political economy, Fennell (1997) conducts her analysis of the CAP from the perspective of policy makers, questioning their intentions in the devising and implementation of the policy, the effects it had, and the outcomes compared with those intentions. She notes that the close relationship between structural and market policy never materialised, with inadequate funding for other forms of aid besides farm modification, compensatory payments for LFAs and processing and marketing. She particularly notes that environmental problems had not been linked to the CAP in the beginning, with no mention of these in the ToR. Rather, the reduction of

intensity of production in CAP reform was linked to income levels and controls of surpluses and not to environmental damage. While the Single European Act (SEA) and Maastricht amended the ToR and the focus shifted to sustainability in the agricultural sector, the 1992 reform failed to produce the impetus towards an environmentally friendly CAP. Fennell's critique implies that the reformed CAP may be unable to fulfil its new multiplicity of objectives without parallel policies governing commerce, industry, regions and society at large, in the same way as the market policy had failed before. It therefore needs new initiatives and a new balance in land use *i.e.* a reform of its objectives and mechanisms. Swinbank (1997, p109) agrees that ... "the new CAP" of the mid-1990s remains in a state of flux and needs new mechanisms, for example the replacement of existing entitlement to area payments by a transferable bond.

Other authors produce similar critiques. Grant (1997), from a new institutionalist, political economy perspective, points out that the CAP at macro-level is influenced by exogenous factors that have had profound influences on policy change. These policy changes have often been diluted during the process of implementation in the various Member State countries, driven by the defence of national interests and resulting in policy inertia. He concludes that, while Europe needs a CAP, it should be one with different objectives and mechanisms from the current policy. Whitby (1996), reviewing the introduction of the AE regulation of 1992 from an economics/ market failure perspective, notes that ... "there are serious issues of policy design and implementation which require examination before Regulation 2078/92 can be hailed as an unqualified success" (*ibid*, p240).

The introduction of the Accompanying Measures in the 1992 reform of the CAP (the MacSharry Reform) resulted in a large amount of literature on the subject of sustainable agriculture and the means to achieve it. Contributors' perspectives range from social critiques, emphasising farmers' perceptions of changing agriculture and its implications for AE mechanisms (Morris and Potter 1995; Young, C. *et al.* 1995; Wilson 1996; Battershill and Gilg 1997) to resource-based geographical perspectives (Benson, J. 1994; Bowers 1995; Ilbery, B., Chiotti, Q. and Rickard, T. 1997); an integration critique where sustainable agriculture is achieved through the integration of agriculture and environment



(Hart and Wilson 1998; Lowe *et al.* 1999; Brouwer and Lowe 2000; Lowe and Baldock 2000; Ward 2000); and a sustainable food production critique (as opposed to environmental conservationism) (Evans *et al.* 2001). Lowe and Whitby (1997) maintain that long-term protection of the rural environment is a prerequisite for the sustainable delivery of the benefits it provides, because of the time taken to regenerate these benefits. A possible route towards a secure conservation policy mechanism for the future may be, they suggest, through a revision of the land development rights of farmers and landowners. From a broader perspective of the multifunctionality of agriculture in a new European model, Buller (2001) proposes a proactive form of IRD. In collaboration with Hoggart and Black (Hoggart *et al.* 1995), Buller seeks ... “to emphasise the need for quality research that examines the complexities of causal processes and their outcomes” (ibid, p264) in order to identify processes and structures that are specific to one country but which find weak expression elsewhere.

The CAP is characterised by Winter (2000) as being weak in two ways: other factors influence farm management decisions; and it has manifestly failed to bring about the changes anticipated in policy rhetoric. He maintains that an assessment of CAP strength depends on how the policy is conceptualised, the design of the policy instruments, and, crucially, whose policy objectives are being considered. Policy goals should be explicit and the policy mechanisms designed to achieve them tightly focused. This, together with the summary presented above, suggests that research should focus on the objectives and implementation of the current reform proposal for RD to highlight the complexity involved in CAP policy development and change, and to assess its potential for the promotion of sustainability in rural land use.

Following a period of waning interest in implementation as a theoretical construct, the continued failure of rational economics and political economy to provide a convincing explanation of the implementation process may indicate that the time is now ripe for a new perspective on the implementation approach. Thus, based on the foregoing analysis of CAP literature, and guided by Winter’s observations, this thesis explores the potential of the RDR to deliver sustainability in rural land use from an implementation perspective. Using

the South West of England as a study area, the thesis examines the construction of sustainability in rural land use within the policy making arena, its role in policy texts and practices, and the way it has been interpreted by different actors and populations within the policy process to affect outcomes. The exploration is guided by the policy design framework of Schneider and Ingram (1997) which provides a sophisticated conceptual framework for studying policy designs and implementation. It reveals, through the construction and translation of sustainability in rural land use at different policy levels, the normative/empirical nature of the policy process and the way that implementation is constrained by the different design decisions and their underlying logics.

The following section examines CAP reform in a little more detail, particularly in respect of the MacSharry Reform, which was significant for the evolution of RD policy in the 1990s. The chapter then goes on to identify the new opportunities and risks presented by the introduction of Agenda 2000 before outlining the research problem, the research questions and the theoretical framework for the study. It concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 CAP Reform**

The policy context within which the RDR arose was one of contradiction and instability (Lowe 2000). The traditional rationales for European Union (EU) agriculture policy were breaking down under pressure from both endogenous and exogenous forces, and alternative rationales were formulated that encapsulated the new climate of ideas surrounding the restructuring of agricultural support. The traditional rationales could be found within the monolithic ‘Green Europe’ model, incorporating notions such as a “peopled countryside and a landscape with figures” (Potter and Goodwin 1998), the ‘family farm’ as representative of the European countryside, the primacy of agriculture as the vehicle for



maintaining and preserving the countryside, and the discourse of ‘Green Europe’<sup>4</sup> to express the moral superiority of the traditions and virtues of rural areas (Buller 2001).

Based on evidence from the Stresa Conference in 1958<sup>5</sup>, where the first guidelines for the future CAP were laid down (Kay 1998) the policy has been viewed by critics as largely socio-political rather than economic, neglecting environmental considerations and implicitly upholding two core principles identified by Clarke *et al* (1997) as crucial in shaping the evolution of the AER: to guarantee occupancy of agricultural land with the aim of ensuring rural stability; and to uphold the centrality of small-scale and family farming to the restructuring of rural space. It appeared to be politically easier to gain common agreement for a price policy than for a structural policy, as was manifest in the subsequent dilution of the Mansholt reform proposals in 1968 which advocated a radical restructuring of the industry involving the removal of some five million agricultural workers from the land (Kay 1998). The subsequent focus of the CAP on market manipulation mechanisms created an ‘economic’ as opposed to a socio-political policy, and may lie at the heart of its failure to deliver ‘sustainability’ in either a socio-economic or an environmental sense, leading to difficulties in achieving consensus on a new common approach to rural policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The MacSharry Reform, taking place as it did amidst intense pressure from a number of different sources<sup>6</sup> can be seen as the culmination of two decades of intensifying crisis<sup>7</sup> as the two pillars of the ‘Green Europe’ CAP, the prices and markets policy and the structural policy (CEC 1992) remained critically uneven<sup>8</sup>. The Mansholt Reforms of 1968 had been followed by some attempts during the 1970s to implement structural directives and in the 1980s by a string of reforms designed to control production (Winter, M. 1996; Grant 1997;

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Green Europe’ had no environmental connotations, being a symbol of the perceived links between agriculture and culture, and between the identity of nations and the food they eat (CEC 1992).

<sup>5</sup> The Conference balked at specifying mechanisms to achieve the aims of the new CAP.

<sup>6</sup> The collapse of the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations, budgetary crisis and the reforming zeal of the Agriculture Commissioner, Ray MacSharry and the Commission President, Jacques Delors

<sup>7</sup> Mansholt 1968; Structural Directives 1972, 1984, 1988; Price increases 1982, 1983; Quotas 1984; co-responsibility levy 1986; stabiliser reforms 1988.

<sup>8</sup> The Guidance section of the EAGGF (allocated to structural measures) remained below 5% in spite of earlier intentions that it should be one third of the budget, only rising to 7% in 1995 (Grant 1997).

Winter, M. *et al.* 1998). In the face of budgetary crisis, international pressure, and an active environmental lobby, the MacSharry Reforms introduced annual compensatory measures in a new Agri-environment Regulation (AER – EU 2078/92) to accompany the commodity regime reforms. It also made a commitment, based on the 1988 European Commission (EC) publication *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC 1988) to RD in areas of economic activity outside of agriculture to maintain populations and strengthen the rural economies of Member States.

The AER received much criticism for its perceived failure to integrate environmental concerns into agricultural policy making (Deverre 1995; Potter 1998a) (Bowers 1995; Potter 1998b; Winter, M. and Gaskell 1998; Brouwer and Lowe 2000; Buller 2000; Winter, M. 2000), and themes emanating from subsequent research seemed to indicate the possibility over time of a separation of market policies from socio-economic and environmental policies, with RD playing an increasingly important role in building an alternative model of development (Winter, M. 1996; Buller 2000; Lowe and Baldock 2000). Much of the concern expressed later about the RDR had its roots in experience with the AER, the main criticism of the latter being the fact that the inclusion of environmental policies were promulgated in EU and national government rhetoric<sup>9</sup> as constituting a radical reform, but in practice they could be seen merely as incremental measures that were more likely to benefit producer groups than to contribute to a more benign agriculture. In retrospect, some critics claim that the AER has been found to have had only a very small impact on productivist agriculture, the dualism of its goals working against any radical reorientation of production methods or ethos (Potter 1998b; Winter, M. 1998). The publication of *The Future of Rural Society* was an explicit acknowledgement by the EC that it no longer considered agriculture to be the main focus for European rural policy, and it became clear that the CAP, overwhelmingly criticised by many commentators ... “for its profligate spending, its disruption of world trade patterns and for its negative impact on the natural environment” (Winter, M. *et al.* 1998, p1) needed a radical redirection.

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<sup>9</sup> “Language designed to persuade or impress, often with an implication of insincerity or exaggeration” (Pearsall and Trumble 1996)



However, while the AER was roundly criticised for its failure to adequately integrate environmental concerns into CAP policy making, it was also regarded by some commentators as a ‘policy trial’, or facilitation for CAP reform, being offered as a palliative to farmers to accept the rest of the reform (Jones and Clark 1998). In this process, which included the pursuit of its integrationist aims, the EC ceded some responsibilities to Member States, while retaining crucial control of monitoring functions. Jones and Clark (ibid) believe this conceptualisation chimed with the framework of ‘renationalisation’ of the CAP, with member states bearing the costs of implementation and administration. The discretion allocated, and carried forward in the proposals for the RDR, represented an important shift towards a more balanced approach to CAP policy making. It also initiated a process of liberalisation of the Common Market Organisations (CMOs), involving the conversion of some of the indirect costs of supporting managed and protected markets into direct subsidies (Lowe and Brouwer 2000). This theme was picked up later by the Buckwell Group<sup>10</sup> when outlining principles for the EC that would guide the CAP towards transformation to a more legitimate and sustainable model of support over the medium term. They envisaged a more progressive liberalisation of the CMOs as a first step in a process that would also involve the dismantling of supply controls and the decoupling of compensation payments from production, together with reductions in these payments and the transfer of public funds to support environmental management by farmers and the socio-economic development of rural areas (ibid) (See Fig.1.1 over).

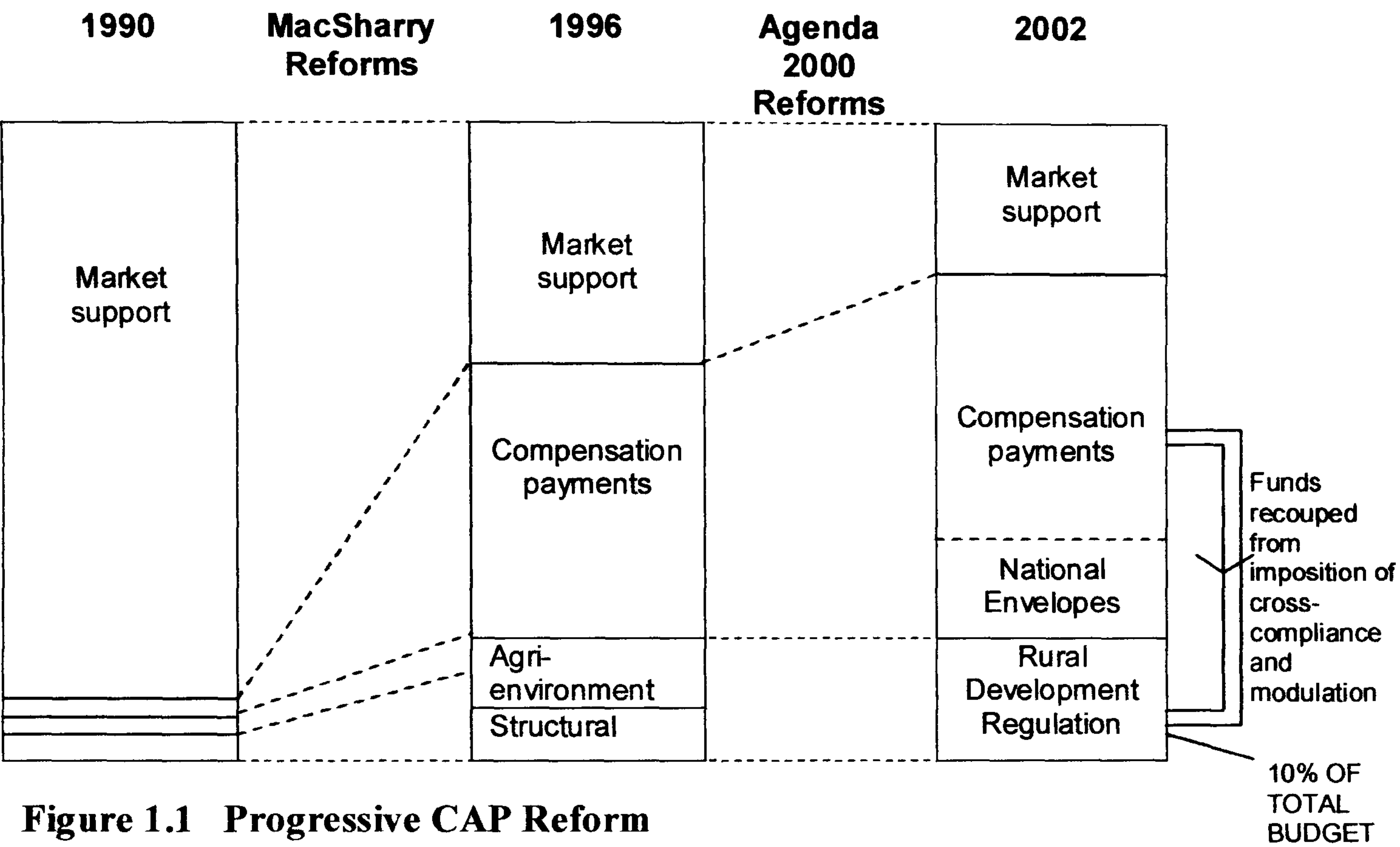
The subsequent Cork Conference issued a declaration endorsing this model, stating that sustainable rural development (SRD) ... “must be at the top of the EU agenda and become the fundamental principle that underpins all rural policy” (Lowe *et al.* 1996, p45), the principles presented to Member States including an integrated and devolved approach to policy making.

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<sup>10</sup> The Buckwell Group was one of the groups set up by the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Franz Fischler, in the wake of the Madrid Summit in December 1995, to explore the implications for further CAP reform of integrating rural development and environmental objectives. This fed into the Cork Conference in 1996 (Lowe *et al.* 1996).



From the Commission’s perspective, the 1992 reforms were a success, albeit only a limited one. The process had averted a budgetary crisis, complied with international pressure to reduce trade barriers, satisfied the disparate aspirations of the member states, fulfilled the Commission’s legal requirements under the Single European Act (SEA) (1987) to integrate environmental protection into other policy areas, and maintained the integrity of the core



**Figure 1.1 Progressive CAP Reform**

Source: (Lowe *et al.* 1999)

policies of the CAP. Others disputed whether this process was actually ‘reform’ in a fundamental sense ... “(a)t least, there has been a decision making process on the subject, leading to an agreement” (Groenendijk 1993, p52). Furthermore, Winter (1998), while acknowledging that some measures had limited environmentally damaging agricultural expansion, expressed concerned about the lack of drivers in the reform for a more fundamental reappraisal of agriculture ... “The most worrying feature of the reforms is that they do so little to encourage a return to a more environmentally sustainable agriculture at either the farm or regional level” (ibid, pxvi).

That the reform did little to alter the *status quo* was a disappointment for the environmental lobby. However, the process had opened the door for alternative elements to emerge within

the policy arena and contribute to change in the climate of ideas, incorporating the new transparency surrounding CAP transfers, and encouraging a public opinion on agricultural policy. There had, in essence, been a ‘Trojan Horse’ planted within the CAP (Lowe and Brouwer 2000). Subsequent events, however, have ensured that, to a large extent, the progressive ideas have remained trapped (ibid), prompting Winter, M. (2000) to suggest that the Agenda 2000 proposals indicate that ... “Whatever the weaknesses of the post-1992 policy framework, further reform will be based largely upon the policy mechanisms put in place at that time”. The weaknesses Winter refers to here include the rural policy context from which the RDR arose, where agricultural market policy, structural policy and environmental policy coexisted, featuring complex policy instruments but lacking any overall coherence. One of the purposes of the RDR was to rationalise this situation, and the form of the resulting regulation reflected the Commission’s emphasis on the integration of these hitherto disparate policy sectors (European Commission 1999c).

### **1.3 Agenda 2000 – opportunities and risks**

The RDR was introduced by the EC as the “2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of the CAP” (European Commission 1999a), forming a key element of the Agenda 2000 CAP reform proposals.

Representing the first step towards a comprehensive, integrated strategy for rural development, this new impetus was the European Commission’s (EC) answer to the challenges and opportunities facing the EU’s agriculture sector in the changing global and European context, as consumer-led demand for food quality and safety impacted on local economies in rural areas (Netherlands Economic Institute 2001). In theory the RDR should have provided member states with the possibility of creating innovative, integrated and forward-looking strategies for sustainable rural futures with the opportunities for discretion contained within the regulation (Winter, M. 1998; Netherlands Economic Institute 2001). In practice, this discretion could be seen as a double-edged sword, raising the likelihood of different interpretations of RD within and between Member States.



In the UK, a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) review of European agriculture in 1995 (MAFF 1995) suggested that a single policy was no longer appropriate, and a new CAP model should include a dual policy where a clear distinction would be drawn between social/environmental and agricultural aims, and the policy instruments used to achieve them. This review was superseded in 1999 by a further MAFF report<sup>11</sup> produced by the Agricultural Advisory Group, but it foreshadowed the implementation of the RDR through the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) in that the rationales for government intervention through CAP reform, and thus the government blueprint for RD, are made quite clear at this early stage: structural adjustment for the agriculture sector; and environmental protection.

The Agenda 2000 reforms aimed to ... “deepen and widen the 1992 reform by replacing price support measures with direct aid payments and accompanying this process by a consistent rural policy” (European Commission 1999a). Following the precedent set with the AER, the financial base for the RDR was broadened through the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) Guarantee section, and the introduction of a measure under Article 33 for promoting and adapting rural areas meant that non-farmers and non-agricultural activities were being funded by the CAP in a similar way to actions funded under Objective 5b of the Structural Funds. This offered a way forward for a more integrated approach to RD, the measures introduced in the single package contained within Council Regulation 1257/1999 (see Appendix 2 for a table showing the regulations amalgamated in the RDR) aiming to support *all* rural areas in three main ways:

- by strengthening the agricultural and forestry sectors through the promotion of quality agricultural products. The reform included measures concerning the establishment of young farmers and conditions for taking early retirement;
- by improving the competitiveness of rural areas with the aim above all of improving the quality of life of rural communities and creating new sources of income for farmers and their families;

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<sup>11</sup> MAFF (1999) Europe’s Agriculture: the case for change.



- and by preserving the environment and European rural heritage via agri-environmental measures such as organic farming. To help the further ‘greening’ of the CAP, the traditional compensatory allowances in support of farming in less-favoured areas was extended to areas where farming was restricted by the existence of specific environmental constraints.  
(European Commission 1999a, p5)

More specifically the Commission suggested the aims of the measures were to:

- improve agricultural holdings
- guarantee the safety and quality of foodstuffs
- ensure fair and stable incomes for farmers
- ensure that environmental issues are taken into account
- develop complementary and alternative activities that generate employment, with a view to slowing the depopulation of the countryside and strengthening the economic and social fabric of rural areas
- improve living and working conditions and equal opportunities  
(European Commission 1999d)

The Regulation was based on four main principles:

- 1 the multifunctionality of agriculture
- 2 a multisectoral and integrated approach to the rural economy in order to diversify activities, create new sources of income and employment and protect the rural heritage
- 3 flexible aids based on subsidiarity and promoting decentralisation, consultation at regional, local and partnership level, and
- 4 transparency in drawing up and managing programmes, based on simplified and more accessible legislation

The RD measures eligible under the Regulation fell into two groups:

- the accompanying measures of the 1992 reform: early retirement, agri-environment and afforestation, as well as the less-favoured areas scheme

- the measures to modernise and diversify agricultural holdings: farm investment, setting-up of young farmers, training, investment aid for processing and marketing facilities, additional assistance for forestry, promotion and conversion of agriculture and facilitating the development and structural adjustment of rural areas

(European Commission 1999d)

The novel features of the new policy created much interest amongst the policy community, many hoping that the valuable lessons learnt from implementation of Objective 5b, now subsumed into the regulation, could be carried forward by the RDR (Ward, 2002, pers.com.). However, a very early review for the European Parliament by the Netherlands Economic Institute (2001) (NEI) criticised the implementation of the regulation in member states on a number of counts. In the first instance, the RDR was regarded mainly as a political rather than as a social, environmental or economic policy *per se*. Secondly, while the structure of the regulation was ‘new’, the contents were not, innovation in ‘new’ measures being largely superficial and rhetorical ... “newness is more about form than content” (Netherlands Economic Institute 2001, p16). Full advantage had not been taken by member states of the ample scope for discretion, with existing national schemes often being put forward for EU funding under the regulation with no clear evaluation evidence of their effectiveness. There were concerns regarding the validity of consultation within member states, and poor communication within and between levels of government at national and EU level had provided further constraints. Furthermore, implementation had been considerably constrained by procedural and administrative obligations which had hampered greater transparency, while delays and problems with implementation had had negative effects on target populations including administrators because of the high ambitions of national programmes (Netherlands Economic Institute 2001).

This analysis reflected the growing concern in England about the way in which the regulation was being interpreted and implemented through the ERDP, in terms of the best use of discretion at national (England) and regional levels, the integration of objectives and measures for SRD and the efficacy of structures and mechanisms for delivery. In the



process of balancing the long-term aims of British governments to ‘scrap the CAP’ with its political credibility (Lowe 2000), the New Labour government had to reconcile the corporatist culture of traditional agricultural politics with the ideals of economic liberalism. The new thinking revealed by ‘Rural Economies’ (Cabinet Office 1999) suggested that this should be achieved through modernising the approach to rural issues and supporting the creation of productive, sustainable and inclusive rural economies. However, while this model might espouse the new agenda of ‘rural development’ in theory, the fear was that in practice it would only deliver objectives designed to pursue the rationales of structural adjustment and environmental protection. This would tend to ignore the guiding principles of RD set out by the EC: integration, subsidiarity and partnership (CEC 1988). It would also support the contention by Lowe (2000) that rhetoric built the support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar, casting doubt on what ‘rural development’, as delivered through the ERDP, would mean in terms of sustainable outcomes.

The RDR, according to Commission rhetoric, had two main aims to fulfil ... “to ensure better coherence between rural development and the prices and market policy of the CAP and to promote all aspects of rural development by encouraging the participation of local actors” (European Commission 1999a, p1). According to Winter (pers.com) and Hart and Wilson (1998) the integration of policy aims and measures is the key to sustainability in rural land use, while discretion and decentralisation have been identified as essential elements of the new, locally-embedded European rural model (Buller 2001; Lowe *et al.* 2002). Indeed, a literature review carried out on behalf of the Countryside Agency (CA) in January 2000 concluded that ... “bottom-up approaches which are genuinely and comprehensively inclusive, may automatically deliver integrated outcomes” (Land Use Consultants 2000). The concern of this study, then, should be to question the extent to which implementation of the RDR through the ERDP reflected a genuine move towards a model of RD that espoused integration and discretion (and thus a more sustainable and equitable approach to rural land use in the regions) and also the capacity of implementation structures and mechanisms to deliver this approach.



## **1.4 The Research Problem**

There are two inherent problems associated with studying the implementation of the RDR. The first is the implicit duality of the language in which the policy rhetoric is couched, ‘sustainability’ and ‘rural development’ both being contested on the basis of their many different interpretations. The second is the normative/empirical<sup>12</sup> dichotomy of policy prescriptions, particularly in relation to such contested concepts. The first makes definition of sustainability in rural land use a relative issue, contingent on perspective, while the second complicates any evaluation of the potential of the policy to deliver it, the outcomes of policy not necessarily reflecting the real intentions of policy makers. Implementing the RDR in the South West of England is a complex process, policy making potentially occurring at three different levels from supra-national through national (England) to regional, and vertically through a spectrum of stakeholder standpoints: political, administrative, economic, environmental, and social. In order to better understand the processes involved, the study demands a holistic framework that can reveal the complex influences of ideas, perceptions and language on the structures and outcomes of policy. The next few paragraphs outline in some more detail the implications of these remarks for this thesis.

### **1.4.1 The Scope and Meaning of Sustainability in Rural Land Use**

In the context of the Agenda 2000 reform, sustainability in rural land use is implied by the use of various different terms involving ‘rural development’ (RD); for example, ‘sustainable rural development’ (SRD), ‘integrated rural development’ (IRD) or ‘sustainable integrated rural development’ (SIRD), RD being predicated on holistic evaluations of policy problems. Thus, according to these terms, the sustainable use of rural land should depend not only on the protection and conservation of environmental assets, but on the whole economic, social and cultural environment of rural areas. Rural land use in

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<sup>12</sup> Empirical theory concerns the effects of policy and normative theory the worth of such effects and the processes through which they are produced (in terms of interests and values met, violated, promoted, obstructed or ignored) (Dryzek 1990).

some contexts refers narrowly to environmental issues, so that, for example, *sustainable rural land use* is one of the environmental goals of the ERDP South West Regional Chapter (MAFF 2000c, p144). In this thesis it is taken to mean land use in the broadest sense, with ‘sustainability’ separated from ‘rural land use’ to avoid the conflation of environmental with land use issues.

Sustainability is implicated in the RDR in different ways, being explicit in the regulation as the ideal of SIRD; implicit in the ERDP National Plan as a ‘guiding principle’; and explicit in the ERDP SW Regional Chapter as the policy goal of SRD. The form of the RDR, by the combination of disparate measures in one legal instrument, should, according to UK policy makers, provide the synergy necessary for sustainable outcomes through the integration of measures, while the discretion apparently allocated at different policy levels (national and regional in the case of England) will contribute to sustainability through the participation of local actors.

From the foregoing, it may be possible to conclude that sustainability in rural land use could be achieved through following the prescriptions of any of the concepts mentioned above. The problem with this is that sustainability and RD in their various forms are interpreted differently by different groups and individuals at different policy levels. While this is useful to policy makers, the inherent flexibility of the terms allowing interpretations designed to suit different agendas, it also presents a challenge in terms of what, exactly, they are implementing, and the consensus this will command.

### ***Sustainability***

Sustainability is often used interchangeably with ‘sustainable development’ (SD) or is combined with various other words to change its meaning in subtle ways. In its original form, sustainable development is inherently dualistic, a characteristic that on one hand has been identified as its greatest weakness, creating difficulty when attempting to translate its goals and purposes into concrete policy directives. On the other hand this characteristic has led to a plethora of interpretations of SD across a spectrum of environmental, political,



social and economic positions (see Chapter 3), providing flexibility in widely differing circumstances (Murdoch 1994; Bowers 1995; Munton 1997). The linguistic characteristics of policies can thus provide useful insights into institutional positions in relation to sustainability, while bearing in mind the legislative requirement at both EU and national levels for the integration of environmental and social policy objectives into policy making over the last decade (Defra 2002). SD has become associated with the integration of the so-called ‘elements’ of sustainability, these constituting the institutionalised version of the Brundtland definition of SD<sup>13</sup>: the social, economic and environmental sectors of society at large, that are often constructed as being separate for logistical convenience. However, the integration of these elements, explicitly required, for example, by the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (ibid, p13) is often absent in practice, the structures, instruments, and mechanisms used to achieve SD reflecting the narrow and often competing sectoral interests of those different elements:

... for the main part, what sustainable development practitioners have seen over the last year is different elements of the thinking within sustainable development packaged and repackaged in different ways, put into a box labelled “liveability”, environmental modernisation, or subordinated to the vagaries of corporate social responsibility.... None of the alternative labels offered – these or any others – can hope to capture the multi-dimensional richness which is offered by sustainable development (Jonathan Porritt quoted in Defra 2002, p47).

Given these inherent problems with the concept of SD, it is perhaps unsurprising that it is difficult to evaluate. Environmental indicators are tools developed in the wake of the ‘Rio’ conference<sup>14</sup> to specifically address this problem. Environmental management translates normative environmental goals and political choices into measures of performance. This implies three things: 1) a willingness by government to ‘manage’ transition to increased sustainability; 2) the ability to do so (consensus); and 3) the expression of environmental goals in quantitative terms (Redclift and Woodgate 1997). However, key indicators developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) and the World Wide Fund for Nature

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<sup>13</sup> SD is defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p43) as ... “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – the ‘Earth Summit’ – held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.



(WWF) have limited application, representing the outcome of policy decisions already taken, using data that is already largely available and based on consensus as to their limitations and usefulness. The Agenda 2000 CAP reforms provided renewed impetus for the integration of environmental concerns into agricultural policy and the focus of the EC is on developing indicators to identify the key AE issues that are of concern in Europe today and that help monitor and evaluate Community programmes (CEC 2000).

However, as indicated above, setting sustainability targets is essentially a political exercise, and ‘sustainability’ needs to be incorporated in the political (qualitative) choices made in addition to the functional (quantitative) indicators against which they are measured (Redclift and Woodgate 1997). Redclift and Woodgate (ibid) express doubt as to whether it is possible to establish indicators of sustainability that command consensus when the term has so many conflicting interpretations. It becomes easier and more relevant when the focus is narrowed to individual societies, but still ... “[t]here are numerous indicators of unsustainability, but it has proved much more difficult to find those for sustainability” (ibid, p57). According to Owens and Cowell (2001), these factors have led to a focus on what is quantifiable, with indicators being constructed around particular conceptions of sustainability rather than being tools to operationalise a set of widely agreed goals. The ‘tools’ thus become ... “part of the political process of persuasion in defence of divergent interests and beliefs” (ibid, p171).

It is not the intention in this thesis to use indicators of SD to evaluate the potential within the RDR for the promotion of sustainability in rural land use. Rather, it is a central tenet of the study that SD is socially constructed through the texts and practices of policy formulation and implementation to provide certain meanings to audiences, including target populations and implementers, and that these meanings are interpreted and mediated by those populations according to their differing perceptions. This process has implications for outcomes, as different interpretations carry different connotations of ‘success’ or ‘failure’, and the outcomes will eventually define ‘sustainability’ in that context. It will therefore be a key research priority for this study to discover how sustainability is constructed in the different policy texts and practices constituting the ‘implementation’ of the RDR in the

South West of England, the way that is translated by target groups and implementers, and the influence this is likely to have on the outcomes of policy.

### ***Rural Development***

Rural development (RD) ‘borrows’ a lot of the features of SD, particularly when it is linked to sustainability through the use of language, for example, when RD becomes SRD or IRD or SIRD. IRD is perhaps the closest to SD in terms of definition, having its roots in the often unsuccessful application of agri-science in developing countries:

IRD is the process through which the economic, social, environmental and cultural resources of rural communities are organised in order to achieve and sustain the long-term viability of those communities (Fitzpatrick and Smith 2002).

Most visions of RD rely on a number of criteria: the interdependence of the three strands of sustainability (economic, social and environmental); participation; integration; diversity, adaptability and subsidiarity; and respect for rural assets and resources (see for example (Dwyer *et al.* 2002)). According to Dwyer (*ibid*, p15) ... “[a]t least at the level of rhetoric, the establishment of the RDR has been hailed as bringing a new approach to European rural development policy. This new approach is usually termed ‘integrated’ and/or ‘sustainable’ rural development”.

The problem with RD in the context of CAP reform is one of definition. While the EC promoted their vision of RD in 1988 (see above) guided by principles of integration, subsidiarity and partnership, different factions in Europe during the 1990s developed different definitions of what RD meant to them. So, for example, those countries with a significant rural vote including France, Germany and some of the southern Member States took a very cautious and conservative view of the new thinking encapsulated in RD, fearing for the future of their family farmers, while a handful of northern Member States including the UK took a more liberal view of the prospect of access to world markets. Characterised by Lowe (1996; 2000) as two extreme positions representing ‘protectionists’ on one hand, and ‘liberals’ on the other, there was yet another position occupied by those interested in reform of the CAP from environmental and social perspectives. The RDR represented a



compromise on these positions following the Agenda 2000 negotiations, with implications for sustainability in rural land use in different Member States, depending on the positions adopted by their governments.

### ***SiRLU***

The purpose of this section has been to define ‘sustainability in rural land use’ as a concept (SiRLU) that can be used in this thesis as the basis for evaluating the ‘rural development’ that the RDR offers. To this end there are two conclusions that can be drawn from the foregoing discussion about sustainability and RD. Firstly there is a wide variety of interpretations of both concepts, all of which are capable of delivering some kind of SiRLU. Secondly, they all rely to some extent on integration and discretion as part of their prescriptions for SiRLU. The rationale underpinning these conclusions is more fully explained in Chapter 3. It is proposed, therefore, that integration and discretion should be considered as the basic tenets of SiRLU; that these should be present in RD prescriptions; and that an exploration of the social construction of RD in its various forms throughout the implementation of the RDR will lead to understanding of the extent to which the regulation has the potential to promote SiRLU.

#### **1.4.2 The normative/empirical dichotomy**

The above discussion has clearly shown that RD is, by its very nature, a multi-sectoral concept (Franklin 2000). This raises questions about the institutional capacity to create the strategic and coherent input necessary to ensure integrated outputs:

...without a suitable form of governance in place to guide and implement an integrated rural development framework, such a strategy is unlikely to become either fully established or self sustainable past the short term (ibid, p2).

The normative-empirical problem arises from the discrepancy between the value prescriptions of policy rhetoric and the necessity of actually implementing a policy that accurately reflects these values. The difficulties faced by policy makers can be illustrated by reference to SD, which, as mentioned briefly above, incorporates the



normative/empirical dichotomy within its language. The two parts of the term appear to oppose each other and thus complicate implementation. While SD is especially dichotomous in this respect ('sustainable' implying constraints and 'development' implying growth in the context of Brundtland), a similar problem exists with RD as a contested and ill-defined concept. From the perspective of CAP reform, the *idea* of RD is incorporated in the RDR, leaving Member States to interpret this within the particular discourse of RD pertaining to their circumstances. While this flexibility of interpretation will help maintain regional distinctiveness in the Union, an immediate and obvious problem is that the broad implications of RD, as indicated above, are likely to challenge the interests and capacity of agriculture departments in Member States (the 'competent authorities' through which the RDR will be implemented) to deal with them. Furthermore, the interpretations of successive layers of government in Member States makes the operationalisation of the idea problematic in terms of achieving the SIRD originally envisaged in the RDR. Thus, one of the aims of this thesis is to examine the relationship between the normative and empirical elements of the policy process to assess the potential within the ERDP to deliver SiRLU.

## **1.5 The Research Questions**

The study has posed two major questions to address the issues outlined above. Each question is broken down into a number of research objectives:

### **1) How has sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU) been socially constructed within the context of the evolving European rural development agenda?**

Research objectives:

- To theorise 'implementation' in the context of CAP reform
- To explain the scope and meaning of SiRLU in this study
- To explore the social construction of SiRLU at European and national (England) policy levels

## **2) What is the potential within the design of the ERDP to deliver sustainability in rural land use?**

### **Research objectives:**

- To explore interpretations of SiRLU by stakeholders and implementers
- To assess, with reference to implementation as defined by Schneider and Ingram, the extent to which value (integration, discretion) has been added to design at different policy levels
- To assess the importance of the ERDP from stakeholder perspectives, and analyse the potential of the policy to deliver SiRLU

## **1.6 The Policy Design Approach**

The RDR, in a complex policy environment, and with a multiplicity of goals, is providing policy-makers with crucial challenges in terms of interpretation and delivery. The implementation process has provided a unique and dynamic subject for research, creating for the researcher a ‘live’ situation, unlike many retrospective policy analyses. This, while providing the opportunity for observing events as they happen, has also given rise to certain challenges in conceptualisation. It became important to find a ‘fixed point’ of reference in the rapidly evolving sequence of events, while at the same time providing a powerful means of conceptualising and understanding the process of policy formulation and implementation.

An initial review of the body of literature concerned with the phenomenon of ‘implementation’ revealed the failure of traditional research foci, dominated by the politics/administration dichotomy, to provide a convincing explanation of the interaction between policy formulation and outcomes. Likewise, ‘policy network’ conceptualisations, while providing detailed descriptions of relations and interactions between groups and individuals, failed to provide explanations of policy change in some dynamic situations (Thatcher 1998). Policy design is a concept that, according to Schneider and Ingram (1997), is dynamic and contextual and can be analysed at many different levels. The approach



abandons research from the various perspectives (top-down/bottom-up, politics/administration, formulation/implementation), concentrating instead on linking normative prescriptions with mechanisms for implementation, and then appraising the appropriateness of that ‘package’ in the context of the policy to be implemented (Linder and Peters 1987, 1990). Centred around the three critical elements of values (the standpoint of implementers), context (the climate of ideas) and form (the content and process of policy) (Bobrow and Dryzek 1987), the design of policies are inherently purposive and normative, and have consequences, many of which result from the meanings and interpretations attributed through the social construction of values in the policy process (Schneider and Ingram 1997). Developed by Schneider and Ingram (S&I) (ibid), and drawing on insights from critical and interpretive theorists, the model of policy design used in this study centres the policy as the locus for meanings and ideas found in the policy context, and uses the concept of social construction to understand the way these are translated and mediated to form part of future contexts. The ‘empirical’ elements of policy designs (*e.g.* the rationales, goals, and implementing structures) included in the model reflect the characteristics of designs, contributing further to understanding the vital links between the formulation of policy and its outcomes.

## **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is broken down into four major parts. Part I introduces the context and theory of RD. Chapter 1 provides information on the background to CAP reform in the EU, explores the opportunities and risks for RD associated with the Agenda 2000 reform and outlines the scope and meaning of SiRLU. It also presents the research problem, research questions and the structure of the thesis. In Chapter 2 the concept of ‘policy’ is discussed and rational/positivist (normative) and interpretive/critical (empirical) theoretical positions are examined, illustrated by examples from implementation studies. The politics of ideas and the concept of ‘policy design’ are introduced as alternative and powerful ways of analysing the policy process. Chapter 3 conceptualises SiRLU by examining the roots and routes of SD and RD, identifying integration and discretion as fundamental to any prescription for

SiRLU. Part I concludes with Chapter 4, which sets out the methodological framework for the study.

Part II sets out to define the climate of ideas within which RD evolved, the way in which the latter was framed within the international policy community, and subsequently designed within the ERDP. Chapter 5 explores the framing and embedding of the idea of RD in the context of the Agenda 2000 negotiations, while Chapter 6 analyses the framing of RD in England during the same period. Chapter 7 explains how different goals at different policy levels resulted in RD being conceptualised as an idea at European level, as a tool at the national (England) level, but as a policy goal at regional level.

Part III explores the implementation of the RDR in South West England. Chapter 8 presents the plethora of constructions of sustainability collected during the field work, analysing the actors involved in certain interpretations and the implications of this for implementation. Chapters 9 and 10 analyse the ‘value added’ to policy design by discretion and integration through the interpretation of RD as a policy goal.

Part IV focuses on the potential for SiRLU presented by the introduction of the RDR in SW England. Chapter 11 assesses the future direction of the ERDP through analysis of the arguments presented in the thesis; stakeholders’ perspectives; the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the ERDP; and the proposals for the future RDR. Chapter 12 then discusses the arguments in the context of the theoretical framework of the thesis, reflects from a personal perspective on the conduct of the study, deliberates on the usefulness of the policy design approach and makes suggestions for further research.



## **Chapter 2 Theorising Implementation and Policy Design**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This thesis explores the implementation of an EU regulation that thereby becomes part of UK public policy. In order to understand the problems associated with implementing such a complex piece of legislation, some explanation is needed about public policy *per se*. The aim of this chapter is to explore the development of the policy design approach and its applicability as the conceptual framework for this study. Policy design springs from policy analysis, and this too requires some explication. Therefore the chapter begins with an exploration of the origins and functions of public policy and a review of policy analysis discourses. It explains why the work is situated within the broad epistemological framework of critical policy analysis, illustrating this analysis by examples from the ‘implementation’ literature which has been influential in the development of theory in policy analysis. The second half of the chapter addresses the evolution of the policy design concept, concluding with an analysis of the policy design model developed by Schneider and Ingram (1997) (S&I). This explains how their framework, adapted to the particular needs of this research, will be used to gain a better understanding of the policy process in the case of implementing the RDR in the South West of England.

### **2.2 What is public policy?**

Public policy is broadly the expression of the purpose of government intervention in a particular field to achieve a desired state of affairs, bearing in mind that a policy’s ‘content’ is not always a clear reflection of the ‘intent’ of policy makers (Hogwood and Gunn 1984). More detailed exploration of the concept reveals that it is conceived and mediated in numerous different ways (ibid), no one of which can capture or explain the complexity that it comprises (Parsons 1995). In addition to expressing the broad purposes of government, policy as a term is used in a number of other ways. Parsons (1995) considers policy as an *idea*, not precise, but a purposive middle range concept that can be situated between more

specific decisions and general social movements. He identifies a particular English notion of policy as a course of action or plan; a set of political purposes; an attempt to define and structure a rational basis for action; or inaction. This reflects the work of Heclo (1972), who adds that this notion of policy is blurred by endogenous and exogenous factors involving the characteristics of the context, human decision making and human agency. Heclo (1974) quoted in (Parsons 1995, p85) views policy making as a form of ... “collective puzzlement on society’s behalf: it entails both deciding and knowing”. This puzzlement continues throughout the policy process in the form of defining problems and framing agendas. Hoppe *et al* (1987) offer a similar analogy by suggesting that the policy process involves the reframing or redefinition of ‘wicked’ problems (intractable and ill-structured), policy arguments being collected and gradually ‘puzzled’ into one coherent piece of policy discourse<sup>15</sup> through argument, counterargument, and design.

Hogwood and Gunn (1984) list a number of other ways in which policy is used including: policy as a *programme*, being the means by which government will pursue its broader purpose; policy as *outputs* (the activities of government at the point of delivery), and *outcomes* (the impact of these activities), the evaluation of which links the stated purpose of a policy to what it has achieved; policy as *theory* where models are used to make assumptions about cause and effect; and policy as *process* signifying the temporal quality of policy making, wherein complex actions take place over time. They arrive at a fairly comprehensive summary of what they believe policy is, while stopping short of providing an actual definition:

Any public policy is subjectively defined by an observer as being such and is usually perceived as comprising a series of patterns of related decisions to which many circumstances and personal, group, and organizational influences have contributed. The policy-making process involves many sub-processes and may extend over a considerable period of time. The aims or purposes underlying a policy are usually identifiable at a

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<sup>15</sup> Discourses contain combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices particular to specific sectors of society (Barnes and Duncan 1992). They naturalise particular viewpoints within peoples’ worlds. As situated knowledges they may be contested and negotiated by other discourses and they may pass from one realm of social action to another, often from academic and civil society to policy (Cloke 1996). While academic discourse may influence policy, so policy makers themselves can be seen to construct agricultural policy around sets of beliefs and ideologies, determining its evolution in relation to these naturalising discourses (Clark *et al.* 1997; Clark and Jones 1998).



relatively early stage in the process but these may change over time and, in some cases, may be defined only retrospectively. The outcomes of policies require to be studied and, where appropriate, compared and contrasted with the policy-makers' intentions. Accidental or deliberate inaction may contribute to a policy outcome. The study of policy requires an understanding of behaviour, especially behaviour involving interaction within and among organizational memberships. For a policy to be regarded as a 'public policy' it must to some degree have been generated or at least processed within the framework of governmental procedures, influences and organizations (Hogwood and Gunn 1984, pp23-24).

The study of policy as a process is important because it marks the beginning of a more rational approach to policy analysis, in contrast to the politics/bureaucracy dichotomy that had epitomised the inter-war years, with Lasswell's (1956) conceptualisation of a 'stages heuristic'<sup>16</sup> of the policy cycle proving extremely useful to analysts and scholars alike. Known as policy science, it incorporated many positive aspects, portraying a view of the policy process that accorded with democratic theory (society/environment – decision makers – policy – implementation) and using the language through which policy activities could be understood (Nakamura 1987; Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1993). However, the key concepts could be interpreted differently by different actors, causing disagreement about what the terms were supposed to capture. In addition, the categories did not adequately specify what was going on, causing misdiagnosis of the problem (Nakamura 1987). Much of the research agenda on policy formulation, implementation and evaluation has been centred on the descriptive shortcomings of the 'textbook' conception, an approach referred to by Heclo (1972) as the 'programmatic', or rational/positivist approach. A new conceptualisation, obscured according to Heclo (ibid) by this approach, arose from the longitudinal case study of Bauer, Pool and Dexter (1963) in which the policy process was described as being like a musical phrase where:

...the quality of a new tone – or policy – becomes tinged by the whole preceding musical context, which itself acquires retroactive meanings as new tones unfold. Thus the policy case study might concentrate, not upon a plurality of juxtaposed units, but upon the successive differentiations in a moving but forever incomplete process of 'becoming' (Bauer, 1963, referred to in Heclo 1972, p94).

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<sup>16</sup> Lasswell differentiated a series of functional activities in what he described as the decision process: *intelligence, recommendation, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal, termination*. These stages were reproduced in many different forms and came to be known as the 'textbook' conception.

This idea of policy ‘becoming’, in a process that relied upon a past context and that was never complete, indicated a shift in thinking that began to open up policy analysis to different approaches and that resulted in a challenge to Lasswell’s largely rational discourse.

## 2.3 Approaches to Policy Analysis

Public policy has evolved through meta-narratives, over-arching discourses or paradigms that have guided policy and policy research. Influenced by ideas and defined by metaphors, these discourses are rooted in the philosophical frameworks that underpin the core values and beliefs of policy-makers (Young, K. 1977; Parsons 1995). The narratives revolve around ideals of ‘public interest’ and the constant evolution of the notions of ‘public’ and ‘private’ (Arendt 1958). These discourses have been broadly categorised by Bernstein (1983) as three, essential, interrelated ‘moments’: *empirical* (rational/positivist); *interpretive* (intersubjective); and *critical* (reflexive/emancipatory). Most policy analysis is conducted from one or other of these three perspectives.

### 2.3.1 The Rational (Positivist) Approach

The rational<sup>17</sup> discourse values progress, stresses the primacy of method, and seeks an ultimate truth (Miller and Crabtree 1999). It is exemplified by the rational, bureaucratic approach adopted by wartime administrations, being essentially a response to the need for more and better information for policy makers, thus improving, or making more rational, the decision-making process (Parsons 1995). At that time, ‘public administration’ effectively divided the state into the two separate realms of politics (subjective) and bureaucracy (objective), a situation challenged by the emergence of the policy sciences (Lasswell 1951). The rational approach can be illustrated by reference to the early implementation research, which arose in response to the perceived failure of existing

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<sup>17</sup> Positivism claims that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof. The terms are often used interchangeably together with empiricism.



pluralist theories involving bureaucracies and organisational processes to provide solutions for policy makers (Kirlin 1984). Hargrove (1975) was credited with finding the ‘missing link’ in the policy process with the ‘discovery’ of implementation, which was perceived subsequently as the problem to be addressed by analysts. An analysis of implementation research provides a useful overview of the different approaches to policy analysis over time (see Table 2.1 below). It has been conceptualised as occurring horizontally in three phases, or generations (Goggin 1986), and vertically as a spectrum from top-down, or positivist, studies, to bottom-up, or post-positivist studies, with a hybrid critique somewhere in-between (Sabatier 1986).

**Table 2.1   Analysis of Implementation Research**

Phases of Research	Top-down Studies	Hybrid Studies	Bottom-up Studies
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Generation</b>	Roots in organisational change, intergovernmental relations, judicial decisions Lack theoretical perspective Implementation as complex and dynamic process <u>Examples</u> include: Selznick (1949) Pressman & Wildavsky (1973) Derthick (1972) Kaufman (1960) Bailey & Mosher (1968)		Roots in Interorg’nl analysis <u>Example:</u> Levine & White (1961)  Street-level bureaucrats <u>Example:</u> Lipsky (1971)  Protective belts around policy core Implementation is incremental <u>Example:</u> Lakatos (1968)  Social learning <u>Example:</u> Heclo (1972; 1974)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Generation</b>	Draws on organisational theory (change, control, compliance) Emphasis on ‘variables’ <u>Examples</u> include: Van Meter & Van Horn (1975) Hood (1976) Dunsire (1978)  Implementation as a process of change evolving over time in response to environ-	Synthesis theories Policy oriented learning, advocacy coalitions (TD structural, BU policy subsystem <u>Example:</u> Sabatier (1986)  Systems management – ‘Forward	Clusters of organisations <u>Example:</u> Benson (1975; 1977)  Implementation structures Exchange & resource dependency, networking <u>Example:</u> Hjern & Porter (1978; 1981)  Blurring of ‘politics/ admin’ dichotomy Games <u>Example:</u> Bardach

	<p>mental setting. Technical theory linked to learning process plus programme champion. Implementation as design problem.</p> <p><u>Examples include:</u>  Majone &amp; Wildavsky (1978)  Sabatier &amp; Mazmanian (1979)</p>	<p><u>Mapping'</u>  <u>Example:</u> Elmore (1978)</p> <p>Organisational development  Conflict &amp; bargaining –  'Backward Mapping'  <u>Example:</u> Elmore (1978)</p>	<p>(1977)</p> <p>Implementation is not context-free – admin, adoption, mutation  (foreshadows Policy Design)  <u>Example:</u> Berman (1978)</p>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Generation</b>	<p>Overcome conceptual &amp; validity problems through analysis &amp; modelling  <u>Example:</u> Goggin (1986; 1990)</p>		<p>Policy Discourse  <u>Example:</u> Majone (1989)</p> <p>Implementation problems start with policy makers not specifying clear goals and objectives, adequate resources and administrative organisation  <u>Example:</u> Baier <i>et al</i> (1986)</p> <p>Policy formation as critical independent variable. Policy out-come as dependent variable  <u>Example:</u> Winter (1990)</p> <p>Interpretive Logic  Social construction  Interpretive methodologies  <u>Example:</u> Yanow (1990)</p>

First generation studies, arising from this background of post-war failure in US social programmes, shared a view of implementation as a complex and dynamic process, emphasising the role of participants and the effects, anticipated or not, of their actions (Selznick 1949; Kaufman 1960; Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Van Meter and Van Horn 1975; Goggin 1986). They consisted mainly of individual cases that, while contributing to an understanding of what implementation was, lacked any real theoretical perspective (Van Meter and Van Horn 1975; Goggin 1986). They can, however, be credited with revealing



something of the complexity and political nature of the policy process, a phenomenon strikingly highlighted by the title of Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) study<sup>18</sup>.

The second generation of implementation studies, emerging from an eclectic background of organisational change and control, judicial decisions affecting public policy, and intergovernmental relations, were more analytic and comparative in perspective than the first. They acknowledged the political nature of implementation, in contrast to the earlier focus on managerialist dimensions (Goggin 1986; Sabatier 1986), and research concentrated on how to achieve 'perfect' implementation. A variety of conceptual frameworks and variables were produced to explain the phenomenon, split between 'top-down' models based on organisational theory and practice (Van Meter and Van Horn 1975; Hood 1976; Dunsire 1978; Elmore, R.F. 1978; Gunn 1978; Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979), and 'bottom-up' models, predicated on a critique of central decision-making (Bardach 1977; Berman 1978; Hjern *et al.* 1978; Lipsky 1979; Sabatier 1986; Elmore, R. 1987; Yanow 1987; Younis and Davidson 1990). The latter studies reflected the shift in the interpretation of policy analysis that occurred as challenges to rationalism began to gain momentum. These came in the form of critical, interpretive and constructivist approaches to the policy process that were methodologically and philosophically diverse, that acknowledged the fragmentation in public policy and articulated different ways of seeing policy making and policy outcomes (Parsons 1995).

As public choice economics replaced the policy sciences as the core public policy theory in the 1980s and '90s, so the old models of pluralism and corporatism (that had culminated in the so-called 'iron triangle' of Lowi (1964)) were overtaken by new metaphors of 'networks' and 'communities' which seemed to 'fit' better with modern policy making. By contrast, Lasswell's 'stagist' model was perceived as creating an artificial view of policy making, providing no causal explanation of how policy moved from one stage to another, characterising policy making as 'top-down' and failing to account for the influence of the

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<sup>18</sup> "Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland; or, Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work At All This being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morals on a Foundation of Ruined Hopes".

so-called ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (see Lipsky (1971; 1979). Furthermore, it ignored the real world of multiple levels of government and interacting cycles, could not be tested empirically, and provided no integrated view of analysis of the policy process (Parsons 1995).

### 2.3.2 The Interpretive Approach

‘Interpretive’ logic contrasts directly with the ‘ontological’ nature of the rational approach to the policy process. The latter approaches implementation, for example, with various assumptions: that implementation is a discrete activity that follows policy making, any problems with implementation therefore emanating from that domain; that it is not the implementer’s task to interpret policy, simply to deliver its literal meaning, and that implementers start with this intention. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that implementers are unaware of the multiple meanings of policy language, or that they are separated in some way from the value and historical context of the policy being implemented. Yanow (1990, p219) notes that:

...implementation is affected not only by what happens after the legislative phase, but by what transpired before and during policy drafting as well ... not only the political forces of policy formulation or the immediate policy formulation environment influence implementers, but so do the values and beliefs inherited from earlier debates, which are attached to the current concern. The issues over which legislators debated and compromised in drafting a policy do not die when the policy appears in the *Federal Register*. They survive the policymaking phase and are carried in the policy culture into the implementation phase, with the strong likelihood that they affect implementers’ work.

The essential difference between the two positions is that the rational approach relies on ... “an unexamined, common logic of inquiry” (ibid, p220) in which activities like implementation exist as objective facts with factual characteristics which can be discovered. This is the logic that has informed the ‘top-down’ side of the ‘top-down/bottom-up’ debate in implementation research. The alternative approach is to adopt a logic that expects to find multiple meanings within the activity of policy implementation, and that outcomes will be predicated on the interpretations of the policy mandate. Thus the



implementation ‘problem’ ceases to exist, and inquiry shifts to focus on interpretations of the policy culture:

..the assumption ... regarding implementers’ intent to implement as written requires analysts to discover what policymakers’ intentions were, whether they were understood as such by implementers, and whether implementers’ intentions were identical with legislators’. Such discovery of ‘original intent’, whether of policy legislators or of agency actors requires the researcher to make interpretations of actors’ words and actions. Since interpretations are not facts, they cannot be handled by a fact-oriented research methodology and require an interpretive logic, rather than an ontological one (ibid, p221).

Yanow’s analysis, regarded here as falling within the ‘third generation’ (see Table 2.1 above) of implementation research, reaches four conclusions: 1) implementers interpret policies; 2) persuasion of one or more groups by others is necessary if implementation means the co-existence of multiple meanings; 3) implementation is adaptive and iterative, each implementer subtly changing policy by their interpretation; 4) implementation *evolves* through successive interpretations within the culture of the policy issue. The implementation ‘problem’, then, pursued so assiduously by previous generations of researchers, may not exist, and ‘closing the gap’ as identified by Hargrove (1975) will not solve the problems of implementing policies because ... “the gap is expected ... the ‘problem’ of implementation is the ongoing working out of societal values about the policy issue which is being implemented, values that change over time and exist in multiple versions simultaneously” (Yanow 1990, p225). McLaughlin (1985, p104) concurs with this view:

[A policy] is created and recreated at various levels of the policy system in ways that are consistent with the interests, goals, skills, and perceptions of various actors. The unitary and apparently fixed ‘policy’ or ‘programme’ as defined by an evaluation instrument or report has questionable basis in reality.

Included in Yanow’s research agenda is an exploration of social constructionist approaches and interpretive methodologies (ethnography, case study, critical theory, and hermeneutics).

### 2.3.3 The Critical Approach

The basis of critical and neo-Marxist thought is that problems may be constructed and agendas set in a dimension which is not observable empirically, through systems of beliefs, values, assumptions and ideologies. There are two groups of ‘deep’ theorists: the Marxist and Weberian frameworks providing linking levels of analysis; and the ‘argumentative’ approach derived from a number of sources including the French post-structuralists, the German critical theorists, the British tradition of linguistic philosophy and the American pragmatists<sup>19</sup>. The former represents a ‘meso-level’ of analysis, seeking to link policy formulation, micro-decision making in organisations, and the macro political system. A common theme of this analysis is a focus on the structure of power relations, seeking to show how power is exercised in capitalist society in ways that are hidden beneath surface levels of political institutions and bureaucratic organisations. The argumentative group are concerned with the way in which language shapes the world, their starting point being the notion that language is not neutral. They explore the way that ‘policy discourse’ comes to frame the arguments which form the frameworks within which problems and agendas are constructed. Within this policy arena, the struggle for power is a struggle for setting the discourse in which a problem is framed (Parsons 1995).

Fischer and Forester (Fischer, F. and Forester 1993a) suggest several ways in which the argumentative process can contribute to an understanding of the policy process: it is rhetorical, interpretive, and practical, and provides an appreciation of the many ways of constructing ‘the problem’ before providing plausible alternatives or recommendations; using this method reveals that policy analysis and planning are complex exercises of agenda-setting power, and it enables a more finely textured analysis of the political constitution and influence of analysts’ arguments. They point out the pedagogic function of policy analysis through recognition of its argumentative character, but warn that although citizens can learn through these argumentative processes, the arguments themselves can become skewed by the deliberate play of power. Rein (1993) proposes a ‘frame-reflective discourse’, which seeks to explicate the conflicting frames inherent in policy controversies,

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Gramsci (hegemony), Foucault (knowledge and power), Marcuse, Habermas (Frankfurt School – critical theory), Wittgenstein (language), Dewey (pragmatism).



enabling a better grasp of the relationships between hidden premises and normative conclusions. The notion of learning through the process is emphasised ... “The reframing of policy issues grows out of shifts of context and also helps to produce them. Both adaptation and social learning are operative” (ibid, p155). In his challenge to positivist conceptions of policy analysis, Kaplan (1993) cites empiricism and hermeneutics as alternatives. A narrative structure (*i.e.* who, what, where, how, and why) provides an aid to truth testing in hermeneutic planning and policy analysis. It is, he suggests, very useful for ‘getting inside the heads’ of other people, and can be quite precise, in spite of criticism from rational choice proponents.

Within this genre there are various ways of explaining the world of policy making.

*Constructivist theories* stress the need to analyse politics and policy as modes of discourse (Fischer, F. and Forester 1993b). Truth is relative, and there is no objective knowledge. They have their roots in hermeneutics and phenomenology<sup>20</sup>, emphasising the importance of the human creation of meaning, and acknowledging the premise of the social construction of reality (Miller and Crabtree 1999). Social constructionism is a concept arising from those bodies of literature concerned with the sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckman 1966), science (Latour and Woolgar 1979), and nature (Macnaghten and Urry 1995). There is no one feature, according to Burr (1995), that could be said to identify a social constructionist position, but he offers four assumptions which underlie the approach: 1) it necessitates a critical stance, as it rejects the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective observation of the world; 2) all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative; 3) people construct knowledge through social processes and interactions; and 4) different social constructions invite different forms of action.

The *critical theorists* advocate a fundamental and far-reaching shift towards a more open decision-making process, rather than improving the way in which decision makers use information and knowledge. The assumptions underpinning arguments should be subject to rigorous criticism from a wide audience so that learning capacities can contribute to

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<sup>20</sup> After Heidegger and Schutz.

emancipatory reform. Two kinds of framework illustrate the approach: ‘integrative’, exemplified by the work of Lasswell, and ‘communicative’, as proposed by John Dryzek (Parsons 1995). As stated above, Lasswell believed that a more rational decision-making process was required to counteract distortion in situations of growing complexity. This could be managed through ‘decision seminars’, an extension of his concern with the ... “progressive democratisation of mankind” (Lasswell, 1948, quoted in Bobrow and Dryzek 1987, p172). Dryzek’s work is rooted in the philosophy of Habermas and Arendt, and attempts to fuse rationality and democracy through ‘communicative rationality’, ‘participatory democracy’, and ‘ideal speech’ situations (Dryzek 1990; Parsons 1995). The problem with a critical approach is that it requires a wholesale reconstruction of political institutions and public life, and is thus inconsistent with the dominant political tradition of western democracies, where a multiplicity of frames and normative stances is seen to be both inevitable and desirable (Bobrow and Dryzek 1987). As Torgerson (1985) points out, the adoption of such a reorientation could jeopardise relationships between analysts and policy makers, making participant observation difficult when allied to a project dedicated to subversion of the established political order. Amy (1984, p210) highlights the problem when explaining why positivist (rational) methodologies continue to dominate policy analysis:

...methodology has very real political implications, and the political implications of post-positivist methodologies prevent it from fitting easily into our policy making institutions...post-positivist approaches often encourage analysts to critically question the normative and theoretical presuppositions that underlie policy decisions...good policy analysis often involves ‘subverting policy premises [b]ut while this makes good sense intellectually it makes little sense politically for an analyst working in a government agency. Most administrators are firmly committed to their programs and the last thing they want to hear is subversive questions about the basic worth or sense of that program...Positivism survives because it limits, in a way that is politically convenient, the kinds of questions that analysis can investigate.

In recent decades a number of critical policy theorists have taken up the notion that *ideas* play an important part in the policy process. The philosopher William James (1842-1910), the so-called father of modern ‘pragmatism’, believed that ideas become true through events; they are the activity through which humans are able to modify their environment in order to survive and develop (Parsons 1995). More recently, Donald Schon (1971, p128) conceptualised the relationship between ideas, public learning, networks, mediators, and



change as ... “the ‘system’ of ideas in good currency”. Against a background of the loss of the ‘stable state’, and everything that has meant for different sectors of policy-making, Schon discusses government as a ‘learning system’ that differs from society as a whole by encapsulating the idea of *public learning*. He rejects the rational/experimental model of public learning, turning instead to the role of ideas for an alternative approach to the problems of government policy-makers ... “Ideas in good currency ... are ideas powerful for the formation of public policy ... they change over time; they obey a law of limited numbers; and they lag behind changing events, sometimes in dramatic ways” (ibid, p123). The process of the emergence of ideas is crucial to the formation of policy, and it begins with a shift in the language of an issue. Changes take place as a result of public debate and the attention of media and groups. Ideas in good currency emerge in time, while the situation to which they refer goes on changing, independent from the process of deliberation. Ideas emerge and fade slowly, and effective learning is reflected in the ability of the social system to reduce the lag in emergence.

Majone (1989) believes that ideas and theories come to dominate the thinking of professionals and politicians, contradicting the positivistic view of the role of knowledge in politics. It is, rather, a ... “slow and complex process of reciprocal influence of ideas and events” (ibid, p13). Thus, a full account of policy development must also include the conceptualisations, theories, arguments and norms by which the process is analysed and evaluated. Hall’s (1989; 1993) analysis, based also on Heclo’s ideas of political interaction constituting a process of social learning<sup>21</sup> expressed through policy, is that the terms of political discourse privilege some lines of policy over others; organised interests, political parties and policy experts acquire power in part by trying to influence the political discourse of the day, rather than in any way, *exerting* power. Even if they have no formal

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<sup>21</sup> Social learning as employed by state theorists implies that elements within the state, acting in pursuit of the national interest, decide what to do without much serious opposition from external actors. The image of learning presented has three central features: one of the principal factors affecting policy at time 1 is policy at time 0; the key agents in advancing the learning process are the experts in a given field of policy; and the state acts autonomously from societal pressures. Thus it can be defined as ... “a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information. Learning is indicated when policy changes as a result of such a process” (Hall 1993, p278).

influence, the resultant flow of ideas contributes to and helps define the climate in which policy is made. Majone (1989, p148) supports this view:

...the political and institutional development of policy is always accompanied by a parallel intellectual process of debate and argument. Participants marshal evidence in support of their proposals, use analysis and experts to challenge the assumptions of their opponents, and make arguments that appeal to the beliefs and values, as well as to the interests of broader constituencies...

These themes can be traced through the theories of Kingdon<sup>22</sup> and Sabatier<sup>23</sup> in network conceptualisations, and through the reconceptualisation of implementation as a process of incremental change, policy being characterised by narrowly focused policy learning (Lakatos 1968; Heclo 1974; Majone 1989; Clark *et al.* 1997) and influenced by a broader social learning (Schon 1971; Hall 1993; Parsons 1995). This learning process links policy formation to outcomes, thus broadening the concept of implementation to include policy-making. Policy-making according to Imre Lakatos (1968, quoted in; Majone 1989, p151) conceptualises programmes as forming several ... “protective belts” around a policy core that maintain consistency over time. Policy-making is thus characterised by incremental rather than radical change. Taken up by Majone as a policy discourse approach to policy making (1989), the idea has been applied more recently to European Union policy-making through the work of Clark *et al* (1997).

#### **2.3.4 Synthesis of Approaches to Policy Analysis**

This analysis of approaches to public policy making and analysis, illustrated from the implementation literature, leads to a number of conclusions about the policy process. The first is that the neat characterisation of policy as a series of separate ‘stages’, as suggested by the ‘text book’ method of Lasswell, is unrealistic and unhelpful to those engaged in the process as opposed to theorists and analysts. It has shown that policy making is

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<sup>22</sup> Kingdon’s policy stream conceptualisation draws on evolutionary theory to project a ‘soup’ in which ideas sink or swim according to a process of natural selection, mediated by policy communities and policy entrepreneurs. A successful policy change can be launched when the three policy streams (problems, policies, politics) converge temporarily (Kingdon 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Sabatier (1986; 1991; 1993; 1993) conceptualises the policy process in terms of policy sub-systems, each of which is composed of *all* those who play a part in the ‘processing’ of an idea.



characterised by complexity, dynamism, incrementalism, evolution, change and learning. It is also strongly influenced by context. Examples from implementation studies have shown that ‘implementation’ is not separate from policy formation; rather it starts with policy makers’ decisions in terms of the goals and objectives specified and the provision of adequate resources to achieve outcomes. The bottom-up theorists have clearly shown the influence of ideas, discourses and implementers on policy outcomes and the co-existence of multiple meanings and interpretations. Clearly then, the climate of ideas is important in providing the necessary conditions for successful policy formation and implementation; that is, policy formation that can produce the desired outcomes. This means that any theory of the policy process must include an analysis of the climate of ideas because that will influence policy makers’ choices and also implementers’ interpretations. The design of the policy therefore, becomes a focus for inquiry and analysis, unlike early implementation studies which concentrated on the difficulties of operationalising policies without questioning their provenance.

## **2.4 Towards a Theory of Policy Design**

The previous discussion has demonstrated the need for a comprehensive and dynamic framework that admits the influence of ideas, events and perceptions on the formation of policy and on the interpretation of policy by implementers. The second part of this chapter introduces the policy design framework used in this thesis to guide research and help provide greater understanding of the policy process. It starts with a short analysis of the necessary conditions for the realisation of successful outcomes from ambitious policy making, implementation failure having inspired much of the past research in the policy arena. It then continues with an analysis of the evolution of policy design as a public policy theory and concludes with an overview of the Schneider and Ingram (S&I) framework (Schneider and Ingram 1997).

### 2.4.1 The Ambitions of Policy

From a position of critical communicative rationality, Dryzek (1990) challenges the warnings made by some theorists regarding the excessive ambition in consciously pursued public policy and the perceptions of widespread failure in its implementation. Dryzek (ibid) maintains that there is no need to eschew ambition in policy design provided that one attends to the degree of communicative rationality<sup>24</sup> in policy formation. The warnings revolve round the theory that overambitious policy can create a situation where programmes are created on behalf of citizens but not at their behest, and are supported by the existence of a weak social science base that is dispersed, incomplete and often contradictory, the ability of self-interested public officials, and the political divisions inherent in pluralist societies. The antidotes to this are perceived to be incrementalism<sup>25</sup>, privatisation or decentralisation, negative utilitarianism<sup>26</sup>, Lasswell's politics of prevention or the inevitability of broad acquiescence. According to Dryzek, all the detractors are missing the point, which is that the common pattern for failure concerns the variable conditions of policy formation, particularly with respect to critical oversight, hierarchy and imposition (where too little criticism, too much hierarchy and imposition tempt failure). These three dimensions, he believes, converge on a single crucial quality: the openness of discourse about policy:

Designed public policies require the backing of both empirical and normative theory. Empirical theory concerns the effects of policy and normative theory the worth of such effects and the processes through which they are produced (in terms of interests and values met, violated, promoted, obstructed, or ignored). Policy debates, and hence policy design, involve communication about both kinds of theory (ibid, p142).

Dryzek (ibid) identifies four categories of society from a comparison of their openness in both empirical and normative dimensions (see Fig.2.1 below). A society that is closed in both dimensions is authoritarian and risks policy disaster. The 'open' society (normatively closed but empirically open) is a victory for instrumental rationality, policy design pursuing uninformed ends (relativist). The society of 'good intent' is open normatively, enabling free

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<sup>24</sup> Uncoerced and undistorted interaction among competent individuals (Dryzek 1990, p12).

<sup>25</sup> For example Popper's 'piecemeal social engineering' (Parsons 1995).

<sup>26</sup> The restriction of public policy to those elements common to all members of society (Parsons 1995).



discussion about elements of policy but neglecting the empirical dimension, resulting in unanticipated outcomes, while the model of practical reason epitomised by both empirical and normative openness suggests a mode of politics that is discursive, democratic and participatory. The objective of policy design, therefore, is to be discursive, requiring participation of the ‘objects’ of design in a broader public validation of the policy. It thereby inevitably becomes political.

		Communication over empirical claims	
		Closed	Open
Communication over normative claims	Closed	A	B
	Open	C	D

**Figure 2.1 The conditions of policy communications**

Source: (Dryzek 1990, p143)

### 2.4.2 The Evolution of Policy Design

Attention to the design of policy instruments is not a new concept, being proposed in the early 1950’s by Dahl and Lindblom (1953). The evaluative criteria they proposed reflected a preoccupation with democracy, underpinned by the values of freedom, rationality, political equality, and subjective equality. Lowi (1964) was the first to develop a typology of policy designs (distributive, regulatory, redistributive, constituent), but, while this was theoretically useful, caused empirical problems when attempts were made to fit policies into the categories. Two other contributions from the early 1980’s that have been significant for policy design are those of Steinberger (1980) and Simon (1981). The former was largely overlooked when he argued that the effects of policies depend on the meanings and interpretations attached to policies by citizens, while the latter was an early pioneer of design science, concerned with design by intentional choice (Schneider and Ingram 1997). Since then policy design has developed in two ways, maintaining a distinction between

rational, positivist modes of inquiry, and critical epistemologies (Bobrow and Dryzek 1987). Both have roots in the intentional and purposeful actions of human beings, the designs of legislation, programmes and practices all being created through dynamic processes involving characteristics of the context, human decision-making and human agency. On the one hand a design perspective seeking greater conceptual rigour was taken up in the late 1980's by Linder and Peters (1987; 1988) in response to the stagnation of the implementation agenda. On the other, Bobrow and Dryzek (1987) pursued a critical discourse in their move from the philosophy of inquiry to a philosophy of design as an extension of Dryzek's work to make intelligent use of the plethora of analytical frameworks in policy analysis.

Linder and Peters are representative of Goggin's (1990) 3<sup>rd</sup> generation cohort of implementation theorists, grappling with the theoretical vacuum felt to exist in the mid-1980's. According to them, the 'art and craft' of implementation research (Wildavsky 1980) should follow the earlier exhortations of Alice Rivlin (1971) to focus on new approaches and more systematic thinking in social research. They critique the design of public policy from both formulation and implementation perspectives, rejecting the view that policy failure should be ascribed to the politics/administration dichotomy. Rather, design problems call for good ideas about what the problem is and how best to deal with it. Uncertainty is concentrated around the choice of policy instruments and the subsequent fit of instruments to the policy context. They advocate greater attention being paid to the selection of goals, and the mechanisms for attaining them.

In defining design, Linder and Peters (1988) clarify its meaning in terms of four different perspectives: 1) as an artifact of the formative influence of systems analysis on policy inquiry; 2) as a metaphor for instrumental reasoning; 3) as a symbolic expression of optimal solutions to well-defined problems; and 4) as the creative resolution of a problem or at least the outcome of a creative process, implying careful consideration of problem definitions. They acknowledge the recent vintage of policy design as an ideological approach, and as alien to conventional views of policy-making. They do, however, reject any notion of design as centralising and monocratic because of its organisational



implications, or inherently synoptic or incremental, as it is allied to neither centralized planning nor market mechanisms. It is intended to enrich rather than supplant the working of the policy process, preceding the formulation of alternatives, and returning some institutional and structural analysis to the study of policy:

As an approach to research a design perspective offers a way of uncovering the instrumental goals of government action, and shedding light on the rapidly changing nature of government purposes and instruments...[it] can also serve as a unifying thread linking together disparate policy contents and political configurations (Linder and Peters 1988, p745).

Adopting a more critical approach, Bobrow and Dryzek (1987) define design as the creation of an actionable form to promote valued outcomes in a particular context, and distinguish three central elements: values, context, and the creation of form (content and process of policy). A consensus on values must occur somewhere in the policy process, and relevant values need to be formulated in an operational and socially comprehensible form. Thus, some means for coping with unstable and conflicting goals is required. The success or failure of any designed policy depends crucially on context: the milieu or external policy environment within which policy will take effect; and the policy process within which designers and others are pursuing the adoption and implementation of policies. Selecting the appropriate approach addresses the relevant values and factors that, given the context, create the form of the policy and determine policy results. This means that the approach must be amenable to contextually appropriate reasoning about the impact, adoption, and implementation of policy alternatives.

Bobrow and Dryzek (1987) argue that the process of policy design is not mechanical and linear, but rather a recursive process, necessitated by conflicting values and perspectives, instability and weak control. These are the realities of the policy process, realities that will not necessarily respond to the vague and conflicting exhortations of generations of policy analysts. Policy design as described above is intended to be *catalytic* rather than *authoritative*, and speaks to all those involved in the policy process. Instead of routinely applying a particular frame or 'lens' to any policy problem or situation, these should be used in a practical and creative way to improve the quality of debate within the policy

arena. Summing up the approach, Bobrow and Dryzek (ibid) recommend a move from the philosophy of inquiry to a philosophy of design, a move that would enable frames to be used intelligently, and epistemological stalemate avoided ... “Policy design ... involves the pursuit of valued outcomes through activities sensitive to the context of time and place. These activities revolve around factors that can be affected by the volitions of human beings” (ibid, p19).

## **2.5 The Schneider and Ingram Model**

### **2.5.1 Introducing the model**

The purpose of this last section is to introduce the policy design thesis proposed by Schneider and Ingram (1997) (S&I), to show how its central elements can provide a robust conceptual and theoretical framework with which to address the research questions posed by the study. Implementation approaches are insufficient for this purpose, lacking the causal determinants necessary to provide such a framework. The S&I approach provides a causal theory and analysis linking policy design, as the dependent variable, to the social constructions, power, institutional characteristics and behavioural dynamics (independent variables) found in the policy making history and context. Together these construct the policy characteristics that, as independent variables, will ultimately determine the outcomes of the policy making process. Unlike other conceptualisations, this approach effectively provides the elusive link between the normative and empirical elements of the policy process. S&I draw heavily on critical theory in developing their approach, focusing specifically on social constructions as an important and underdeveloped aspect of policy analysis.

The central theme of S&I’s thesis is that the content of public policy contained within policy designs are strongly implicated in what they perceive as the current crisis of democracy. Designed from the standpoint of American politics, criticisms of government



centre round *governance*<sup>27</sup>, which S&I describe as ... “the capacity of a democracy to produce public policy that meets the expectations of society” (Schneider and Ingram 1997, p4). Governance takes place in a multi-actor environment involving interest groups in the public and private spheres who interact in ways that are likely to exclude certain elements of the population from agenda setting and policy formulation, thereby compromising democracy. It is the contention of the authors that policies are produced through a dynamic historical process that may involve the social construction of knowledge, the social construction of target populations, power relationships, and institutions. Policies are imprinted with the context from which they emerge, and are conveyed to the public through messages, interpretations and experiences. Thus, issues and target populations can be strategically manipulated through policy design, the characterisations applied to them becoming embedded in the design itself. If a policy is dysfunctional, its characteristics are often carried forward in subsequent policies ... “policy designs are a product of their historical context, but they also create a subsequent context with its own form of politics from which the next round of public policy will ensue” (Schneider and Ingram 1997, p6).

Using S&I’s model of policy design as the conceptual framework for this study, it is suggested that sustainability in rural land use existed in the context of CAP reform as a contested concept, its form being largely absent from the texts of policy documents and its meaning being mediated by the standpoint of actors in the policy process. The introduction of the RDR/ERDP provided the impetus for a coalescence of differing perceptions around a consensus, the language of SRD lending credibility to the prescriptions of the new policies. Thus, SRD was socially constructed through the RDR and the ERDP to provide meanings of sustainability to audiences, including target populations and implementers, these meanings being interpreted and mediated by those populations according to their differing perceptions. This process has implications for outcomes, as different interpretations carry different connotations of ‘success’ or ‘failure’. The study concentrates research on the language or discourses of RD in the policy context, and those contained within policy

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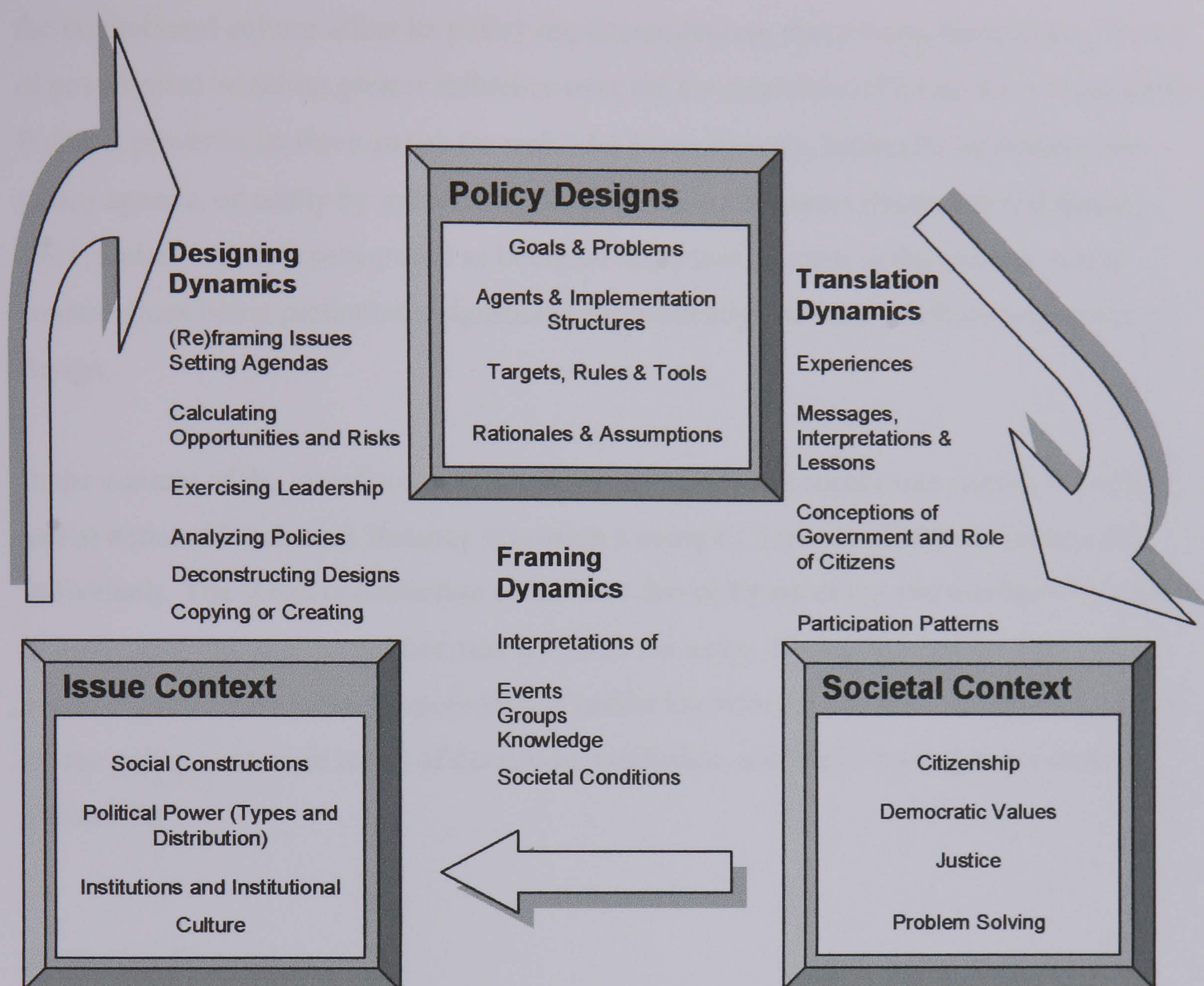
<sup>27</sup> Governance has slightly different connotations in UK literature *e.g.* Marsden and Murdoch (1998) use it to refer to a transformation in the patterns and processes of governing focusing on the interdependence of governmental and non-governmental forces in meeting economic and social challenges.

documents and other related texts. It then compares these with the interpretations of sustainability operationalised through working practices and implementation structures, to assess the extent to which the discourses underpinning policy statements are representative of a wider consensus and what the effects are likely to be on outcomes. Simply put, what sort of sustainability is likely to be delivered through the RD of the RDR/ERDP?

### **2.5.2 Operationalising the model**

S&I contend that the failure of other research to contribute much to the development of a theory of policy design when attempting to characterise the relative advantages of various types of design, can be attributed to the absence of an overarching framework within which to situate studies. They address this deficiency in their own approach by: 1) situating the concept of policy design within a causal model that emphasises the political and translation processes through which effects on democracy are realised; and 2) by providing a comprehensive set of empirical elements found in all public policy designs and whose dimensions reflect the theoretically interesting characteristics of designs (see Fig.2.2 over). This study does not attempt to explore all elements of this model. Indeed, to do so would be to dilute the data by excessively broadening the scope, thereby risking the trap of inconclusive relativism. Rather, it uses those elements that contribute to an understanding of the policy process in the context of the research questions. To do this, the model has been adapted to reflect the context of implementing an EU regulation, substituting the ‘societal context’ of the original with the broader CAP reform context, and the ‘issue context’ with the narrower context of UK policy making. Research concentrates on these two contexts, the linking dynamics (framing, designing and translation) and four elements of the design of the ERDP (rather than the five identified by Schneider and Ingram): *rationales and assumption; goals and problems; rules; and agents and implementing structures*. This allows the study to focus closely on the normative/empirical problems associated with the implementation of what is, essentially, an ‘idea in good currency’ (see Fig.2.3, p64).





**Figure 2.2 The Policy Design Model**

Source: (Schneider and Ingram 1997, p74)

### ***Framing Dynamics***

The model (see Fig.2.2) shows how issues arise from the general societal context, the 'soup' or 'climate' of ideas identified above (Kingdon 1984; Majone 1992) (Schon 1971), and are mediated and interpreted by events and groups. This 'framing' process is carried out within and between organisations and institutions, involving a wide range of elected and non-elected officials, media, government departments and agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGO's), influential individuals and social groups. The values and norms of



the institutional culture affect its policy recommendations, those institutions having the ear of government wielding greater influence over the constructions of issues for consideration. Political power in its three guises (to make decisions directly, indirectly by shaping the policy agenda, or subtly by influencing the perceptions of others (Bachrach and Baratz 1961; Lukes 1974)) is recognised as being an important element in the process, social constructions being particularly significant for indirectly and subtly influencing policy design.

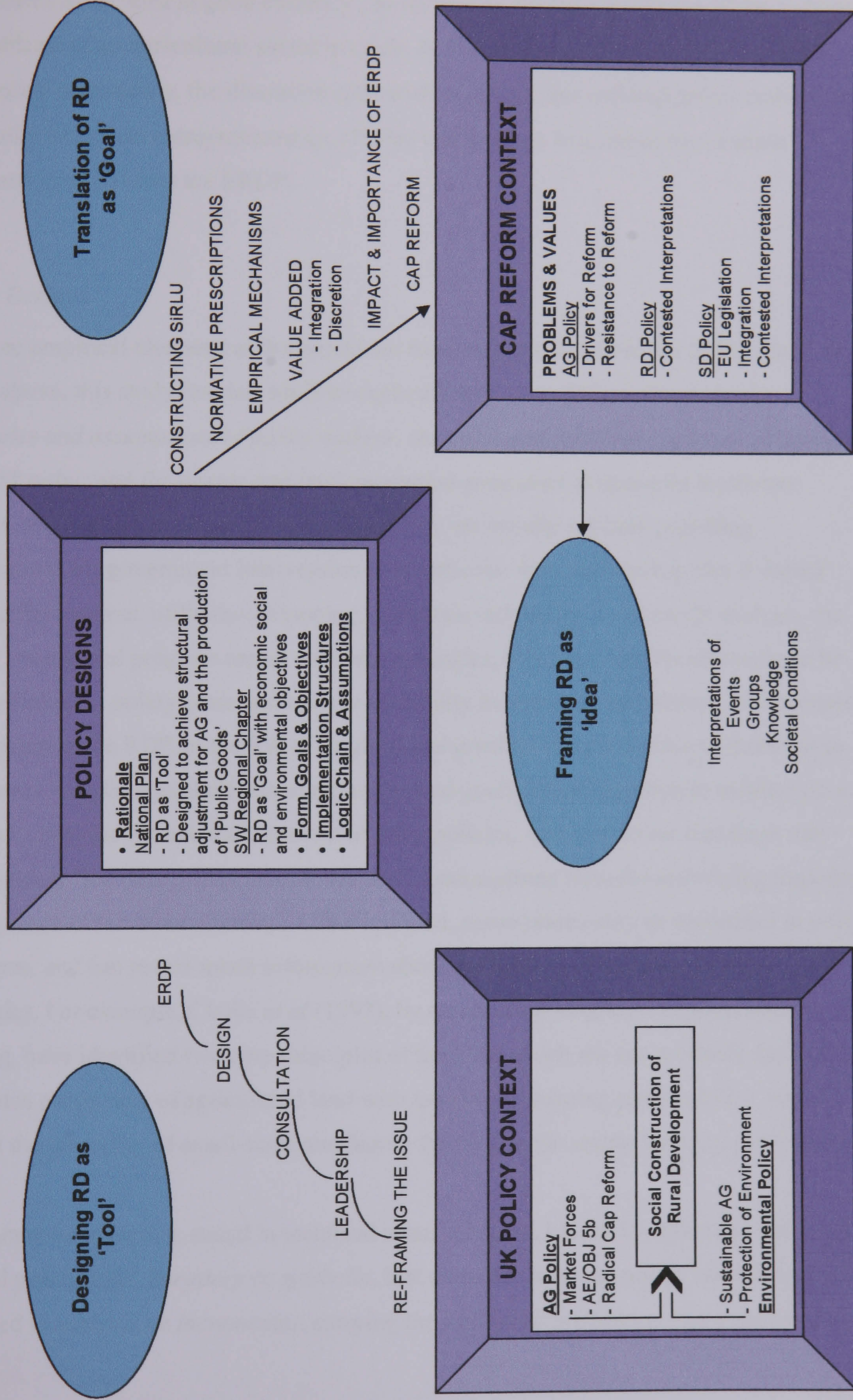
In the context of the introduction of the RDR, this framing process was carried out at EU and at national level, each instance involving a complex network of interest groups and individuals. The social construction of RD was driven by necessity and mediated by values in both cases although in neither case are these the same. The point made by S&I is that social constructions (of target populations and/or knowledge) can have deleterious effects on the policy context in terms of deception, confusion, and the discouragement of active citizenship.

### ***Designing Dynamics***

S&I recognise that social construction is a dynamic process, and that both the issue context and the societal conditions are likely to change during the designing process. Social constructions take place at all levels, often involving the re-framing of the issue to suit the changed context. The changed context in this instance is the shift from supra-national to national level in the implementation of the RDR, where Member State governments have the discretion to apply their own interpretation of the policy within the parameters staked out by the EC. Designing reflects the link between the interaction of contextual characteristics, design choices, and human entrepreneurship. In this process, designers will be looking for ways of maximising political opportunities, and minimising risk. It is here that the creation of needs and issues through the social constructions of events and groups plays a central role in the politics of power. Thus the concept of RD is picked up by the UK



Figure 2.3 The CAP Reform model of policy design





government as an ‘idea in good currency’, to be used to advance its agenda while ‘solving’ the problems of an agricultural sector in crisis. In this process, the characteristics of the rural policy community, the discretion allocated to, and by, the national policy makers, and the quality of human entrepreneurship, all play crucial parts in embedding a certain construction of RD into the ERDP.

### ***Policy Designs***

The core empirical elements of the model are those that reside within the policy itself. As stated above, this study restricts itself to exploration of four of these elements: *the rationales and assumptions of policy makers; the goals and problems; rules (in relation to the RDR only); and the agents and implementation structures*. **Rationales** legitimate designs, linking design elements to context. They are usually explicit, providing explanations for government intervention in a particular form and stating why it should work. Effectiveness, utilitarian reasoning, economic rationality, cost/benefit analysis, the public interest and progress are all common rationales. It is important for rationales to be closely linked to policy goals and to have credibility in terms of expectations of outcomes. Implementing the RDR in the SW of England has involved the production of three policy statements with their explicit sets of rationales and goals. With discretion to mediate (to a certain extent) the form and the content of these policies, it is easy to see that these may differ widely from one policy level to another. **Assumptions** form the underlying logic that makes sense of the other elements. Often unstated, assumptions may be embedded in policy discourse, and can reveal much information about the issue context and designing dynamics. For example, Clarke *et al* (1997), by scrutinising long-term patterns of decision making, have identified two core principles of the CAP which are not precisely defined: to guarantee occupancy of agricultural land with the aim of ensuring rural stability; and to uphold the centrality of small-scale and family farming to the restructuring of rural space.

**Goals** may be *objective*, stated in technical terms, *obscure*, hidden by rationales that mask the real policy aims, *hortatory* or *symbolic*, that overstate what the policy can reasonably be expected to achieve, or *incremental*, carrying the imprint of previous policy histories. Goals



should relate to current perceptions of problems that are relevant to the target population, and they should be structured credibly so that a link can be found between them and policy outcomes. As stated briefly above in relation to rationales, the goals of the RDR are scattered between three policy statements in the case of implementing the regulation in SW England, so that tracing links between them becomes a challenge for policy analysts. This brings into sharp focus the normative/empirical problem identified in Chapter 1; that the explicit and implicit goals of policy can rarely be easily translated into the desired outcomes. Implementers must deliver verifiable results, and to do this they need clearly stated goals. An exploration of the way this is achieved in implementing the RDR in SW England is an objective of this research.

The **rules** of a policy have important implications for democracy, the latter depending on the degree of openness, inclusivity and flexibility within the policy design. It is important for public policies to be able to demonstrate control over the way money is spent, but strict rules foster a less positive experience with policy, according to S&I, damaging people's perception of the policy and their future participation.

The **implementation structures** of a policy denote the relationship between targets and the agents of implementation. Having excluded the target groups as being beyond the scope of this study, the implementation structures will refer here to the relationships between implementing agents *i.e.* those vertically from national to sub-regional levels and horizontally across a spectrum of agencies and interest groups. S&I refer to implementation as *value added to design*, using this designation in terms of the discretion used by agents to effect changes of any sort to the basic blueprint of the policy. Policy implementation is measured by the difference between the blueprint and that enacted by agents at different levels in the policy process. S&I identify four different patterns of allocating discretion, ranging from 'Strong Statutes' that place finite limits on implementers, through 'Wilsonian' and 'Grassroots' patterns that successively allocate greater discretion, to 'Consensus-building' designs, intended to support the participation of agents and targets in decision-making functions. Implementation structures may be constrained by resource allocation in addition to discretion, resulting in inequities in the distribution of inadequate

funds. The discretion allowed to Member States in some areas of implementation of the RDR is novel within the context of the CAP. In turn, Member State governments are expected by the EC to consult widely in their national domains during the implementation process. Consultation can, however, be a number of quite different things, from a ‘cosmetic’ exercise carried out for compliance with rules, to an inclusive and iterative process that gives voice to bottom-up interests in the policy process. Thus, in every instance, it is a *political* process, and exploration of this aspect of implementation provides crucial insight into the hidden assumptions and constraints of policy makers.

### ***Translation dynamics***

The language and symbolism of the policy design contain messages, and the meanings and interpretations of these messages shape not only the resulting participation patterns, but also the value added through the actions of implementing agents. These policy experiences, combined with the perception of their role in conjunction with that of government, teach people what to expect from politics and policy-making, and contribute to learning about policy. By exploring the translation of policy through its implementing mechanisms it is possible to define how normative statements are transformed into action and whether, in the process, the objectives of policy makers are being achieved. The beliefs and perceptions of implementers and interest groups are important in this process because their voices will contribute to a new generation of policy making through policy learning.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The first part of this chapter showed how public policy analysis has evolved from its problem-solving, rational beginnings through new discourses of critical, interpretive and constructionist approaches, to its present status as a complex process, linked to the values of policy makers, rooted in the context from which it arose, and having consequences for the future context. Critical approaches have shown how problems are constructed and power exercised in agenda-setting. They also show how policy learning occurs through the framing and reframing of these problems. Social construction requires a critical stance from



policy analysts, but this approach is inconsistent with the dominant policy traditions of Western democracies. A critical approach has also shown the importance of ideas in the policy process as opposed to the pursuit of knowledge in politics, the flow of ideas contributing to and helping define the climate of policy making. Policy making is further defined by some critical theorists as moving forward incrementally rather than making radical progress, new policies indirectly reinforcing the *status quo* at the policy core. Others believe that the ambitions of policy can be met provided that both normative and empirical elements are included in a discursive policy environment involving the participation of a wide policy community.

The discussion concludes that a critical approach is crucial to understanding the complex and murky reality (Richardson and Jordan 1979) that is the policy process. Policy design is an approach rooted in critical theory, which focuses on the values, context and form of the policy being implemented. It is catalytic and sensitive to human volition, helping to link the normative and empirical elements of the policy process in this study through an exploration of the social constructions of RD, an analysis of the policy design and an evaluation of the translation (words and deeds) of the ERDP by implementers.

## Chapter 3 Conceptualising Sustainability in Rural Land Use

### 3.1 Introduction

The model of policy design used as a framework for this thesis emphasises the importance of context in the formulation and analysis of policies ... “Policies fit into contexts. What may be an excellent design in one context, may well serve poorly in another” (Schneider and Ingram 1997, p3). The arguments in Chapter 2 support this view. The context of this thesis is that of rural policy making, sustainability and CAP reform at European, national (England) and regional levels, in which a number of terms have become part of the common parlance, for example ‘rural development’ (RD), ‘sustainable rural development’ (SRD), ‘integrated rural development’ (IRD), and ‘sustainable integrated rural development’ (SIRD). The research questions posed in Chapter 1 focus on sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU) as the term that should be examined and explored. This, however, is problematic in as far as it is not conceptualised as such within the texts, documents and critiques associated with CAP reform. In addition, the words are difficult to reconcile in a meaningful way when the phrase is deconstructed, the concepts of ‘sustainability’<sup>28</sup> and ‘rural’<sup>29</sup> being contested in a number of ways and ‘land use’ being more often associated with planning issues. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to construct some basic tenets for SiRLU in the context of implementing the RDR.

It is proposed to do this in the first instance by exploring the contested concept of sustainable development (SD) as the basis of most subsequent conceptualisations of RD, and to expose its theoretical and practical strengths and weaknesses. The analysis then shifts to examine, through the lens of CAP reform discourses, the evolution of RD and associated terms as concepts that implicitly embody SiRLU. The link between RD and

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<sup>28</sup> “while the *concept* of sustainable development...is widely endorsed, appropriate *conceptions*, which include the principles to be applied in the real world, remain in profound dispute” (*emphasis in the original*) (Owens and Cowell 2001, p171).

<sup>29</sup> “...there are many rurals and a multiplicity of meanings of the term rurality” (Pratt, 1996 quoted in Franklin 2000, p1).



SiRLU is important to this study for two reasons: 1) the RDR is promoted in its rhetoric as a policy that will contribute towards achieving sustainable, integrated, rural development (SIRD), but this may not necessarily be the same as SiRLU; and 2) it will provide a benchmark against which to compare the various interpretations of RD and SD found at different policy levels in the implementation of the regulation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of IRD prescriptions to establish the basic tenets of SiRLU for this thesis.

### 3.2 Sustainability

‘Sustainability’ has become a popular shorthand version of the more complex and contested ‘SD’. The latter, endorsed as a credible strategy to guide future global development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED – the ‘Earth Summit’) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, enshrined the principles of intergenerational equity (implying the development rights of the poor) and the ecological limits of environmental capacity, agreed by the so-called Brundtland Commission<sup>30</sup> (Pepper 1996). The clear ambiguity of the concept is regarded by some as a potential strength, because it can be interpreted in different ways, offering the possibility of reconciling divergent views and making the term amenable to different interests (Baldock *et al.* 1996; Carvalho 2001). It has also provided a shared language for the environmental agenda (Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Myers and Macnaghten 1998). Indeed, it is a persuasive notion that somehow development can be made sustainable; an idea whose ‘time has come’, a new ‘philosophers stone’ for a world of increasing uncertainty (Murdoch and Clark 1994). As an ethico-political concept (Langhelle 2000) the term has proved very useful for policy-makers in conscious efforts to achieve social change (Rydin 1999), the linguistic characteristics of policy providing crucial insights into the normative position of governments in relation to the sustainability debate (*ibid.*). Langhelle (2000, p304) quotes Dryzek (1997) ... “language matters...and the way we construct, interpret, discuss and analyse environmental problems has all kinds of consequences”. Rydin (1999, p476) is more specific about the influence of language:

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<sup>30</sup> ... “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987).

[I]t can alter perceptions of interests and issues; it can define the object of policy attention; it can promote particular policy agendas; it can shape the nature of communication between actors; it can cement coalitions or differences between actors; and it can be diversionary, resulting in a form of symbolic politics.

Others, however, believe the concept is dichotomous and misleading, combining competing objectives in what has been described as an unresolved cultural oxymoron<sup>31</sup> (Myerson and Rydin 1994). This has led to the validity of its language and interpretation being contested, the inherent dualism of the term being identified as its greatest weakness. The last decade or so has witnessed a great deal of interest in the concept from academics and commentators because of the difficulties it has created for policy makers when attempting to translate its goals and purposes into concrete policy directives (Whatmore and Boucher 1993; Murdoch 1994; Bowers 1995; Munton 1997; Robinson 1997; Rydin 1999; Langhelle 2000; Carvalho 2001; Chatterton and Style 2001; Owens and Cowell 2001; Giddings *et al.* 2002). The tensions within the term are often inadequately recognised in policies promoting sustainability, in spite of the fact that SD as an attainable goal is now enshrined in many articles of US and EU legislation (Robinson 1997). Munton (1997) identifies the issue of translating essentially global concerns into meaningful local action as central to arguments over nature-society relations, which are at the core of SD. He believes, however, that it is unhelpful to dwell on the indeterminacy of the term, but rather it is preferable to:

examine the justification, constitution and implementation of programmes of action, and to acknowledge that sustainable development 'is not so much an idea but a convoy of ideas' (British Government Panel on Sustainable Development, 1995, p1) that has to be fed into individual life styles and the decisions of interest groups, business and governments, than to reject the claims of sustainable development because of the definitional problems they pose for 'rational' analysis (ibid, p13).

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<sup>31</sup> A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction (Pearsall and Trumble 1996).



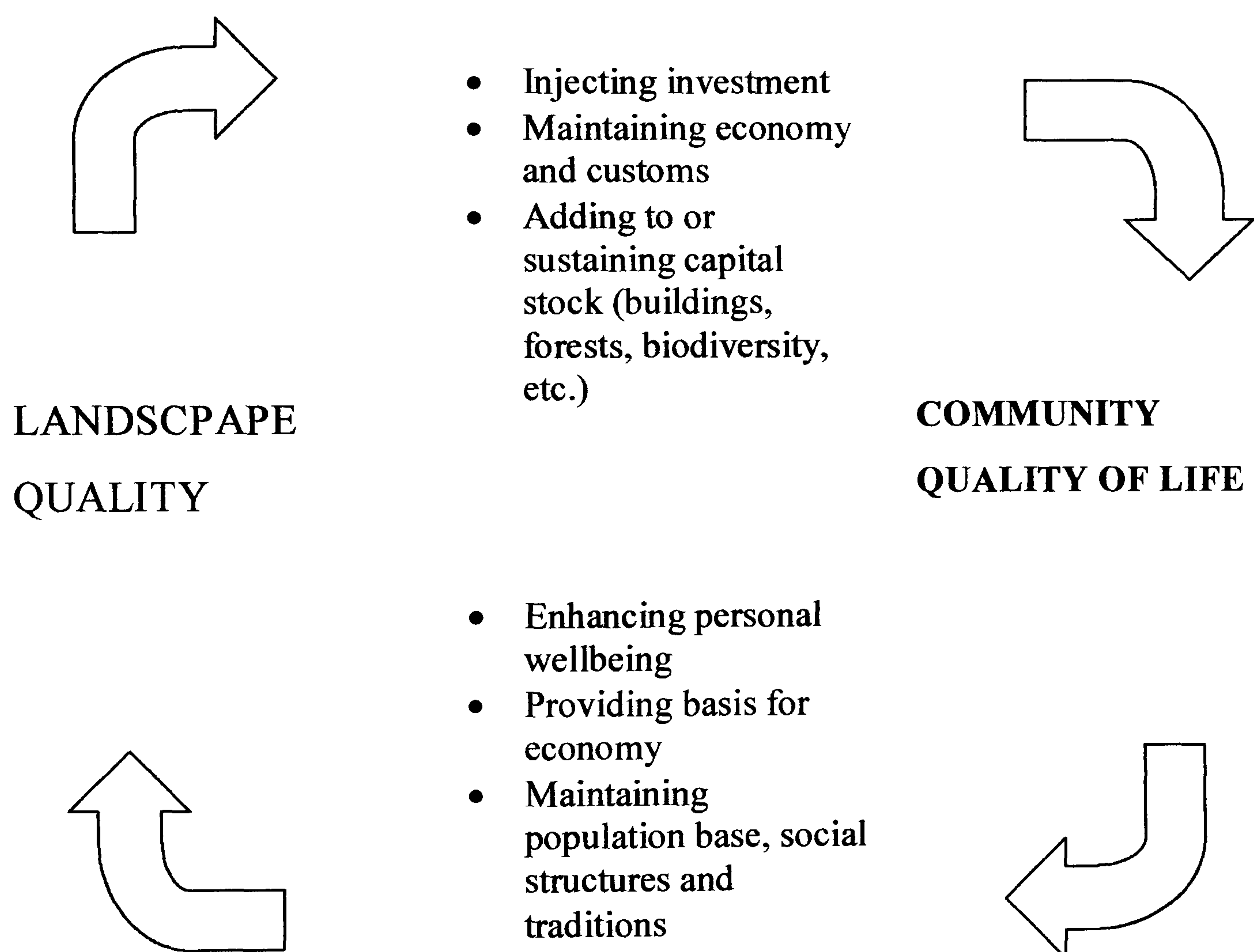
Some commentators have found their way round the problems briefly described above by utilising alternative terms, thereby avoiding the duality of meaning (Gibbs *et al.* 1998). For example, ‘sustainability’, in which some sort of continuation is implicit, is often substituted for sustainable development, or used in conjunction with one dimension or another (economic sustainability etc.) as descriptive and analytic categories. Davidson (2000, p30) interprets sustainability as ... “the normative goal which sets the parameters for sustainable economic development”, using ‘economic’ to precisely define the concept as something different from the original. The plethora of interpretations of sustainability range across a ‘spectrum’, depending on the extent to which the concept is perceived as a *reformist* approach or a *radical* ideology (Dobson 1990; Chatterton and Style 2001). Defined by O’Riordan (1989) as either *ecocentric* (ecology-based morality) or *technocentric* (non-radical economo-environmental solutions) (Pepper 1996), the two positions are now generally regarded respectively as either normatively ‘strong’, or normatively ‘weak’ (Jacobs 1995; Redclift and Woodgate 1997). The former adheres to the notion of environmental limits and the carrying capacity of ecosystems, while the latter revolves round the notion of ‘trade-offs’ between environmental conservation and the pressures of growth. These different views have significant implications for the sort of sustainability implemented through policies and programmes, governments and business usually occupying a conservative (weak) standpoint (Davidson 2000). They can be represented by four broad conceptualisations of SD.

### 3.2.1 Conceptualisations of SD

#### *The Virtuous Circle*

The so-called ‘virtuous circle’ has become part of the core philosophy of SD, conflating environmental well-being with improved growth, employment and quality of life (see Fig.3.1 over). Based on the discourse of ‘capitals’ (natural, human, social, manufactured, financial), the idea of environment is used to establish claims in support of a representation of the countryside as ‘wealth’. The value of the environment is calculated by the ‘enoughness’ of these capitals (Selman and Wragg 2002). The arguments in terms of ‘valued environmental qualities’ which require financial subvention to maintain, and

‘environment as an important economic and employment sector in its own right’, align environment with economy in a ‘win-win’ scenario, a discourse established by the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 (Adams 1990) that has become increasingly popular with policy-makers and influencers during the 1990’s as sustainable development has been incorporated into national policy. This discourse has formed an important part of environmental rhetoric, for wealth creation, deriving from economic growth and backed by political legitimacy as the antithesis of scarcity, has always been regarded as a ‘good thing’ by governments and citizens alike (Redclift and Woodgate 1997).



**Figure 3.1 The Virtuous Circle**

Source: (Selman and Wragg 2002)

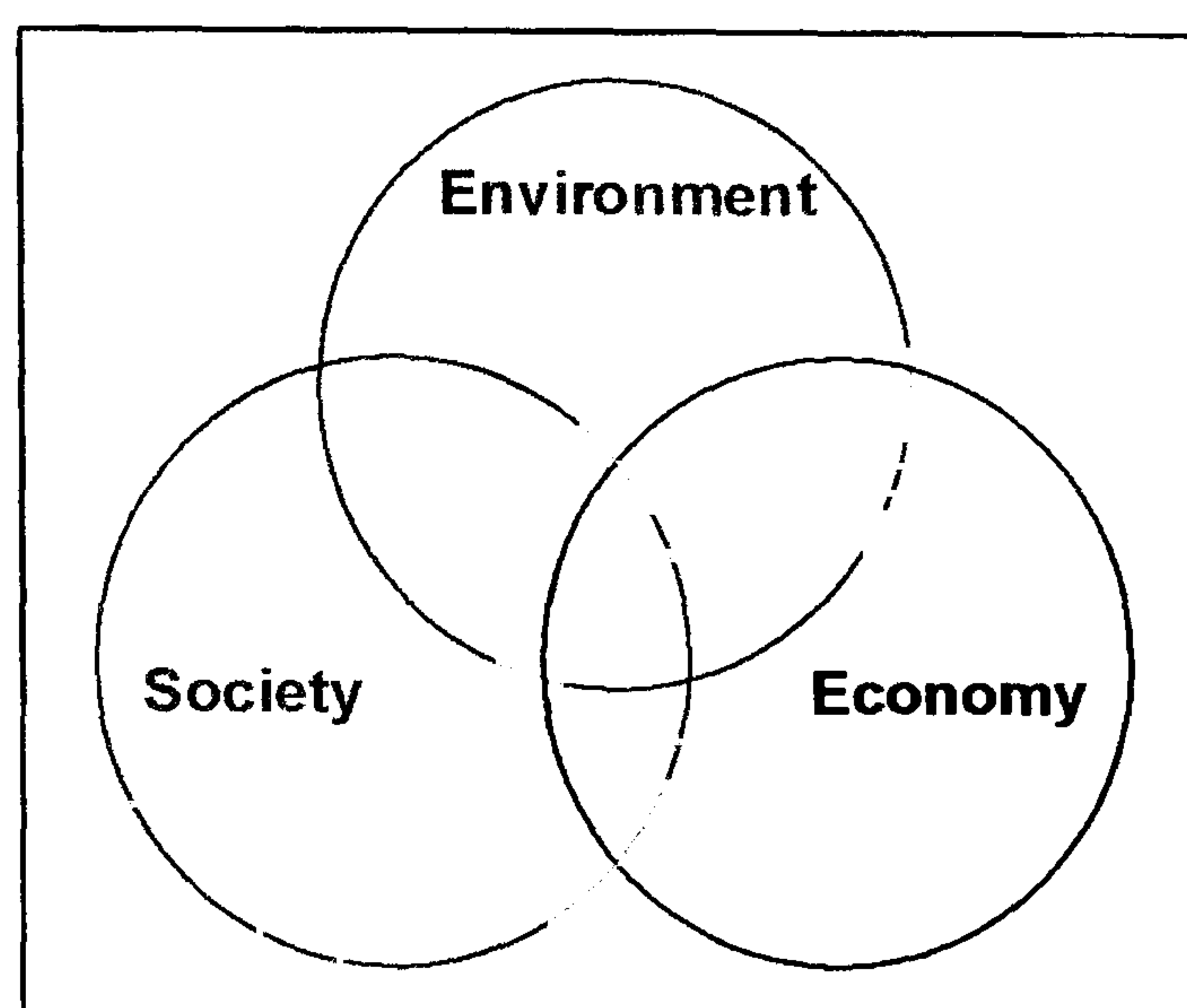


However, Selman (2002) believes these discourses pose a risk that the environment will only be valued for its instrumental worth, resulting in ‘weak’ versions of sustainability centring on ‘development’ rather than ‘sustainable’. These weak versions may include conceptualisations like ecological modernisation, in which economic growth can be adapted to meet environmental goals by adopting a synergy between the two where conflict previously existed (Redclift and Woodgate 1997; Langhelle 2000).

### ***The Balancing Model***

The inclusion of social and economic goals with environmental ones in formulations of sustainable development after Rio, and the common view that these must be somehow ‘balanced’, has given rise to a simplified model of sustainability; one that has become ubiquitous in the rhetoric of policy in various forms because it can be easily understood. The ‘triple bottom line’ approach has been championed by the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, and it uses financial accounting terminology to represent the three elements of sustainability as items on a balance sheet. The logical consequence of the representation is that the triple bottom line will eventually become one, but no single currency has yet been identified in which to express the final outcome (Sustainable Development Commission 2001). Another representation of this model portrays sustainability as three equal sized rings in a symmetrical interconnection (see Fig.3.2 over). This implies that the sectors (environmental, social, and economic) are separate from each other, and that they are all of equal size, and therefore importance. The problem with these conceptualisations is that the assumed autonomy of the sectors encourages a compartmentalised approach to the tackling of sustainability issues, underplaying the interconnectedness of the three. It also encourages the assumption that trade-offs can be made between the three, in line with the ‘weak’ version of sustainability (Giddings *et al.* 2002).

This approach to sustainable development has become institutionalised and is used in discourse and text to conceal the underlying complexity of the issues involved in sustainable development, such as the nature of society and whose values are employed. But there are many different economies, environments and societies at different spatial scales, with different values and constraints dominating at different levels (Cocklin *et al.* 1997).



**Figure 3.2 The Balancing Model of Sustainable Development**

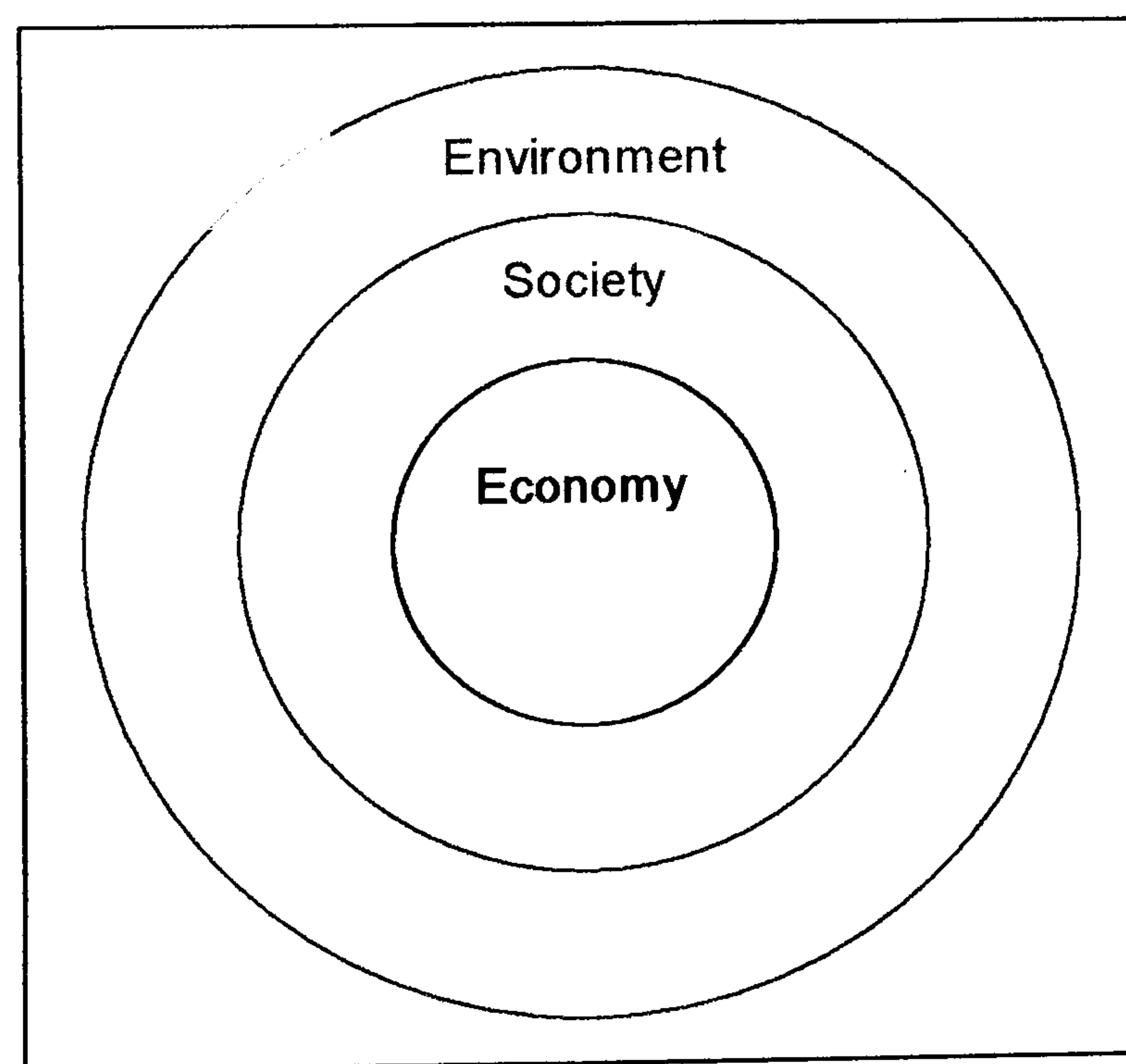
Source: (Giddings *et al.* 2002)

To ignore these in favour of three unified wholes is to risk losing the diversity inherent in human sustainability (Giddings *et al.* 2002). On the other hand, it is quite useful for governments because it encourages technical solutions to problems that are easy to monitor and evaluate, and which do not require such examination of the core of sustainability as the nature of society, whose values are involved, and other wider social issues (Redclift and Woodgate 1997; Giddings *et al.* 2002). This means that management of the environment must translate normative environmental goals, and political choices into measures of performance. This implies that governments are willing to manage the transition to increased sustainability, they have the ability to do so (*i.e.* there is consensus), and environmental goals are expressed in quantitative terms (Redclift and Woodgate 1997).



### ***The Russian Doll Model***

The ‘Russian Doll’ model of SD is proposed as a slightly more accurate presentation of the relationship between the three elements than the Balancing Model by making the concentric circles fit one inside the other, the economy ‘nested’ inside society and the environment (see Fig.3.3 below). This relies on the premise that the economy is merely a sub-set of society, which itself is wholly dependent on the environment. This suggests that the environment takes precedence over the other two sectors; an example of ‘strong’ sustainability. This is typified by the stance taken by the UK environmental lobby in response to the increasing industrialisation of agriculture throughout the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in what Winter (1996, p138) referred to as a ... “more assertive environmentalism, prepared to challenge the record of agriculture”. They claimed a small victory for ‘strong’ sustainability that has had some far-reaching effects through the birth of the concept of agri-environmentalism in the mid-1980s, arising from battles over the ploughing of tracts of land on Exmoor and in the Halvergate Marshes of Norfolk (Cox *et al.* 1986).



**Figure 3.3 The Russian Doll Model of Sustainable Development**

Source: (Giddings *et al.* 2002)

The competing interpretation of the Russian Doll model is where the economy takes precedence over environment and society, the argument being that environmental and social benefits can only devolve from a healthy economy. This argument is used extensively by farmers and farm business consultants to justify certain farming methods and public support for the industry.

### ***The Integrated Model***

The problem with the above models is that they represent the elements of sustainability (environmental, social, and economic) as unified entities, which in practice they are clearly not. Porritt (2002), looking at the inter-relationships between key policy sectors and the use of natural resources in relation to sustainable land use in the South West of England, emphasises the importance of changing the way we think about sustainable development, and the instruments we use to achieve it. Thus, instead of splitting these into ... “narrow, disconnected and often competing subsets of the whole” (ibid, p61), we should ... “begin to think much more dynamically about a more integrated and sustainable approach ....., actively seeking out convergence in terms of both policy and practice” (ibid, p62). Another conceptualisation, then, is of an integrated model, where all the elements are considered together. Fudge and Rowe (2001) propose a *governance* model to address substantial problems in achieving development which is sustainable in terms of the specialisations of individuals and organisations, the narrow quantification of performance, and market mechanisms. They propose five key principles for governance: integration, cooperation, homeostasis, subsidiarity, and synergy. Integration in this instance means:

both vertical and horizontal, in policies, plans, and programmes, of the external (natural, social, economic) environment with the internal policymaking process, and of the dimensions of time and space, values and behaviour, personal needs and institutional capacity (ibid, p1529).

Another governance conceptualisation is provided by the Sustainable Development Commission (Sustainable Development Commission 2001) as one of a number of alternative formulations of SD. It is based on the concepts of dialogue, trust, participation and democratic accountability, and promotes four themes: *rich dialogue and participation*



*in debate*; the *re-establishment of trust* between government and citizens; the *renewal of democracy* in integration at the local level; and the extension of *democratic accountability* to global institutions and corporations. This formulation does not rely on neat metaphors employing circles, triangles, pillars, legs, dolls or bottom lines. It is pragmatic in the sense that it seeks consensus through enlightenment, dialogue, and participation, and it extends the boundaries of criteria for sustainable development to the institutions and mechanisms necessarily involved in turning the normative rhetoric of the policy-making process to empirical progress in achieving the aims of policy.

### **3.2.2 Implementing SD**

Integration is the issue regarded by commentators as key to the successful implementation of sustainable development, an expression of which has been the integration of environmental protection with economic development as a guiding principle of the concept. Protection of the environment became a critical policy issue in Europe during the decade of the 1980's, and the integration of the environment with the economy and society became the goal of policy-makers by the end of the 1990's (see Appendix 3 – SD Calendar). However, the false separation of these elements in policy discourse makes their integration and implementation difficult in practice, tending to reinforce the nature/society dichotomy. Indeed, Cocklin (1997) suggests that there may be no universal theory that can achieve integration among dimensions and across spatial scales.

The SD calendar (Appendix 3) shows how the European SD agenda has reflected the ideal of integration over the past two decades, ensuring that the inclusion of environmental policy into other areas of policy is a priority for governments. However, the policy rhetoric of integration is difficult to translate into practice, partly because the ideology of constraints explicit in the SD discourse is politically unpopular, and partly because the limitations of the normative/empirical dichotomy are hard to overcome. As an example of the first, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (DoE 1994), based on the 1990 Environment White Paper (DoE 1990), was strongly influenced by the government's neo-liberal ideology. While both papers emphasise linkages between the economy and the environment, they

make it clear that environmental policies should not inhibit wealth creation or affect UK competitiveness. Reviewing the Agriculture Chapter of the Strategy, commentators observe that it does not integrate production and environment, this being merely a wish for the future, reflecting the contradictions between liberalisation and the ‘greening’ of European agricultural policy (Benson, J. 1994; Lowe and Ward 1994; Tilzey 1994).

In terms of the limitations of the normative/empirical dichotomy, several accounts argue from different perspectives. Beckerman (1994) claims, from the standpoint of welfare economics, that SD is either morally repugnant in its ‘strong’ formulation, being morally unacceptable and impractical, or logically redundant in its ‘weak’ formulation, offering nothing beyond traditional economic welfare maximisation. His main criticism is that the concept is basically flawed, mixing up the technical characteristics of a particular development path with a moral injunction to pursue it. He contends that SD should be treated as a purely technical concept, avoiding the normative injunctions that speculate on the value of particular actions. From a sociological perspective it is the normative quality of SD that makes the concept difficult intellectually (Redclift and Woodgate 1997), being both theoretical and practical in character. Redclift (ibid) argues for a widening of traditional linkages to counteract the increasing complexity of social structures, proposing that sustainability in modern societies depends not only on society/nature linkages, but also on those between institutions and specialized social actors. Thus:

[S]ustainability as a policy goal (rather than as a characteristic of ecological systems) means maintaining the links between individuals, their livelihoods and lifestyles, and the social institutions which condition the natural, economic and policy environments. It is these environments which provide the backdrop to social action and influence the development of social choices... (ibid, p67).

This implies the need for greater openness between governments and citizens in the formulation and implementation of policy, requiring the former to ensure that policy is created in an environment of informed consensus with clear links established between intentions and outcomes. An example of this can be seen in the research carried out by Winter and Gaskell (Winter, M. and Gaskell 1998) into the environmental effects of the 1992 CAP reforms in Great Britain. Their conclusion was that in spite of the rhetoric of



environmental integration, environmental benefits resulting from the reform were negligible, the goals being too vague and the mechanisms for delivery being inadequate.

### **3.2.3 Summing up Sustainability**

This analysis of the different ways that sustainability is articulated has shown that the most common interpretations use the term in positive ways to support certain positions. The constraints inherent in the original phrase of ‘sustainable development’ are lacking in all conceptualisations with the exception of the Russian Doll model where this is used to denote the environment as the largest doll. It has also shown that integrating the elements of sustainability, popularly understood as underpinning the concept is difficult in practice, the normative rhetoric of policy claiming potential outcomes that cannot be achieved. The elements of SD are implied in most prescriptions of RD; thus these findings have important implications for this thesis in terms of the way that ‘sustainability’ is constructed and translated in relation to CAP reform and the implementation of the RDR/ERDP. Policy design provides the means for identifying these constructions through the ‘framing’ and ‘translation dynamics’ elements of the framework.

## **3.3 Rural Development**

As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, this thesis examines SiRLU as a concept because it captures the idea of a holistic approach to land management. It cannot be found in texts as such, but is implied in the RDR by the various versions of rural development (RD) that seek to promote the idea of a more ‘sustainable’ mode of development than that currently being employed in the agricultural sector. In the lexicon of European policy making, RD has been around for quite a while, as opposed to England, where it has arguably only been adopted as an important concept with the introduction of the Agenda 2000 proposals. The second part of this chapter explores the roots/routes of RD as a more sustainable alternative to the productivist ethos of the CAP, finally identifying those elements of its prescription that would be likely to promote SiRLU.

### 3.3.1 Integrated Rural Development

As a political concept ‘rural development’ is seldom used on its own. In much the same way as SD has been adapted to suit different situations, RD is often linked to other descriptors such as ‘sustainable’ or ‘integrated’ to reinforce the implication of a ‘more sustainable’ model of development. This exploration, then, focuses on the ‘idea’ of RD, using IRD as a common denominator because this appears to be the most oft-used version of the concept and one which has resonance in both European and UK rural policy history.

#### *IRD in Europe*

IRD in Europe had begun with the creation of the ERDF in the mid-1970s. The concept started to take on a new significance within the European rural policy arena at the end of the 1980s in response to two broad concerns: a desire on the one hand to reduce regional disparities and improve cohesion across the EU by supporting disadvantaged areas; and on the other to mitigate the effects of a decade of unrelieved crisis in the CAP. In 1988 the Commission published *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC 1988), in which it acknowledged that agriculture could no longer be considered as the sole focus for European Community (EC) rural policies. This message built on a commitment in the Single European Act (1987) (SEA) to use RD policy in strengthening economic and social cohesion, and the reform of the Structural Funds. This was later reinforced by the Commission’s Deadline 92 Document (CEC 1992) that restated the Commission’s position in regarding RD as one of its priority concerns. It highlighted the three guiding principles laid down in the 1988 communication: the *integrated approach principle* (in contrast to the sectoral approach); the *subsidiarity principle* (responsibilities being spread through different levels of authority); and the *partnership principle* (communication and cooperation between the Community and the various levels of national authorities). It also reminded readers of a proposal concerning the preparation and implementation of the CAP in 1960<sup>32</sup>:

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<sup>32</sup> Proposals pursuant to Article 43 of the Treaty establishing the EEC (Doc. VI/COM(60) 105, 30.6.1960); Part II, paragraphs 8, 16 and 17.



The links between the agricultural and other sectors are such that the solution to agricultural problems is not to be found exclusively within the agricultural domain – it depends to a certain degree on the development of other sectors. In this context, development of the rural regions themselves is of particular importance and requires promoting their economy as a whole. Measures to improve agricultural structures need to take account of regional policy and should be designed not to correct symptoms such as low incomes, but to remove the causes of such an unsatisfactory situation (CEC 1992, p74)

Reflecting the ethos of the Commission's publication, the gradual development of the Structural Funds included the introduction of regional Objectives (1, 2, 5b, and 6), which applied only in specifically defined regions, and horizontal Objectives (3, 4, and 5a), which applied throughout the Community. Driven by initiatives from EU Commissioners and their cabinets (the Delors-Christophersen-Andriessen Axis) (Kay 1998), Objectives 1 and 5b<sup>33</sup> particularly had scope to limit the growth of agricultural expenditure and provide new sources of income for farmers. Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) set up in these regions involved not only the ERDF, but also the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Guidance section of the EAGGF. Implementation was based on a number of guiding principles: *partnership* between the local, regional, national and Community level for both the programming and its practical implementation; *additionality* of funding, including financial participation at regional, national and Community level; *concentration* of funding on specified regions or specific actions; and *programming* of all measures, based on comprehensive plans put forward by the Member States or regions and approved by the Commission (European Commission 1997b).

Programming was to take place within five-year periods and was built around a series of measures available within each structural fund. Some examples from Article 5 of Regulation 2085/93 show the kind of measures available under the EAGGF Guidance section which applied in both Objective 1 and Objective 5b areas from 1994:

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<sup>33</sup> Objective 1 applied to regions, defined at NUTS 2 level, which were lagging behind economically, with a GDP of less than 75% of the EU average. Objective 5b applied to rural areas with a low level of socio-economic development, a high dependency on agricultural employment, low agricultural incomes and population problems (low density or declining population). NUTS (Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques) is the basis for regional data classification, from 1 (Member State) to 5 (local municipalities of communes).

- the development and improvement of rural infrastructure linked to agriculture and forestry development;
- measures to achieve diversification, especially those providing multiple activities or alternative incomes for farmers of either sex;
- the renovation and development of villages and the protection and conservation of the rural heritage;
- land reparcelling of farming and forestry holdings;
- encouragement for tourist and craft investment;
- protection of the environment, maintenance of the countryside and restoration of landscapes; and
- development of agricultural advisory services and improvement of agricultural and forestry vocational training.

(European Commission 1997b)

LEADER I<sup>34</sup> was introduced in 1991<sup>35</sup> as a more ‘bottom-up’ initiative to operate within Objective 1, and then 5b and 6 regions once they also were introduced. Its main aim in the first programming period was to stimulate RD initiatives at local level, with support being given to local action groups and other collective bodies. It also aimed to promote the exchange of relevant information and experience through a European RD network. The latter aim was subsequently shown to have produced some very interesting results in LEADER II (1994-99), which were claimed by the Commission to have balanced out the effects of its ‘more formalised’ approach in this second period, whereby the three EU funds were not pooled into a ‘single pot’ supplied directly from the EC, but were administered separately at national level (European Commission 2005).

In this second period, in line with the agreement at the Edinburgh European Council, the Objective 1 regions received about 70% of structural fund expenditure. The overarching

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<sup>34</sup> LEADER stands for Liason Entre Actions pour le Développement de L'Economie Rurale (links between actions for the development of the rural economy).

<sup>35</sup> LEADER was introduced in 1991 but because of bureaucratic delays, did not commence in the UK until 1992.



development priorities within both the Objective 1 and 5b areas were set by the Commission, but the emphasis of detailed priorities and measures varied considerably between Member States. For example, Spain and France concentrated 5b funding on the improvement of the agricultural and forestry infrastructure, while in Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK, Finland and Sweden, more attention was paid to the non-agricultural sectors. This, together with differences in co-financing rates, resulted in the financial impact of structural fund intervention being quite different from one Objective to another, and for the same Objective between Member States (European Commission 1997b).

### ***IRD in the UK***

The history of IRD in the UK reveals a slow progression from the fundamental concept of RD as the redevelopment of traditional rural activities<sup>36</sup>, to the more recent ‘urban’ ideas of a multifunctional countryside encompassing radically different activities (Minay 1990). In spite of the current interest aroused by the introduction of the RDR, the concept is still ill-defined, a recent report for the Countryside Agency (CA) suggesting that it ... “could be viewed as the ultimate goal of policy, but could also be considered merely as an approach to policy and implementation which results in a more balanced set of outputs” (Land Use Consultants 2000). Certainly RD did not develop a high profile in national rural discourses in the past, the main impetus for IRD coming from Europe through the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in the mid-1970s.

The first major experiment with IRD in England was the Peak District Integrated Rural Development Project, which ran from 1981 to 1988. Funded by a wide partnership of stakeholders, the project was based on three central principles: *interdependence* of economic, social and environmental objectives; *individuality*, reflecting an area’s distinctive character, priorities, problems and opportunities; and *involvement* drawing on

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<sup>36</sup> Rural Development in England was formalised by the setting up in 1909 of the Development Commission. Its rural/agricultural priorities were superseded in the 1970s by a focus on manufacturing/industry in rural areas, and thereafter by a broadening of concerns towards declining service provision in rural areas. The Commission was critically under funded, being described as a ... “relic agency”(Minay 1990), the role of which was ... “sweeping up the socio-economic problems that agriculture left in its wake” (Ward 2000, p9).

self-help and emphasising the inclusion of local communities. Its aim was to create new business opportunities, new community institutions and an improved environment. The project provided many lessons in the translation of the term IRD<sup>37</sup> into a practical reality, and concluded that ... “a co-operative, consensus approach to rural areas may, more than anything, provide the most hopeful signs for their future” (Parker 1984). A subsequent report set out to assess whether promising results would be sustained over time, what the consequences might be for rural communities, and what lessons there would be for systems of public administration (Parker *et al.* 1990). This concluded that IRD worked where there were willing partnerships between public agencies and authorities in terms of objectives and practices, where there were effective contact officers and simple, unambiguous grant schemes, and where there were willing local communities (*ibid*)<sup>38</sup>.

The first experience with the Structural Funds in the UK came in 1981 through the adoption of the Western Isles of Scotland (Outer Hebrides) as one of three integrated programmes (the other two being in the Lozère department and the less-favoured zones of Belgium) for economic and social development of rural zones. In the first programming period after the 1988 Structural Funds Reform (1989-1993) Northern Ireland was designated as the UK's first Objective 1 area, to be followed in the second period (1994-1999) by Merseyside and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Region, previously Objective 2 and 5b respectively (European Commission 1997a). Then, in 2000, these were followed by West Wales and the Valleys, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and South Yorkshire. In the current programming period (2000-2006) Merseyside, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and South Yorkshire constitute the Objective 1 areas for the UK (European Commission 2005), but the others still have major programmes as ‘transitional areas’. In 1994 11 Objective 5b areas were

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<sup>37</sup> The authors of the subsequent reports noted that IRD had different meanings for different people, and was used throughout the project as an administrative term for the concept, adding that to some it was probably rather an ... “off-putting” term (Parker 1984; Parker *et al.* 1990).

<sup>38</sup> A recent review of the project carried out for the Countryside Agency identified the improved physical appearance of the built landscape (redundant buildings and walls) as a lasting testimony to the scheme, but there were fewer obvious ecological benefits, grant-aided projects often suffering the ‘end-of-contract’ problem identified by Whitby (2000). Overall, though, a ‘social’ legacy of ‘capacity building’ is seen to have developed amongst some local residents and, quite importantly, amongst the public sector agencies and authorities involved (Blackburn *et al.* 2000).



designated in the UK, six of them in England, and the LEADER II programme was limited specifically to these and Objective 1 areas (Defra 2005). Both Objective 5b and LEADER II programmes closed to new projects at the end of 1999, having received a total of £77.5m from the EAGGF during the period from 1994-1999 (MAFF 2000a).

In England during the decade of the 1990s the focus on RD as a new paradigm seemed to take shape across a wide consensus, at all levels of governance, and with the general support of the academic community. It developed in parallel with the emergence of a new facilitative role within local government linked to the post-Rio Local Agenda 21 programmes, and with the promotion of partnership and regional approaches such as Biodiversity Action Plans. The newly formed Regional Development Agencies were charged by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) with developing a clear analysis of the regional economy and of the social and economic conditions that influenced it. SD was a mandatory element, as was a statement of their approach to the integration of social, economic and environmental objectives (Blackburn *et al.* 2000). In land use planning terms, the discourse shifted from the narrow utilitarianism of the 1980s, which was dominated by the tension between ‘development’ and ‘conservation’ (Whatmore and Boucher 1993), towards a reconsideration of the meaning of sustainability and the idea of balance and ‘trade-offs’ competing with limits, constraints and demand management (Healey 1993).

The main point to make about the development of RD in the UK is that for much of its history it has remained separate from agriculture, the latter not being seen as part of RD policy. Rather, agriculture was a national, sectoral policy arena with few connections to the local economy. This situation started to change as RD policy became the mechanism for delivering structural adjustment to a declining agricultural sector (Ward *et al.* 2003). The Accompanying Measures of the MacSharry Reform, while rooted in the movement towards a reduction in surplus production, could be seen as having social and environmental benefits in terms of safeguarding farming incomes and encouraging less intensive farming methods. The Objective 5b designations in 1994 supported rural areas with a low level of

socio-economic development, a high dependency on agricultural employment, low agricultural incomes and population problems (European Commission 1997b), helping farmers diversify and develop new business opportunities. These approaches, however, demanded more from policy makers than before ... “the inadequacy of a sectoral approach to rural policy making becom[ing] almost self-evident when recognition is given to the fact that rural development, by its very nature, is a multi-sectoral concept” (Franklin 2000). The Rural White Papers of 1995 (covering England, Scotland and Wales) provided an overarching statement giving a sense of direction and coherence to rural policies, celebrating the diversity of rural Britain and advocating a ‘bottom-up’ approach to rural policy. However, they did not, according to Lowe (Lowe 1996), identify the mechanisms for delivering policy aims, appearing reluctant to admit the scale of European influence on rural policy or to confront the dichotomies of RD/conservation and environmental protection/deregulation.

### **3.3.2 The Definition and Delivery of IRD**

As explained above, Objective 5b was introduced in 1994 as an addition to the set of ‘objectives’ emanating from the 1988 reforms. Building on the delivery model developed for Objective 1 areas, it was intended to target specific problems in rural areas that had below average levels of economic development, where employment was dominated by the agricultural sector, and where agricultural incomes were low<sup>39</sup>. It was to be administered in a way that stressed the creation of links between the different levels of government, from the local to the supra-national, and also required the development of links between a range of sectors and groups in a locality. Policy rhetoric emphasised its bottom-up nature and its potential to empower local communities to define and develop their own schemes. In England it was seen by some as representing a new form of rural governance (Ward and McNicholas 1998), resonating with the essential characteristics of rural communities, in which localness, community, empowerment and partnership were explicitly required. In

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<sup>39</sup> The Objective 5b areas in the UK were The Marches, Lincolnshire, The Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Rural Stirling and Upland Tayside, Midlands Uplands, Northern Uplands, Rural Wales, North and West Grampian, The South West and East Anglia.



practice, however, the devolution could be seen to stop at the level of the policy administration.

A report by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC) for the European Commission in 1998 drew together the intermediate evaluations of Objective 5b programmes in the UK for the period 1994-1999. The report highlighted delays in the implementation of projects and the poor development of a framework for regional economic development, concluding that inexperience with the programme lay at the root of the problem. It also highlighted concerns that projects were doing little to enhance innovation and were not generally thought to have enhanced partnership working a great deal. It recommended simplifying and standardising programmes while allowing for regional differences; the increased integration of structural funds to enhance information flows of the programmes; and a more national perspective to enhance synergies at UK level (European Commission 1998b).

As a result of the 5b initiative in the UK, an innovative network called the 5b partnership appeared among affected local authorities across Europe, working from the local to the European level to promote its ideals (Ward and McNicholas 1998). With the transfer of 5b measures into the RDR the 5b partnerships became disenfranchised, delivery and programming being undertaken thereafter at a less local level. The ethos of the partnership, however, has continued in the European Rural Exchange (ERE), an informal network of local/regional authorities with a common interest in rural development policies and practice (Fitzpatrick and Smith 2002). The Exchange has developed a definition of IRD that is based on a synthesis of the literature:

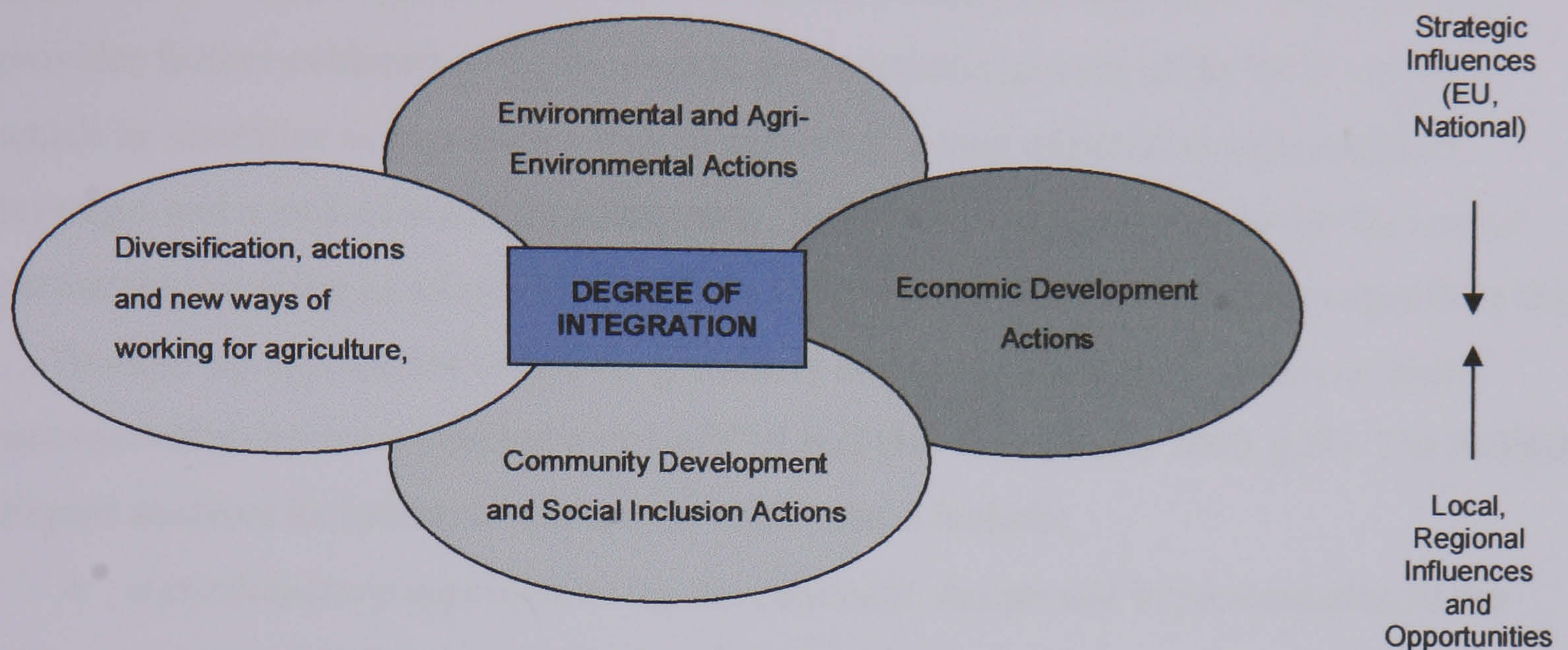
IRD is the process through which the economic, social, environmental and cultural resources of rural communities are organised in order to achieve and sustain the long term viability of those communities (ibid, p3).

The IRD approach to policy formulation and delivery, they say, requires a better working relationship between the top-down and bottom-up elements within the policy process. This should result in a balance being struck between the two rather than a prioritisation of one

over the other, recognising that ... “flexible strategic frameworks for policy development, linked to better delivery, are necessary for the harnessing of creativity and enterprise at local level” (ibid, p4). The Framework for IRD proposed by the ERE makes the elements of SD (environmental, social and economic) implicit rather than explicit, specifically creating a place for the primary and traditional industries which still play a unique part in the rural economy (see Fig.3.4 below). The key to successfully implementing IRD policy is the degree to which integration between its components takes place. Leading on from this is the problem of creating mechanisms for guiding the development of strategic and coherent input ... “without a suitable form of governance in place to guide and implement an integrated rural development framework, such a strategy is unlikely to become either fully established or self-sustainable past the short term” (Franklin 2000).

Land Use Consultants (LUC), in their review of the IRD literature for the CA (Land Use Consultants 2000) refrained from providing a definition of IRD, given the multiple nature of its perceived meanings and values. Their focus was the extent to which integration could be achieved through programmes purporting to deliver IRD, and they identified four ways that this could potentially occur: vertical integration of environmental, social and economic objectives from the international to the local level; horizontal integration of these objectives between stakeholders; integration of projects within a programme; integration of objectives within a project. Key findings from the review indicated that: programmes need to be tailored at the regional/local level to reflect local circumstances; robust partnerships are central to the delivery of integrated rural development; and national programmes need to remain flexible. Within these key findings, the indications were that (with some exceptions) the majority of individual projects supported under programmes purporting to deliver IRD were single sector, depending on their overarching framework for synergy to produce a coherent whole. This synergy was reduced in situations where projects were undertaken in isolation and with weak cross linkages. LUC concluded their review with the identification of some of the barriers to integration, which is prescient in the current debate about the effectiveness of the ERDP mechanisms in the delivery of SiRLU:





### The Four Components of IRD

**Figure 3.4 A Framework for Integrated Rural Development**

Source: (Fitzpatrick and Smith 2002)

- The traditional isolation of agricultural policy and community (from wider rural objectives and in research fields);
- Programme administration which is not rooted in the needs of the area and which fails to develop strong local partnerships;
- Policy level 'commitments' to integration (reflecting the need for sustainability) that may mask the delivery of poorly integrated projects on the ground;
- The focus on economic performance indicators in programme monitoring, skewing programmes towards the achievement of easily measured economic targets while ignoring more qualitative environmental and community outputs;
- Practical issues such as inflexible financial requirements;
- Poor vertical integration in terms of links/conflicts between European and national levels and between national and local agendas.

(Land Use Consultants 2000, p29)



In the UK National Report of the Nature of Rural Development project<sup>40</sup> Ward (2000) provides further evidence of the barriers to the successful growth of the SRD approach which he identifies as including a lack of resources, a lack of political will, a lack of leverage, and a lack of institutional capacity. Both LUC and Ward emphasise the role of partnership working as a key opportunity in the pursuit of SIRD, the former suggesting that ... “bottom-up approaches which are genuinely and comprehensively inclusive, may automatically deliver integrated outcomes” (Land Use Consultants 2000, p29). The NORD Report analyses its sponsors’ visions for SRD. These include:

- *a participatory approach* to the development, design and implementation of the rural support programme in each Member State;
- achieving *equity* between local and other stakeholders, between economic, social and environmental interests and between present and future generations;
- containing measures that are *integrated* as fully as possible;
- achieves *integration* of local, national and international perspectives and promotes joined up analysis and solutions;
- ensuring that the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, environmental – are recognised and interdependent;
- that equal consideration is given to each

(Dwyer *et al.* 2002, p16).

Further research by LUC and Segal Quince Wicksteed (SQW) on behalf of the CA revealed the wide range of perspectives regarding IRD within the CA; it is both ... “a *process* and an *outcome*, a ‘solution in search of a problem’, a framework for action and a form of implementation” (SQW Limited and LUC 2001, pi). The consultants identified two key drivers for IRD: 1) a growing critique of the production-based food system underpinned by the CAP, which is environmentally unsustainable and economically flawed; and 2) a critique of the exogenous rural economic growth model which has presided over

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<sup>40</sup> *The Nature of Rural Development* (the NORD Report) is part of the strategic programme of research and influencing work of the project’s sponsors – the Land Use Policy Group (LUPG) and WWF Europe, the aim of which is to understand the impacts of the CAP and its rural development instruments on the rural environment and countryside of the enlarged EU (Dwyer *et al.* 2002. piii).

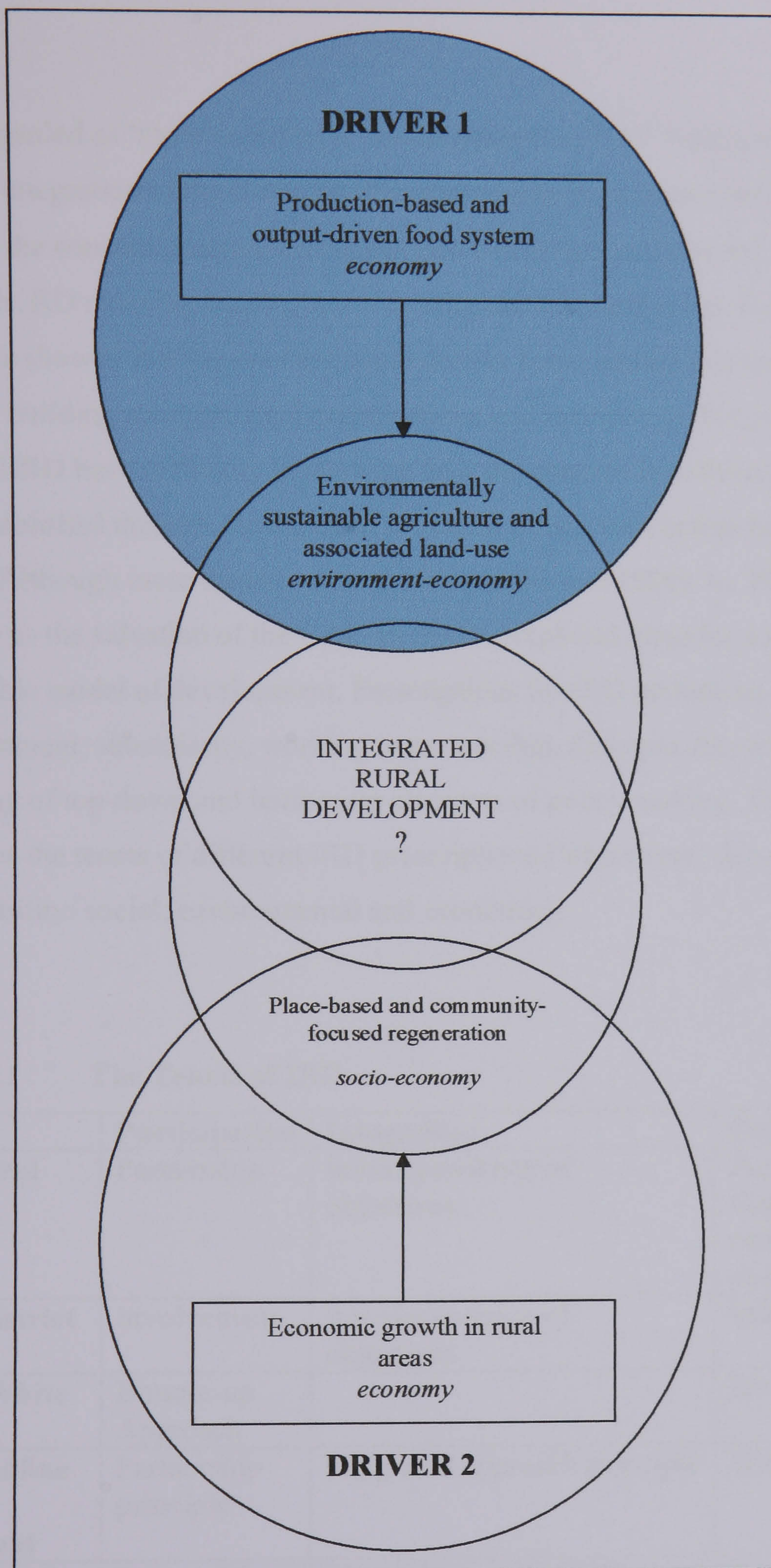


inappropriate forms of development in rural areas. IRD, in their view, derives from neither in isolation, but can be achieved at the point of overlap between the two, where environment, economy and community coalesce in a ‘win-win-win’ relationship (see Fig. 3.5 over). The research gives little indication, however, of how IRD can be delivered through the programmes surveyed, as the programming documents themselves are couched only in very general terms in relation to potential delivery mechanisms.

### **3.4 Summary and Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to construct some basic tenets of SiRLU from an exploration of the concepts of SD and RD. Exploring SD reveals that it is both a useful and challenging concept for policy makers, its ambiguity assuring its legacy of contested validity. It is explained by a spectrum of views ranging from reformist (weak), to radical (strong) conceptualisations, and compared to not one, but a whole ‘convoy’ of ideas. Four broad conceptualisations have been identified from the literature to represent the many competing versions of the concept. Three of these represent sustainability (either weak or strong) as being composed of separate elements that can be manipulated to achieve the intended result. The fourth does not rely on these constructs; rather it promotes the ideas of integration and democracy, achieving consensus through enlightenment, dialogue and participation. Integration is regarded as the key to SD, but it is difficult to put into practice, the false separation of the elements (environmental, social, economic) tending to exacerbate the difficulties with environmental constraints and the normative/empirical problems described above. Better links between individuals and institutions are required to counteract this, involving greater openness and accountability.





**Figure 3.5 Drivers towards Integrated Rural Development**

Source: (SQW Limited and LUC 2001, pii)



RD is regarded as ‘more sustainable’ in the context of CAP reform rhetoric than the *status quo*, the integration of the elements of sustainability in its prescriptions being implicit. In England the concept was not well developed before the introduction of the Agenda 2000 proposals, RD meaning exactly that – development in rural areas. Experiments with IRD in the 1980s showed that the concept could deliver some sustainable results, particularly in capacity building amongst local organisations and institutions, but policies espousing the tenets of IRD have difficulty in showing how the concept is delivered. In Europe IRD had been established through the regional structural policy well before becoming a tool for CAP reform. Although more rhetoric than practice in the late 1980s, by 1996 IRD was regarded by some as the salvation of the CAP, as the EC explored ideas for a more legitimate and sustainable model of development. Prescriptions for IRD include an integrated approach, enlightenment, subsidiarity, working in partnership, dialogue, discretion, localness, and the balancing of top-down and bottom-up elements of policy making. Table 3.1 below compares the tenets of different IRD prescriptions (‘objectives’ denotes the elements of sustainability: social, environmental and economic):

**Table 3.1      The Tenets of IRD**

Source	Participation	Integration	Other features
Structural Fund RDPs	Partnership	Interdependence of objectives	Programming of measures Concentration and additionality of funding
Peak District IRDP	Involvement	Interdependence of objectives	Individuality
Rural White Papers	Bottom-up Approach		Diversity
EC Deadline ‘92 Document	Partnership principle	Integrated approach principle	Subsidiarity principle
Objective 5b	Partnership	Vertical integration of government Horizontal integration of sectors and groups	Localness, empowerment, community
IRD – ERE	Networks	Integration of objectives	Diversification of

			agriculture
<b>LUC</b>	<b>Partnership</b>	Vertical integration of objectives Horizontal integration of objectives between stakeholders Integration of projects within a programme Integration of objectives within a project	Subsidiarity, flexibility
<b>Nord II Project</b>	<b>Participatory approach</b>	Integration of local, national & international perspectives Joined-up analysis & solutions Interdependence & equality of objectives Integration of measures	Equity between stakeholders, interests & generations
<b>LUC/SQW</b>		Integration of objectives in 'win-win-win' scenario	

The foregoing description and analysis reveal that integration is the key to any prescription for a ‘sustainable’ RD policy. Integration can occur at many different levels, but the integration of objectives (the ‘elements’ of SD) is a priority. In addition, partnership working, the involvement of communities, the balancing of top-down/bottom-up elements and subsidiarity are also regarded as essential to a truly integrated RD policy. The objective of the RDR was set out by the EC in the following way, emphasising the importance of integration and participation to the success of the policy:

To introduce a sustainable and integrated rural development policy governed by a single legal instrument to ensure better coherence between rural development and the prices and market policy of the common agricultural policy (CAP) and to promote all aspects of rural development by encouraging the participation of local actors (European Commission 1999d).

It is proposed, therefore, that *integration* and *discretion* (as an umbrella term representing the participation of local actors) should be regarded for the purposes of this thesis as the tenets of SiRLU.



## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapters have identified the research problem, established a theoretical framework within which to situate the study, and described the context within which the Agenda 2000 CAP reform arose. This has established the need for a critical and reflexive approach to the study of implementing the RDR in a complex and political environment. The thesis has posed two major questions to address the issues raised, together with a number of research objectives, and this chapter will explain the methodology that guided research, and describe the methods used to collect, analyse and evaluate data in order to achieve these aims. The concept of sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU) is used as an example of how issues are socially constructed by actors in the policy process, and then mediated by the exercise of power in the production of policy texts, which have implications for policy outcomes. Central to the study is an analysis of the relations between social constructions, policy and interpretation in the context of implementing the RDR in South West England. This will help establish the potential within the policy for the promotion of SiRLU by comparing the rationale and justifications for intervention with the objectives and goals of the policy, and with the implementation structures and resources set up to achieve them. The chapter begins with an explanation of the methodology that guided the study, followed by a description of the research methods used to collect data. It concludes with an account of the way data were analysed and presented.

### **4.2 Methodology**

A model of policy design developed by Schneider and Ingram (Schneider and Ingram 1997) (S&I) has been used as the theoretical framework in this thesis and as a guide for the development of a research agenda. As explained in Chapter 2, the policy design model is rooted in a critical methodology. The antithesis of a positivist approach, a critical methodology exhibits the characteristics of qualitative research in its interpretive,

naturalistic, communicative, reflective and qualitative approach (Sarantakos 1998). Critical methodologies, like other qualitative methodologies, allow researchers to explore questions of *why?* and *how?* as well as the *what?* questions of positivist approaches, providing explanations of phenomena and understanding of processes:

One's initial move should be to give close attention to how participants locally produce contexts for their interaction. By beginning with this question of 'how', we can then fruitfully move on to 'why' questions about institutional and cultural constraints. Such constraints reveal the functions of apparently irrational practices and help us to understand the possibilities and limits of attempts at social reform (Silverman 2001).

A critical methodology, however, may differ from other qualitative methodologies in delving much more deeply into the search for explanations, for example in questioning how meanings are created, who facilitates such interpretations, who benefits and how this affects social organisation. This is useful in the context of this research because it emphasises the centrality of social constructions in public policy making and the way that these can then limit the bounds of what might be considered by policy makers. As Miller (1999) remarks in the context of clinical research, it is a powerful methodology for analysing political engagement and the study of systems.

The research was developed to analyse the way that SiRLU was socially constructed in the context of implementing the RDR in SW England and to explore the implementation structures and the interpretations of stakeholders. The model shows how social constructions, developed from a particular policy context, influence the form of a policy and have consequences for the future context. It provides a credible representation of the policy process and is adaptable to the complexities of European policy making. There is a danger, however, of oversimplification in superimposing structure on a situation that, in reality, is much messier, lacking the boundaries imposed by the model. It is also impractical to try and explain every issue, this often resulting in a lack of focus and theoretical rigour; for example as suffered by the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of implementation studies (see Chapter 2). The model was therefore adapted to reflect the current research aims (see Fig.2.3).

The parameters for research are set by the two research questions and objectives identified in Chapter 1. The research questions each have a broad scope and represent normative and



empirical categories within the research parameters. The first, or normative element, explores the concepts involved in the process of implementing (creating) the RDR and the ERDP. The ‘societal context’ of the original model is adapted to represent the CAP reform context of the European Union (EU), while the ‘issue context’ becomes the UK policy context. This is represented in the thesis by Parts I and II, which deal with the context and theory of RD and the climate of ideas within which SiRLU was socially constructed. The ‘framing dynamics’ part of the model is used in these parts to show how discourses of rural development (RD) were developed within the climate of ideas surrounding the Agenda 2000 negotiations and were adapted after production of the RDR to suit the UK agenda for CAP reform and the structural adjustment of agriculture. The ‘designing dynamics’ structures the way that social constructions of RD are shown to be embedded in the ERDP while ‘policy designs’ enable an analysis of the policy texts to reveal the socially constructed form of RD contained therein and the unstated assumptions of policy makers.

The second, empirical element, based on the translation dynamics element of the model, explores and assesses the implementation (interpretation) of the resulting policy. This is represented by Parts III and IV, and deals with the delivery of the Programme, the value added during that process, its impact in terms of stakeholder perceptions, and its potential to deliver SiRLU. Within these parts the ‘translation dynamics’ are used to show how stakeholder experiences with the ERDP and the lessons learnt in the process influence the value they add to the policy during implementation, and also how their own interpretations of SiRLU affect their perceptions of the worth of the policy.

### **4.3 The Scope of the Study**

Implementation, as explained in Chapter 2, can be thought of as starting with policy design and ending with the take-up of schemes by target groups. In other words, it is a *vertical* process. In terms of implementing the RDR at a European level, this presented possibilities for research that went well beyond the scope of this study (see Dwyer *et al* (2002) for a Europe-wide evaluation of implementing the RDR). Looking at the situation from a

national (UK) perspective would again have been beyond the scope of this thesis, a study focusing at that level probably becoming a horizontal comparison of the four regions (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). This has been dealt with in part elsewhere (see (Dwyer and Baldock 2000)).

Studies focusing on decision making in the EC, for example (Clark *et al.* 1997), have highlighted the discursive quality of the process at supranational level. Likewise, farmer surveys following the 1992 reforms have provided insights into individual motivation for taking up AE schemes, for example (Walsh 1997). These studies, however, provide only partial insight into the much more complex process of implementation. The real interest in this process lies within the policy delivery framework and its ability to deliver the policy as EU policy makers intended. Thus, while the scope of the policy design model is infinite, this research is narrowly focused on the implementation of the RDR in England. This means examining the processes and structures set up in England through the ERDP to deliver the Regulation.

It is useful here to point out that the use of the terms ‘national’ and ‘regional’ in the context of the RDR have a different meaning to that of the ERDP. For the former, national refers to the Member State (in this case the UK), while regional refers to the four plans covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Further devolvment involves a ‘sub-regional’ level. For the latter, national refers to the national (England) level while regional refers to the Government Office regions to which some powers are devolved in the ERDP (the terms are used throughout the ERDP policy document, together with the Ex-Ante Evaluation and all explanatory documentation). Therefore, to avoid confusion in the thesis, the term ‘national’ will be appropriately qualified.



## 4.4 The Study Area

Studying the structures set up to facilitate implementation of the RDR in England involved research at both national (England) and regional levels. It was necessary, therefore, to decide which region, or regions, should be the study area(s). Although not strictly a case study, as it is a necessary part of a larger whole (*i.e.* it is one part of the whole implementation structure), some justification for the selection of the South West of England as the study area is appropriate here.

As stated above, there are nine English regions involved in implementing the ERDP. They all drew up their regional chapters following strict guidelines laid down by the Rural Division of MAFF in terms of style and content. Their priorities and goals, while specifically addressing regional aspirations, were constrained by national aims for the policy and by the requirements of the RDR. The structures for delivery in each case were the same, as were the measures available through the policy. Thus, differences were only likely to arise through the relative effectiveness of regional structures in terms of leadership and cooperation between policy actors. The objective of this study was not to observe and compare how the ERDP was implemented laterally (a worthwhile study in its own right) but rather to understand the policy process from a vertical perspective, thereby enabling some assessment of the power relationships between the different levels in the policy hierarchy. Thus, the choice of study area became somewhat irrelevant to the research aims.

The SW region is distinguished by a number of features: geographically it is the largest of the English regions, accounting for 15% of the total land area; it is the most 'rural', some 80% of the land being in agricultural use and 3.3% of the working population being employed in agriculture (close to twice the national figure); the region's countryside is of high quality; it suffers the effects of peripherality owing to its peninsular geography; Cornwall is designated an Objective 1 area, and parts of Devon and Somerset are Objective 2. These features make it a good candidate for a study that is premised on the notion of SiRLU. Denscombe (1998) points out that each case study is in some respects unique, but is, at the same time, a single example of a broader class, while Stake (1995) suggests that

an unusual case often helps illustrate matters we overlook. Indeed, the uniqueness of the case is expected by the reader to be critical to the understanding of the particular case:

The real business of case study is particularisation, not generalisation. We take a particular case study and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself (ibid, p8).

Thus it was not anticipated that generalisations would be an outcome of the study; rather that the SW region would provide data to complement other studies, for example, the Nord II report, in different aspects of policy implementation.

Having made these points, it would be naïve to underestimate the pragmatism underlying the choice of study area. Living near Weston-super-Mare, the researcher was very well placed to attend meetings of the four implementation groups in Exeter, Taunton, Bristol and London, which was a critical part of the study. As the majority of the respondents were to be drawn from these groups, many of them living and working in the region, it made perfect sense, from the perspectives of time, cost and access, to choose only one case, that being the closest possible. As McNeill (1990, p126) remarks ... “A sociologist’s theoretical perspective will guide the choice of topic and research method adopted ... time, money and labour will determine what is realistically possible”.

## **4.5 Familiarisation**

The Countryside Agency (CA) played a significant part in the early stages of this CASE<sup>41</sup> studentship in familiarising the researcher with the policy community in general and its own ethos in particular. The CA supervisor ensured that the researcher received relevant updates on the ERDP policy situation by e-mail, and invited her to attend various seminars, workshops and discussions at the CA offices in Cheltenham, London and other venues<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Collaborative Award for Science and Engineering – the ESRC Collaborative (CASE) Studentship.

<sup>42</sup> These included an initial briefing session with the supervisor in November 2000, an internal workshop examining the Structural Funds in January 2001, attendance at the CA two-day Induction course in February 2001, a CA Branch Day in April 2001, working lunches with the supervisor in October 2001 in Cheltenham



The Agency was also able, at the researcher's request, to arrange for her to attend the 'Integration Workshop' at Malvern in November 2001, organised by DEFRA following discussions at the NSG. This participative workshop brought together members of the ERDP National Strategy Group (NSG) with a team from Defra HQ, the Government Office (GO) Regional Directors, the Rural Development Service (RDS) Regional Managers and other interested parties, to discuss their experience of the programme, particularly in relation to the problems of integration. This was a valuable opportunity for the researcher to hear views from other regions, and to meet and talk with NSG members in an informal environment.

In the latter part of the studentship, contact with the Agency diminished as the focus changed from acquiring knowledge to organising and presenting it. The CASE student contract required that the researcher should submit an annual report to the Agency detailing progress to date. This turned out to be a useful exercise in positioning the research within the real world of policy advice and change, an ethos that underpins the rationale for a CASE studentship.

#### **4.6 Selection of respondents**

This thesis set out to examine the implementation of the RDR in SW England. It was therefore deemed appropriate to include in the populations of respondents those who were primarily concerned with that function, and those who were able to comment on it from an informed position. Qualitative research employs non-probability sampling procedures to select populations for study. This method makes no claim for representativeness, and can be *accidental*, *purposive*, *quota*, or *snowball* in character (Sarantakos 1998). Purposive sampling allows the choice of case or population because it illustrates some feature or process of interest (Silverman 2001). The implementing structures of the ERDP provided a

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and in Weston-super-Mare in December 2001, a presentation by consultants (SQW/LUC) on IRD in November 2001, and observation of a video conference on the Nord Project with Neil Ward at the CA offices in London in March 2002. The researcher was subsequently asked to contribute to the latter project through the CA.

framework for the purposive selection of the majority of respondents, including as they did not only all the statutory partners of the designated implementing authorities (MAFF, now Defra, and the Forestry Commission (FC)), and a range of other stakeholders, but a hierarchical arrangement of policy levels for analysis. The design of the research included observation of these groups under the Chatham House Rule<sup>43</sup> which constrained the use of data collected in this way. This further enhanced the need to make the membership the basis for respondent selection. Some of the respondents outside these structures were also selected purposively based on their suitability to provide relevant data; for example, the academic respondents, whereas others (two advisers and three consultants) were enrolled using the ‘snowball’ method referred to above. This involved following up contacts made during interviews and observations. The total number of respondents was limited to sixty, plus the two group interviews, with the possibility of reducing this number if saturation in data gathering occurred. Four populations were chosen to categorise respondents: 1) *the Policy Makers* (national bureaucrats); 2) *the Policy Implementers* (regional bureaucrats); 3) *the Policy Influencers* (government agencies/NGOs/local authorities); and 4) *the Policy Advisers* (academics/advisors/consultants). These classifications were based on the power structures assumed to apply to these populations in the context of implementing the RDR rather than to the intrinsic similarities or differences between members. The populations are described in more detail below and are analysed in Table 4.1 at the end of this section. A full list of interviewees by population, organisation and position can be found at Appendix 4.

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<sup>43</sup> The Chatham House Rule originated at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1927 (refined in 1992) with the aim of guaranteeing anonymity to those speaking within its walls in order that better international relations could be achieved. It allows people to speak as individuals, and to express views that may not be those of their organisations, thereby encouraging free discussion. The rule is widely used in the English-speaking world by local government and commercial organisations including research organisations. It states that ... “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker[s], nor that of any participant, may be revealed (Royal Institute of International Affairs 2003).



#### **4.6.1 Population 1 - the 'Policy Makers'**

The government division charged with the implementation of the RDR in England was the Rural Division of MAFF. At the time of the fieldwork (2002) the new department of Defra had been formed from MAFF and environmental and countryside areas of the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Rural Division became Rural Development Division (RDD) with this reorganisation, and five of the interviewees in this population were drawn from there. Four of them had been involved in the drafting of the ERDP, while one had joined Defra subsequently. All five sat on the NSG. One interviewee in RDD was a secondee from the Cabinet Office, met during the Defra Integration Workshop in Malvern and chosen to contribute because she was working on the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the CAP with the Rural Development Policy and Evaluation Team. A further interviewee was a secondee from a government agency working with the Defra Policy and Corporate Strategy Unit, and was selected for interview on the recommendation of another government agency officer, based on his wide experience and knowledge in the rural development agenda.

#### **4.6.2 Population 2 - the 'Policy Implementers'**

Interviewees in this population were drawn from the Government Office – South West (GO-SW), Defra in the GO-SW and the Rural Development Service (RDS). Of the thirteen selected, one was the GO-SW representative sitting on the NSG who also sat on the RPG, one was the Defra GO Director for the South West and another was a Defra Team Leader at the GO-SW (both sat on the RPG). Three were RDS (Regional Office, Bristol) officers, the Regional Manager, his deputy and a senior technical assessment manager. The former two sat on the RPG and the RCG while the latter was chosen to provide details of the ERDP project-based technical assessment procedures following an ERDP workshop in Gloucestershire. Two interviewees were with the RDS technical assessment teams in Taunton and Exeter, the former having been involved in the drafting of the ERDP South West Regional Chapter. Three interviewees from the GO-SW in Plymouth provided information about the operation of Objective 1 in the South West and about sustainability criteria applied in Objective 1 project assessments. Further information about sustainability

criteria was elicited from an RDS officer in Truro who was currently engaged in a Masters degree on the subject. The last interviewee was, at the time of the fieldwork, the Regional Manager of the RDS in the North East, but was interviewed primarily because of her involvement in the drafting of the ERDP while working in Rural Division and her in-depth knowledge of the programme both at strategic and implementation levels. One of the two group interviews carried out during this research was with three members of the technical assessment team from the RDS in Exeter.

#### **4.6.3 Population 3 - the 'Policy Influencers'**

This population included all those organisations that were not directly responsible for policy formulation or implementation in relation to the ERDP. They were all, however, involved with the implementation of the programme through one or other of the implementing groups (NSG, RPG, and RCG) with the exception of a senior NGO officer who sat on none of them. It was an anomaly within the research methodology that senior NGO staff were excluded on the basis that there was no regular forum within the ERDP implementation structures for their input, the National Rural Development Forum<sup>44</sup> meeting only once prior to the fieldwork commencing. Within the twenty seven representatives interviewed, fourteen were government agency (GA) officers from both national and regional levels. These included officers from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), the Regional Assembly (RA) and the Forestry Commission<sup>45</sup> (FC) in addition to the statutory authorities. Ten interviewees were representatives of NGOs including Forum for the Future (FFtF), the National Farmers Union (NFU), the Country Landowners Association (CLA), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Wildlife Trust (WLT), the National Trust (NT) and the National Parks Authority (NPA - Dartmoor National Park). Three local authority officers were interviewed, from Devon County Council (DCC), Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and West Dorset District Council (WDDC). Finally, a group interview was carried out with three officers from a government

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<sup>44</sup> The NRDF mirrored the RCG at national level, being modelled on the previous National AE Consultation Group and having a wide ranging membership.

<sup>45</sup> The Forestry Commission is a small government department and is also one of the responsible agencies for delivery of the programme, but is treated here as a government agency as its function at group meetings was the same.



agency. This was suggested by the agency and produced a more detailed and nuanced account of the agency’s position with regard to the issues discussed.

**4.6.4 Population 4 - the ‘Policy Advisors’**

Four academics were interviewed for this thesis. They were selected on the basis of their contribution to various aspects of the RD debate. One had specific expertise in agri-environmental and RD issues, particularly from a French perspective. Another was an observer and commentator on CAP policy making and the environment at the European level, together with rural and regional policy in the UK. The third had specific expertise with Objective 5b, the RDR (especially with modulation), and rural and regional policy. He had also been directly involved in drafting the Cabinet Office White Paper, ‘Rural Economies’, and was carrying out research into the implementation of the RDR across Europe at the time of the fieldwork. The fourth was an acknowledged expert in UK rural politics, CAP reform (specifically in relation to the 1992 reform), and environmental and countryside issues. They were able to provide the broad perspective on issues that countered those of the interest-based organisations. Two farm business advisers were interviewed, both contacts made through the RDS. They were able to speak from experience with producer groups, but in that respect, they were biased towards the interests of those groups. Finally five consultants were interviewed. Three of these had worked in various capacities on the ex-ante evaluation of the ERDP, one had produced the Integration paper for Defra, and the last had helped formulate sustainability criteria for the Objective 1 programme in Cornwall.

**Table 4.1      Analysis of Interviewees by Population and Group Membership**

Population	Category	Total Number	NSG	RPG	RCG	Non-member	Total In population
<b>1 The Policy Makers</b>	RDD	5	all				
	Ex-RDD	1				1	
	Secondee to RDD	1				1	
	Secondee To Defra	1				1	

	SDU Defra	1				1	9
<b>2</b> <b>The Policy Implementers</b>	GO-SW Bristol	1	on both groups	on both groups			
	GO-SW Plymouth	3				all	
	Defra in the GO	2		2	one on both groups		
	RDS Bristol	3		2 on both groups	2 on both groups	1	
	RDS Taunton	1				1	
	RDS Exeter	1				1	
	RDS Exeter	Group interview				(3)	
	RDS Truro	1				1	
	RDS NE Region	1	Was on NSG	Now on RPG			14
<b>3</b> <b>The Policy Influencers</b>	GA	14	5	8	1		
	GA	Group interview				(3)	
	NGO	11			10	1	
	LA	3		1	2		28
<b>4</b> <b>The Policy Advisers</b>	Academics	4			1 (Representing WWF)	3	
	Advisors	2				2	
	Consultants	5				5	11

#### 4.6.5 Research Ethics

The fieldwork posed two main problems in terms of research ethics. The first concerned the size of the policy community from which respondents were drawn. Usually sampling procedures select respondents from large populations, for example, farmers in a particular area. In the case of this thesis the respondents were drawn from a very small policy arena, one in which an individual’s anonymity might easily be compromised. In the majority of cases throughout the text, this problem was approached by referencing only the population to which they belonged and taking care not to quote passages that would obviously identify them. This was difficult in the case of the ‘Leadership’ section at paragraphs 7.1 and 7.1.1



where the head of RDD became the object of analysis. While her name was omitted from the text and from quotations, those who were familiar with the staff at the time of the research will no doubt be able to identify her. It was felt, nevertheless, that the data should be included in that chapter, as she had such a strong influence on the process of implementation, with clear implications for outcomes.

The second problem concerned the restrictions of the Chatham House Rule (see above). These restrictions meant that the proceedings of the meetings held under the rule could not be reproduced in this thesis, limiting the usefulness of the data collected through observation. However, observation provided the researcher with logistical information concerning the conduct of the meetings and enabled her, through an enhanced understanding of the processes involved, to discuss issues that arose with respondents during subsequent interviews.

## **4.7 Research Methods**

### **4.7.1 Fulfilling the Research Objectives**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the research methodology employed in this thesis is qualitative, utilising interpretive and critical research methods to understand how people constructed and translated SiRLU in the context of implementing the RDR in SW England. Research methods are the tools of data generation and analysis, chosen on the basis of criteria related to the methodology in which they are embedded (Sarantakos 1998). The same methods can be used in the context of different methodologies, but some are more apposite in the case of qualitative research than others. Qualitative research is founded on the principles of phenomenology<sup>46</sup> and hermeneutics<sup>47</sup>, and relies on a variety of different assumptions about social life. Great importance is attached to the interpretation of data and events through the interaction of people, and the relevance in that process of context and

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<sup>46</sup> The philosophical study of consciousness and its immediate objects (Pearsall and Trumble 1996).

<sup>47</sup> The branch of knowledge dealing with interpretation (Pearsall and Trumble 1996).

language (ibid). Thus, the research methods often equated with qualitative research include semi-structured interviews, participant observation, discussions and focus groups. Three research methods were employed in this study: *interviewing*; *participant observation*, and *documentary analysis*. They reflect the critical methodology explained above, complementing each other and helping to triangulate the work. There are no widely agreed protocols for carrying out triangulation on subjective data (Stake 1995). It is not necessarily 'better' than simply using a single method, and is not suitable for every issue (Sarantakos 1998), but qualitative research is often criticised on the basis of its credibility, the latter being identified with confidence in the knowledge presented in research studies (Silverman 2001). In any event, multiple methods involve the production of more data that is likely to improve the quality of the research (Denscombe 1998). The methods focus on different relationships between the researcher and the respondent, minimising problems with researcher bias, selective perception and selective memory often associated with qualitative methods (Sarantakos 1998). They are linked to the research objectives in the next section before being described in detail at 4.6.2 below.

The first research objective involved the conceptualisation and contextualisation of the main elements of the thesis. This is accomplished in Part I through an extensive literature review encompassing policy studies, implementation, the history of CAP reform, SD and UK RD and agricultural policy. The second objective demanded an explanation of the scope and meaning of SiRLU in this study. This objective is addressed in Part I, Chapter 3, again by a review of current literature.

The third research objective involved an exploration of the social construction of SiRLU at European and national policy levels. It is largely addressed in Part II of the thesis, which employs three methods of data collection. Firstly, primary data from interviews is used to illustrate secondary data drawn from the literature review. This provides the interpretation of social conditions, knowledge, events and groups which structure Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 7 employs mainly primary data from the interviews to describe and analyse the designing dynamics of the ERDP. Both Chapters 5 and 7 also use the policy design model as a framework for documentary analysis of the RDR and the ERDP.



The fourth, fifth and sixth research objectives explored the ‘translation’ of the policy, including stakeholders’ perceptions of sustainability, empirical aspects of implementing the ERDP in SW England, the importance of the Programme from stakeholder standpoints and its potential future direction. In Part III, Chapter 8 begins with an analysis of stakeholder views of the meaning of SiRLU. Data for this analysis were obtained from the semi-structured interviews carried out with each of the respondents. Chapters 9 and 10 deal with the empirical aspects of implementation, drawing on prolonged and iterative participant observation together with interview data. In Part IV, Chapter 11 draws on interview data for a policy level analysis of stakeholder perceptions of the importance of the ERDP, and documentary analysis for an appraisal of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the ERDP and the EC proposals for a new RDR.

#### 4.7.2 Interviewing

Implementation is something that people do, and it was decided early on in the fieldwork planning that semi-structured interviews would provide the core data with which to address the research questions. Stake (1995, p43) asserts that ... “‘thick description’, ‘experiential understanding’, and ‘multiple realities’” together with the researcher as interpreter are necessary in qualitative research ... “to sophisticate the beholding of [the world]”. Thick descriptions refer to the particular perceptions of actors through which the researcher attempts to establish an empathetic understanding with the reader (ibid). The most effective way of obtaining such data is through total participant observation over a long period of time. Clearly inappropriate in this instance, the study uses interviews to complement the observation and textual analysis that is described below, and this section of this chapter provides details of why and how and when interviews were conducted.

There are four different types of interview: *structured*, *semi-structured*, *unstructured*, and *group* (May 1997). The semi-structured interview was considered to be the most appropriate for obtaining these data, seeking both clarification and elaboration in an open dialogue that allowed further probing into certain issues (ibid). The semi-structured

interview differs from standardised interviews in so far as it is based around broad themes that can be adjusted by the researcher as the interview progresses, allowing people to answer on their own terms while still addressing the aims of the research. In this study, interviews were treated as ... “straightforward reports on another reality” rather than expressing ... “interpretive procedures or conversational practices present in what both interviewer and interviewee are *doing* through their talk and non-verbal actions” (Silverman 2001, p111). The latter position is associated with constructionism, but in the context of this study was not considered an appropriate approach, the aim being to record discourses rather than construct them. In addition to semi-structured interviews with individual respondents, two group interviews were carried out that had not been planned at the outset of the fieldwork. They were proposed and initiated during interaction with individuals involved in different ways with the study *e.g.* the group interview with technical assessment staff at the RDS in Exeter was arranged following the observation of the Regional Appraisal Panel (RAP) (see below) where they were also observing.

It was decided that, bearing in mind the different roles and perceptions of actors involved in the hierarchy of implementation, the interview questions would revolve around five main themes for all the populations, but that they should reflect the relative power and knowledge of those actors. May (1997) cites three conditions for a successful interview: *accessibility* (does the interviewee know the answers); *cognition* (understanding by the interviewee of what is required); and *motivation* (answers must be seen to be valued). Thus the questions, while remaining focused on the themes, addressed the subjects in slightly different ways, so that they related to the experience of the interviewee. The five themes chosen were: *ideas/drivers for change*; *definitions of sustainability in rural land use*; *integration*; *discretion*; *change and the ERDP*.

The first question was designed to find out what interviewees thought was the rationale guiding the introduction of the RDR. According to Schneider and Ingram (1997) people’s perception of the politics influencing policies affects the way they subsequently relate to that policy, with consequences for outcomes. The second question self-evidently seeks to discover the various ways that people construct SiRLU. This could be very different



depending on the standpoint of the interviewee and will have direct consequences for the design of policies and the way they are translated by implementers. The third question asks interviewees about their experience with the ERDP as an integrated approach to SRD. This aims to assess the extent to which the policy could be said to contribute to SiRLU when compared with the tenets of that concept developed for this study. The fourth question adopts the same approach in relation to the discretion experienced by interviewees during the implementation of the programme. Finally, the fifth question asks interviewees to make an assessment of the ERDP in terms of its impact and importance in a changing policy context. As with the first question, people's perceptions of a policy's impact are important because their influence within the climate of ideas is likely to affect future policy designs. Templates of all the interview questionnaires are included at Appendix 5.

#### **4.7.3 Conducting the interviews**

The interview process took place in three phases, over a period from July 2001 to October 2002. Each interview was recorded; the decision to record the interviews being taken in light of the researcher's experience with qualitative interviewing for two previous degrees. This had shown that notes cannot provide the authenticity, and often also fail to capture the nuances, of a verbatim account. It had also shown that recording assists interpretation, avoiding memory lapses and allowing concentration during the interview. Furthermore, it was felt that, as the interviewees were largely professional people, speaking on behalf of organisations, they would be unlikely to object to this method of recording data on the basis of intimidation. That they may be inhibited because of their employment obligations was felt to be more likely. In the event only two individual interviewees and one group refused permission to record their comments. None of them gave specific reasons for their decision, merely stating that they would rather not be recorded. A diary summary of all interviews conducted is included at Appendix 6, together with a full description of the interview phases at Appendix 6a.

All the interviews were transcribed in full, which was, as expected, an extremely time-consuming task. The positive aspect of this was that the researcher became very familiar

with the data, enabling the establishment of some broad analysis categories during the process. Two of the interviewees had requested copies of their interviews, and these were duly sent to them, one being returned, edited, where gaps had occurred in the transcript. This was extremely useful as a major problem with tape transcripts was the variable quality of the recording. The interviews had varied considerably in length, the majority of face-to-face sessions taking approximately 1¾ hours, while telephone conversations had generally been shorter. The shortest face-to-face interview was ½ hour and the longest nearly 3 hours. Most tapes took up to a day to transcribe, the longest taking three days and resulting in 28 pages of text for analysis.

#### **4.7.4 Documentary analysis**

The central concepts and emphases of the critical paradigm focus on some key issues in relation to documents in research. Its concern with analysis at a societal level translates into an interest in official public documents, which are seen as instruments of power. Its interest in ideology as a means of legitimating structures leads to its treatment of documents as legitimating devices that operate by gaining popular consent. Following from this it demands a critical examination of the role of public documents in relation to ideology, power and control (Jupp and Norris 1993). From the perspectives of other paradigms, however, documentary research is often not regarded as constituting a method in the way that survey research or participant observation is. Documents cannot be read in a detached manner, and the analyst must consider the differences between her own frame of meaning and that found in the text. It is helpful to approach the text in terms of the intentions of the author and the social context in which it was produced, situating it within a theoretical frame of reference in order to understand its content (May 1997).

There are two broad ways in which documents can be analysed: *content analysis*, which employs quantitative methods of sampling, interpretation and analysis; and a *critical/analytic* stance which considers how the document represents the events that it describes; how it constructs authority; and how it characterises events and people in certain ways according to particular interests (ibid). This study has been situated within the policy



design framework that draws on this critical perspective in designating the policy document as the locus of social constructions resulting from the exercise of power in the issues context. The framework describes designs in such a way that they can be compared and analysed, a feature that, according to Schneider and Ingram (1997) is inadequate within the existing theories of public policy. The framework defines a set of core empirical elements found in all public policies: goals, targets, implementation structures, tools, rules, rationales and assumptions. The analysis of the RDR and ERDP in this study was organised round three of these elements (goals, implementation structures, rationales/assumptions) as far as they related to SiRLU. The policy goals were analysed and compared with the rationale which is an important link between policy design and policy outcomes. The implementation structures (the connection between policy makers and targets) were defined, specifying the value added to design during the implementation process (the discretion allocated to them and the integration of various elements achieved). In the case of the RDR, the rules of the policy were also included in the analysis, based on the impact of the Implementing Regulation on the implementation of the ERDP. This analysis exposed the relationship between normative policy rhetoric and empirical elements of implementation, revealing assumptions that had been made in formulating and designing the policy.

The documents analysed were:

- The RDR (Council of the European Communities 1999)
- The RDR Implementing Regulation (CEC 1999)
- The ERDP (MAFF 2000a)
- The ERDP Appendix A9 South West Region (MAFF 2000c)

In addition to the analyses of these main policy documents that are included in Chapter 5 and 6, a number of other documents were analysed in the course of the research. The Ex-Ante Evaluation of the ERDP was analysed as part of the ‘designing dynamics’ and included in Chapter 7. Likewise, the Mid-Term Evaluation was analysed as part of the ‘translation dynamics’ and included in Chapter 11, together with an appraisal of the EC proposals for the new RDR. In addition a large number of documents had to be read prior to

observing at implementation group meetings and other participatory events attended. These are described in the next section.

#### **4.7.5 Participant observation**

According to Schneider and Ingram (1997) the relationship among agents (defined as the means for delivering policy to target populations) and the connections to targets constitute the implementation structure. The most complicated policy designs will have multiple agents at various levels of government. They define implementation as the ... “value added to design” (ibid, p89), referring to the way discretion is used to change the basic blueprint or structural logic of the policy, and suggest that the allocation of discretion in the policy design is a key aspect of implementation structure. They identify four different patterns of allocating discretion from implementation literature: *strong statutes* (limiting discretion to administrators as much as possible); *Wilsonian* (as above but giving professional administrators some discretion in determining how goals should be reached); *grassroots* (allocating discretion to the lowest-level agents); and *consensus-building* (where designs are intended to provide a forum for participation and discussion between upper and lower-level agents). The allocation of discretion varies according to the location of control over resources and rules. Chapter 3 identified discretion as a key tenet of SRD, and the collection of data to provide evidence in relation to this aspect of implementation was included in the early design of the fieldwork.

The relationship of the researcher to the CA presented the opportunity for unique access to the proceedings of the ERDP National Strategy Group (NSG), the South West Region Regional Programming Group (RPG) and the South West Region Regional Consultation Group (RCG). Access to these meetings was considered to be an important part of the research, providing information about the extent to which discretion was exercised in the implementation of the programme, the capacity of regional networks to cooperate in driving the programme forward, and the extent of policy learning evident in the process. Early in the studentship, permission was sought from MAFF by the CA supervisor for the researcher to attend meetings of the NSG as an observer for the duration of the research.



Permission was forthcoming, and the researcher attended the first of four meetings at Nobel House in Smith Square, London in December 2000. Subsequent meetings of the NSG were held in March 2001, July 2001, and April 2002, all at Nobel House. Access for the researcher to all the meetings was conditional on observation of the Chatham House Rule. This had clear implications for use of the data in this thesis, reproduction being largely restricted to the logistics and conduct of the meetings rather than the content. In preparation for these meetings, and all the others observed (see Appendix 7 for a full list of observations), there were a number of agenda items provided in advance that had to be read. Sometimes these arrived only the day before a meeting, and, in the case of the NSG, often consisted of several documents. A typical NSG agenda is included at Appendix 8 to illustrate this point.

The NSG and the RPG had been formed at the beginning of the implementation process as planning groups to oversee the preparation of the ERDP as required by Council Regulation 1257/99. They were maintained subsequently to advise MAFF and the Forestry Commission (FC) on the implementation of the programme. The groups were hierarchically arranged, together with the NCG (see below), having the following membership:

**NSG: Headquarters Representatives of:**

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food (MAFF)

Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)

Forestry Commission (FC)

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Department for Trade and Industry (DTI)

Countryside Agency (CA)

English Nature (EN)

English Heritage (EH)

Environment Agency (EA)

Government Office-South West (GO-SW) (in practice the GO – East Midlands also attended)

Regional Development Agency (RDA)(represented by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA))

- RPG:** Regional Representatives of:
- Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food (MAFF)
  - Government Office-South West (GO-SW)
  - Regional Development Agency (RDA)
  - Forestry Commission (FC) – Regional Conservator
  - Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)
  - Countryside Agency (CA)
  - English Nature (EN)
  - English Heritage (EH)
  - Environment Agency (EA)
  - Regional Chamber and/or Local Government Association
  - Forum for the Future (not a statutory partner – particular to the SW)

The **RCG** met for the first time on 29 June 2000 with a very broad membership of regional interests that was drastically reduced in size in October 2001 because it was too large to function as a working group. Prior to that date the group had convened as the Regional Agri-environment Consultation Group, meeting regularly to discuss issues relating solely to the AE schemes. A meeting of the new RCG in December 2001 proposed that a Core Group should be set up to meet quarterly, with all the interested parties meeting once a year. The suggested core group members were:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| English Nature (EN)                               | Wildlife Trusts Representative (WLT)     |
| Forestry Commission (FC)                          | Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) |
| Environment Agency (EA)                           | Local Authority Representative (LGA)     |
| Countryside Agency (CA)                           | English Heritage (EH)                    |
| Country Landowners and Business Association (CLA) |  |



National Farmers Union Food Group (NFU) Regional Development Agency (RDA)  
Community Council Training (CCT)                      Government Office SW (GO-SW)  
National Parks/Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NP/AONB)  
South West Tourist Board (SWTB)

Members felt, however, that duplication with the RPG should be avoided to allow greater representation in total across both groups, and the government agencies were excluded, with Business Link and the Ramblers Association being added. By March 2002, when the researcher attended her first meeting, there was a standing membership of 20:

Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)  
Rural Development Service (RDS)  
Government Office – South West (GO-SW)  
National Farmers Union (NFU) – SW Region  
Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT)  
National Trust (NT)  
Ramblers Association  
Country Landowners and Business Association (CLA)  
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)  
South West ACRE Network (SWAN)  
Gloucestershire County Council (GCC)  
Devon County Council (DCC)  
North Wiltshire District Council (NWDC)  
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)  
Dartmoor National Park (DNP)  
South West Local Food Partnership  
West Dorset District Council (WDDC)  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)  
Environment Agency (EA)  
South West Tourism (SWT)  
South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA)

This membership, however, was not stable at that time, with some members never attending and others from the wider group sometimes appearing. Some members had objected to being barred from meetings and had been allowed to continue to attend. Others had been recruited by RDS officers because of their perceived usefulness to the group in terms of willingness to engage.

Participant observation within a qualitative methodology relies on a number of characteristics: 1) direct observation; 2) fieldwork; 3) natural setting; and 4) perception (Denscombe 1998). In turn these rely on some form of interaction between the researcher and the observed. This interaction can take place in a variety of ways, from total overt participation in the activity observed, to a covert role, 'shadowing' the observed (ibid). In the case of this study, the field role is difficult to exactly define, being none of the ideal typical roles described by Burgess (1984): complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, or complete observer. Although observer-as-participant adequately describes the situation at the beginning of the research, the relationship had changed subtly by the end to reflect the changed regard in which participants held the researcher. Certainly the researcher appeared to be regarded very much as a member of the group in the case of the RCG, being called upon a number of times to offer opinions during debates. This was not the case with the NSG, where participation was absolutely restricted to complete observer. The relationship between the researcher and the observed in the context of the RPG was markedly different from that of the NSG. The presence of the researcher in the smaller and less formal regional environment aroused the curiosity of the participants, as a result of which it was much easier to engage them in conversation, particularly the Defra/RDS staff members, who showed considerable interest in the study. They proved to be extremely helpful in answering questions, giving background information, and arranging access to various events and workshops. Over the course of the research period, the researcher built up considerable rapport with these individuals, who were able to provide a running commentary on the way that implementation was being effected and the problems that they were encountering. These informal conversations were invaluable for improving understanding of the boundaries between strategy and delivery in the policy process, and



contributed a great deal to the theory-building element of the study. In a practical sense, the relationship enabled the researcher to gain access to other important fora for data collection.

In addition to the meetings of the ERDP implementation groups, access for observation was gained to three other significant events. The first was an invitation to a conference organised by Business Link as a result of attendance at Farmer Strategy workshops and meetings facilitated by the RDS at the beginning of 2002. The researcher was able to participate in these meetings, and gained knowledge about how these farmers perceived the ERDP. While it is acknowledged that the data from these meetings were not representative of farmers in the rest of the region, it was useful in contributing to a better understanding of the difficulties facing the ERDP regional implementation teams as they operated at the interface of strategy and delivery. The resulting conference, 'Revitalising British Agriculture', held at the Royal Agricultural College in February 2002, boasted a distinguished guest speaker list drawn from established agricultural interests, and set in context the way that the industry viewed the current situation. Sponsored by Business Link, Lloyds TSB, Andersons, The Small Business Service and the SWERDA, it was considered by the researcher to be relevant to the overall aims of the research to explore this perspective, albeit not as a major part of the research strategy.

The second event was the consultation held through the RCG on the review of the AE schemes. The meeting was thrown open to a wider audience of about 50 attendees. The researcher attended the meeting to observe the process of consultation, but became involved in that process at the request of the RDS. This involved a brainstorming exercise in small groups that included an RDS facilitator, considering five main issues, and resulting in a 'post-it note' input from each table. This was the same technique as that used in the original ERDP regional consultation, and as such was of interest to the researcher, also providing first-hand an 'insider' view of how participants reacted to the process. As with the implementation groups meetings, there was a considerable amount of reading to do prior to this event.

The third event was a day spent observing the proceedings of the ERDP SW Region Regional Appraisal Panel (RAP) at the RDS offices in Bristol in May 2002. A project file containing 22 applications to be considered at the RAP was sent to the researcher in advance of the meeting for study (owing to the confidential nature of the contents it has not been possible to include an example of an application in the Appendix). These had to be studied in order to follow the proceedings at the meeting. On the day, three other observers were also present. They were from the RDS technical assessment team at the Exeter regional office. The panel consisted of the RDS Regional Manager, his deputy and an Area Manager from the Defra Rural Policy Team in the GO-SW. They were assisted by an administrator from the RDS Bristol Office. The proceedings, as with the group meetings, were held under the Chatham House Rule. Notes were taken during the meeting, particularly of the way in which decisions were taken. There was no participation for the researcher at this meeting beyond the usual pleasantries, but questions and comments were directed at the other observers, except where they had a direct involvement in a project. This was an exceptionally useful day for the researcher in learning how the assessment process was carried out and meeting the technical assessment team from Exeter, with whom a group interview was later arranged.

To complete understanding of the whole technical assessment process, the researcher subsequently arranged to accompany one of the Exeter team on a visit to an applicant in Bristol. This visit was carried out in February 2003, and gave the researcher the opportunity to observe and record the interview procedure prior to the project's approval. Particular note was taken of the knowledge displayed by the assessor in relation to the project context. Feedback from the applicant was obtained after the visit. This provided the researcher with a much clearer picture of the technical assessment process, which was considered to be important when evaluating the way that SiRLU was delivered by the RDS.

A further piece of observation research was carried out on the 4 July 2002, when permission was sought on behalf of the researcher by a senior Defra staff member at GO to attend a RDA Rural Sub-Group meeting at the RDA offices in Exeter. Chaired by Jonathon Porritt, the group considered issues from a specifically rural perspective, rather than the



regional perspective of the Agency. The meeting attended was considering the review of the RDA Regional Economic Strategy (RES), and the interest from the researcher's point of view was to discover the extent to which the ERDP was a factor influencing rural affairs from an RDA perspective and whether there was any evidence of integration between the two programmes.

## **4.8 Data analysis and presentation of results**

### **4.8.1 Data Analysis**

The transcribed interview data more than filled a large lever arch file, and it was decided to use a computer software package to help with data analysis. The package chosen was QSR NVivo, developed from the successful NU\*DIST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data\*Indexing Searching and Theorizing) software. NVivo is designed specifically for qualitative projects, handling large quantities of data, but allowing a more fine-grained analysis than its predecessors and incorporating many enhanced features (Bazeley and Richards 2000). The transcripts were put into a rich-text format and imported directly into NVivo where they were coded on-screen into a number of broad categories. A coding system was established, based on the structure of the thesis within the policy design framework, each part of the thesis relating to one or more of the research questions. Some of the categories provided the descriptive elements of the thesis, recording first hand data from informants, while others recorded perceptions of events and issues for further analysis. Each interview, or document, in NVivo was allocated five attributes (policy level; organisation; member of group; standpoint; population) to facilitate flexibility later in manipulating the data and conducting searches. While qualitative research usually develops in an iterative fashion, theory building as the project takes shape, this research had some structure imposed from the beginning by the policy design framework. This, however, did not constrain the analysis, the use of coding 'tree nodes' within the package accommodating new codes as they were required by the data.

By the end of the initial coding process, data had been analysed under six main headings within which there were 89 sub-nodes. The package was able to prepare reports on each of these sub-nodes, enabling further manual examination and analysis of the data in preparation for presentation of the results. A further set of analysis was carried out using NVivo to obtain suitable data for Chapter 8 (Constructing Sustainability). The node carrying the data was deconstructed and the fifty six original categories were reduced by a series of rationalisations to five broad categories. This provided the data for the first part of the chapter in which the constructions were described and respondents' comments added. For the second part of the chapter, a matrix intersection was carried out using the NVivo search tool. This intersected 'population' with 'constructions of sustainability' to provide a very rough indication of which populations were using which constructions.

Observation data in the form of hand written notes were subsequently rationalised and analysed using Microsoft Word to provide the logistical data for Parts III and IV. Unfortunately, owing to the Chatham House Rule restrictions, much of the data had to be ignored in the context of this thesis. The document analysis was carried out using the policy design framework as a guide, detailed notes being reduced and structured under the headings provided. Data were presented in the text as a qualitative assessment of the policy, backed up by excerpts from the interview data and supplemented by tables where appropriate.

#### **4.8.2 Presentation and interpretation of results**

The qualitative data collected for this thesis is largely presented in a descriptive rather than a numeric format, using modifiers such as 'many', 'some', 'several' or 'the majority' to aid description and explication (Miles and Huberman 1994). Tables are used in several instances to present the data in a more concise fashion, while a matrix intersection developed from the NVivo qualitative data analysis package is used in Chapter 8 to make a specific claim regarding the data (see above). A very large number of acronyms are used in the text to denote the various organisations and institutions involved in the implementation process, together with those derived from concepts, for example, SD (sustainable



development). These are listed in full at the beginning of the thesis and are reiterated at the beginning of each chapter for the sake of clarity. Interview respondents are referred to in the text by an abbreviation of the population to which they belong (see Appendix 4) and a numeric identifier (for researcher audit purposes – this is not linked to details in Appendix 4) followed by ‘pers.com’ denoting personal communication; for example, for a policy maker – PolicyMaker1 (pers.com) or (PolicyMaker2, pers.com). Quotations from interview data are used in the text to support and illustrate points that are made. Where quotations contain a question or comment made by the researcher, this is typed in *italics*. When introducing words or phrases into the text that require definition, these are also italicised.

#### **4.9 Research Evaluation and Conclusion**

This thesis seeks to apply the Schneider and Ingram (S&I) model of policy design to policy implementation rather than ‘test’ the underlying theory. It is important to establish the plausibility of such research through a clear and transparent research design. This includes explaining the reasoning behind the methodology chosen, providing information on respondent selection and explaining the procedures used for analysis and presentation (Baxter and Eyles 1997). Indicators of reliability, validity and generalisability have traditionally been sought to provide plausibility, emphasising consistency, truthfulness and accuracy (Sarantakos 1998). However, acceptable criteria and characteristics for credible research are still debated amongst researchers, with various other terms being seen as more appropriate for establishing qualitative research rigour. Thus, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are now considered more apposite by some in the context of this type of research (Baxter and Eyles 1997; Sarantakos 1998).

Research can be regarded as *credible* providing the validity and reliability of the methodology is established. Qualitative research explicitly involves interaction of some sort between researcher and respondent, and the impact of the researcher on the setting (or ‘halo’ effect) together with the researcher’s values should be carefully controlled to avoid producing a biased account. Triangulation, while being dismissed by Silverman (2001) as

usually inappropriate in qualitative analysis, can be helpful in validating research, the presentation of data sourced through multiple methods being one way of ensuring consistency between the accounts of respondents and the events observed.

*Transferability* is not usually one of the claims made for the ‘information-rich’ purposive samples of qualitative methodologies, referring to the extent to which findings might be relevant to other contexts. Such findings, however, do need to be accessible to other researchers, particularly in terms of providing detailed descriptions of research processes. In the case of this research there are some aspects of the thesis that are relevant to other regions and also to other sectors, for example, the analysis of the constructions of sustainability, while the use of the policy design model as a previously uncited text may be of value to other researchers faced with similar research problems.

The *dependability* of the research relies on the consistency of the research process and the manipulation of data. This is much enhanced by using tape recordings, quoting at length from transcriptions and making comprehensive notes where appropriate. *Confirmability* can be achieved through providing a research audit trail with regard to credibility, transferability and dependability within the research process (Baxter and Eyles 1997).

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, it was not expected that data presented in this thesis would be generalisable to other GO regions in the context of implementing the ERDP. Indeed, certain interview data suggest that there may have been specific inter-organisational and personality difficulties associated with working relationships in the SW region that might explain some of the problems encountered during the implementation process. The aim of the research was to provide greater understanding of the policy process and the social construction of meanings in that process. Silverman (2001, p298) emphasises the link between the use of naturally occurring data and greater understanding of phenomena:

There is nothing wrong with the search for explanations providing that this search is grounded in a close understanding of how the phenomena being explained are ‘put together’ at an interactional level ... wherever possible, one should seek to obtain ‘naturally



occurring' data in order to obtain adequate understanding leading to soundly based policy interventions.

Sarantakos (1998) observes that generating meaning from data is aided considerably by writing and thinking metaphorically. This chapter has sought to elaborate a research audit trail that demonstrates how the methodology selected will provide both understanding and meaning from the research process.

## PART II THE CLIMATE OF IDEAS

### Chapter 5 The Social Construction of Rural Development as ‘Idea’: CAP reform and the RDR

#### 5.1 Introduction

Part I of this thesis introduced the Rural Development Regulation (RDR), providing a background to the Agenda 2000 CAP reform, outlining the research problem and the theoretical framework within which it would be considered, and conceptualising sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU) through rural development (RD) as a ‘more sustainable’ model of development. It concluded with a chapter setting out the methodology employed in carrying out the research. Part II is concerned with the way that RD is socially constructed at different stages in the process of implementing the RDR. The purpose of this first chapter is twofold: to create an observers’ view of the climate of ideas in Europe through which RD was constructed leading up to the Agenda 2000 reforms; and to analyse the construction of RD that was embedded in the RDR. Using the *framing* element of the policy design framework for guidance, the chapter begins with a largely narrative interpretation by respondents of changing *societal conditions* and the position of *groups* within the agricultural policy community. It continues with an account of *events* and an appraisal of the *knowledge* within that policy community, drawn from secondary sources and backed up by the experiences of respondents at the time. These elements of framing are then summarised to discover how RD was considered, and by whom, before continuing with a brief analysis of the RDR in terms of its rationales, goals and rules. Respondents contributing to this chapter were a small cohort who had the knowledge to comment on these issues at a European level through having been intimately involved with either influencing or observing the CAP reform negotiations. These included members of the MAFF RDR negotiating team, national representatives of government agencies (GAs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved with lobbying the European Commission (EC), and experts in the field of European agricultural and rural policy



(academics and consultants). Some perceptions are also included from regional level Defra officers and GA/NGO respondents, while the views of all respondents were analysed in relation to the ‘knowledge’ section.

## **5.2 Framing the RDR**

### **5.2.1 The interpretation of social conditions**

The narrow context of CAP reform has been described in some detail in Chapter 1. In broader terms, according to PolicyAdviser5, the European Union has undergone some fundamental changes in the four decades since the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. He explained how this was evident in terms of the growth of the EU, the issue of the demographic shift within the Union, the decreasing number of farmers, and the growth more generally of the Union’s competences in other fields. The shift from the post-war context of food shortages to one of surplus and the technological revolution has meant a significant evolution of the CAP. These changes have exerted pressure for a rebalancing of forces, adding up to a progressive reform agenda starting in the late 1980s, built around a shift in the nature of society. The effect has been an undermining of the traditional rationale for support for agriculture, resulting in an increasing disillusion with CAP across the EU. PolicyMaker1 described this effect as a gradual melting of the ‘glue’ that was perceived to hold the EU together. In spite of this, PolicyAdviser5 thought there was a perception that, while the rationale appeared to be changing, in principle it was not:

...it’s very interesting because if you look at other subject areas within the community the legislative basis for change is much more recent and has often been modified much more recently, but there’s been very little interest around in going back to the original articles of the Treaty of Rome, and in a way that’s odd ... it’s a combination all the time of threats and budgetary pressures from the groups that want to change it and other groups that don’t (PolicyAdviser5, pers.com).

However, according to PolicyMaker1, the perceived, gradual falling apart of this mythology had finally provided the environment in which radical reform could begin to be talked about.

It is difficult, according to PolicyAdviser5, to define an original set of ideas around the issue of CAP reform. Certainly there was a considerable lobby building around the need to broaden the scope of the CAP to embrace a wider rural development policy well before the MacSharry reforms of 1992. A move towards a new European model of agriculture, perceptible in the 1970s with the introduction of the Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) and continuing with the ‘accompanying measures’ of the 1992 reform, made it increasingly clear that a multiple role for agriculture was a reality in policy terms, reflecting events on the ground. The resulting restructuring of the industry together with the production of public goods would, according to PolicyAdviser1, form the basis of the new model for the future. The 1992 reforms, while appeasing the WTO and nodding slightly towards environmental concerns, also introduced a fundamental shift in the philosophy of the EC, according to another Policy Adviser:

There’s another element of the philosophy of 1992 (besides environmental) that I think the RDR and the horizontal regulation enshrined that you don’t talk about so much. That is the notion that 1992 also began the gradual devolution of agricultural policy away from Brussels ... It should not be an EU competence and under subsidiarity we’ve got to allow a bigger proportion of CAP money to be actually targeted and co-funded through member states (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).

PolicyAdviser5 noted, however, that the nature of reform was mired in the emerging divide between the economic liberalising and agrarian protectionist factions within the EU, making the long-term future of the CAP uncertain. He pointed out that the prospect of large amounts of structural fund money being redirected towards the aspirant countries of Eastern Europe, together with little growth in the Guarantee element of the EAGGF, meant that politicians were increasingly looking to the mainstream agricultural budget for RD support, a situation that caused agriculture ministers considerable concern. The pace of reform, he believed, was settled by the speed at which it was acceptable to the most politically sensitive regions, and the strong element of continuity and resistance to change resulted in a crablike progress in the case of the CAP. Thus, while the implicit rationale for reform had shifted towards the liberalising element, at a fundamental level there was deadlock at times with the different groups attempting to define and redefine the agenda. In this apparent shift, however, one thing was fairly clear from the observation of respondents: that



environmental sustainability in relation to the CAP negotiations was perceived as a relatively small voice when contrasted with powerful exogenous forces and the economic and political agendas of Member State governments, in spite of the obligation in the Maastricht Treaty to integrate environmental concerns into other EU policies (see Appendix 3 - SD Calendar).

### **5.2.2 Groups**

#### ***The Liberalisers***

According to Lowe (2000) the politics of reform were polarised between agrarian protectionism and economic liberalising positions. PolicyInfluencer<sup>3</sup> felt that the latter tended to regard RD as a means to an end (CAP reform) rather than an end in itself. This view is reinforced by the history of reform. The benefits of a broader approach to agricultural policy had been recognised by the EC with the Mansholt proposals of 1968, but as PolicyMaker<sup>4</sup> pointed out, the idea of a dual track policy that could support both production and structural aid was to be a contentious issue for the next forty years, the latter failing substantively to reach the level of funding originally proposed. In his view it was the budgetary crisis of the late 1980s that provided the driver for structural change. Again in 1992, RD as a ‘common policy’ for environmental and social aid in the form of the ‘accompanying measures’ provided limited structural assistance to farmers in the spirit of the early CAP (encourage the best farmers and assist others to leave the industry), but as PolicyMaker<sup>1</sup> confirmed, it was not seen by MAFF as a grand plan for environmental or social reform. Rather the measures satisfied the ‘Green Box’ requirements of the WTO, albeit only temporarily. The status of the AE schemes after 1992 as minor member state initiatives with little impact on the main CAP commodity regimes (Winter, M. *et al.* 1998) was widely accepted, as this comment from an agricultural policy adviser demonstrated ... “Like most farmers through and after MacSharry I totally ignored the new environmental line and focused on production and production subsidies. That’s what produced the bread and butter for us” (PolicyAdviser<sup>2</sup>, pers.com).

In the Agenda 2000 negotiations, the ‘liberalising’ lobby included the UK, Sweden, Finland and to some extent Denmark. These countries generally had less interest in maintaining the *status quo* as far as the CAP was concerned, with the UK and Denmark concerned more with access to world markets and reducing the cost of the CAP (Lowe *et al.* 1996). Within that position, according to PolicyMaker1, the UK, Sweden and Italy were committed to degressivity<sup>48</sup>, PolicyInfluencer19 noting that the UK in particular was battling to appease domestic factions opposed to production support. Politically the UK needed to keep its regional aid package, according to her (meaning about £100m a year to the south west of England), having come under a lot of pressure from regional lobby groups and local authorities:

Every country had its key thing amongst a load of other things. The UK government needed politically to keep regional aid – all the non-agricultural funding – structural funds. The UK government was under a lot of pressure to keep a lot of structural fund money. It had had a lot more lobbying from the regions and LAs on that point than the farmers had done on CAP. Almost as if, and I believe, that the UK government caved in a bit on not pushing as hard as it wanted to, to really go down the RD route, while France and Germany got what they wanted on the CAP but didn’t get it so much on their regional aid. Our regional aid allocation was increased while no other European country’s was (PolicyInfluencer19, pers.com).

Several respondents referred to the general concern amongst some other liberalising countries, led by Commission president, Jacques Santer, about the cost of the CAP. These included for example, Germany (recently reunified), and Spain (facing the loss of its structural support to Eastern Europe). They had made some significant progress at the Brussels Agriculture Ministers Council meeting in advance of the Berlin Summit, where finance ministers had forced agriculture ministers to accept a relatively modest, but nonetheless quite serious reform package aimed at reducing the overall cost of the CAP.

### ***The Protectionists***

On the other hand, some countries had a much more conservative view about CAP reform. France, together with some of the southern Member States, and Germany, were concerned about the effects of global competition on their extensive rural areas, both in terms of the many small farms that they supported, and also the rural vote this implied (Lowe *et al.*

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<sup>48</sup> Involves a gradual reduction in the level of payments made to farmers allowing a proportion to be redirected to the rural development budget (Lowe *et al.* 2002).



1996). PolicyAdviser8 pointed out the peculiar position of France in having a president and a prime minister on opposite sides of the political spectrum, both with a vote at the Berlin Summit. The pro-reform Prime Minister, Jospin, backed modulation and a redistribution of production support from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2 to fund France's ambitious RD project, supported by his socialist agriculture minister, while the anti-reform President Chirac, previously an agriculture minister and fervent supporter of the CAP, vigorously opposed Germany's insistence on reducing the overall cost of the CAP.

### *The Integraters*

Central to the 'new' model of European agriculture that emerged during the 1990s was the notion of agricultural multifunctionality; that is, a model of agriculture and RD. Promulgated by the EC during that decade, the new model was, according to Buller (2001, p14) ... "an explicit recognition of the multiple roles that farming plays in the countryside". Such an agriculture would carry out several different functions: markets - the production of high-quality food and renewable raw materials; environment – the sustainable use of natural resources, protecting biodiversity and landscape; services – satisfying public demands *e.g.* for tourism; employment – to provide more job opportunities through diversification. Buller (*ibid*) suggests that multifunctionality, like the liberalisers' position, is a means rather than an end in itself, except that, unlike the latter, it strives towards ... "a pro-active form of farm-based integrated rural development" (*ibid*, p15). He also suggests that multifunctionality is a sub-national phenomenon, occurring most successfully where local people and local knowledge have been enabled through 'bottom-up' schemes and local fora:

As we move away from the quantitative rationale of European agricultural policy to a more qualitative and multifunctional one, so the territorial dimension both of policy formulation and policy implementation becomes more important, emphasising new geographies of rural and agricultural space (*ibid*, p18).

Multifunctionality was at the heart of the Buckwell model of IRD described in Chapter 1, and formed the basis of the vision promoted by the EC and its Commissioner during the run-up to the Agenda 2000 negotiations.

### ***The EC and its Commissioner***

Jones and Clark (1998, p56) characterise the EC as a ‘policy entrepreneur’, being one of the most important of the Council’s<sup>49</sup> agenda-setters. Within the EC, Directorate-General VI (DGVI) was at the core of the traditionally tightly knit agricultural policy community. As such, it was subject to demands from both internal and external groups, but it had the power to manipulate the ideas that were likely to serve its strategic agendas (ibid). During the Agenda 2000 negotiations, according to two policy advisers, old tensions between DGVI and DG XVI (regions) regarding a general rural fund (subsequently resolved by the formation of Objective 5b) resurfaced in the form of Objective 0 as the replacement for Objective 5b. It was a dispute essentially over the differences between administering structural funds and agricultural policy, and caused a rift within DGVI over the modelling of the RDR. Within this the two sides polarised into a sectoral (traditional agricultural policy making, anti-reform) camp and a reform camp that espoused a structural fund model organised round geographical, territorial units. Another Policy Adviser explained how the matter was finally resolved:

What eventually happened was that the draft regulation was actually an amalgamation of the reform agenda with the sectoral people’s agenda, so that the draft legislation that was produced in 1998 was inconsistent between the front end of the document and the back end of it. The back end of the document was all the reform stuff, all this stuff about programming and implementation which was taken wholesale from structural fund regs, and the front end of the document was much more sort of sectorally kind of very strongly linked to CAP kind of language (PolicyAdviser7, pers.com).

Subsequently DGVI was reorganised resulting in a sectoral approach to Pillar 1, territorial units for dealing with Pillar 2, and a coherence unit for dealing with cross-cutting issues and ensuring a standardised approach.

Franz Fischler, the newly appointed Agriculture Commissioner and former Austrian Agriculture Minister<sup>50</sup>, was committed to a programme of CAP reform, and had aroused

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<sup>49</sup> Council of the European Communities

<sup>50</sup> Fischler’s background was rooted in policies that reflected the diverse nature of Austria’s agricultural industry where the concept of rural development in terms of different land uses (*e.g.* tourism) was well established.



much interest amongst observers within the policy community. Several respondents agreed that, with the deepening of the rift between DGVI and DG XVI over his ambition to make all rural areas ‘special’ through the CAP, his strategy was to provide a vision to Member States of a sustainable CAP that was not dominated by production support, and that thereby maintained appropriate levels of funding for farmers in the face of WTO restrictions and the major issue of enlargement. He carried this vision through to the Madrid Summit in December 1995, surprising those who had accepted the Commission’s previous rhetoric of success in relation to the 1992 reforms. Rejecting both the *status quo* and radical liberalisation, Fischler’s Madrid paper emphasised the need for the integration of social and environmental aims into future reform proposals. Delegates endorsed Fischler’s ideas, and it was an expanded version of this paper, revised by the Buckwell Group, that was presented a year later at the Cork Rural Development Conference (Lowe *et al.* 1996).

### 5.2.3 Events

#### *Cork/Dublin*

The Cork Conference concluded with a declaration that began by advocating sustainable rural development (SRD) as the most pressing item on the EU rural policy agenda (European Commission 1996b). Without advocating renationalisation of the CAP, the main thrust of the Declaration was the promotion of an integrated framework encompassing agriculture, economic diversification, management of natural resources, environmental enhancement and the promotion of culture, tourism and recreation, emphasising the principle of subsidiarity and partnership between all levels (local, regional, national, European). Unfortunately for Fischler, his vision was met with hostility at the subsequent Dublin Summit as he attempted to chart a course between the Scylla of agrarian protectionists on the one hand, and the Charybdis of economic liberalisers on the other. Fischler’s response to this opposition was to seek to detach the promotion of rural policy from the question of CAP reform. They should, he argued, proceed in parallel, but separately (Lowe *et al.* 1996; Lowe *et al.* 2002). The Cork Conference was a defining moment for CAP reform. Fischler’s vision for SRD was considerably watered down before the next round of CAP reform was introduced in 1997. It had promoted a ‘middle way’, a

new integrated agenda for significantly changing the emphasis of agricultural policy (Buckwell 1997a), which was rejected by both the opposing camps of liberalisers and protectionists. Fischler himself, according to PolicyMaker4 (pers.com), received a 'bloody nose' from which he never fully recovered, politically.

### ***Berlin***

The eventual agreement in Berlin, 1999, of the Agenda 2000 reform, was a compromise in which member states failed to agree about degressivity, instead deciding to cut expenditure by postponing the reform of the dairy regime, scaling back price cuts for cereals, and retaining set-aside. The reforms finally affirmed by the Berlin Council involved the creation of a new '2<sup>nd</sup> pillar' for the CAP, the badly under-funded structural strand of the previous CAP being replaced by the RDR. The RDR was to combine agri-environmental, Less Favoured Area (LFA), farm structures aids and RD measures in one new instrument to support the integration of agriculture and RD within the EU (Lowe and Brouwer 2000; Lowe *et al.* 2002), a structure that was initially hailed as a novelty in agricultural policy making, and subsequently perceived as owing much to political and administrative expediency. The negotiations themselves were perceived by PolicyMaker1 as a purely political process, a view that was backed up by PolicyInfluencer19 who was working in the EC at the time. She reported that lobbying went on round the clock as teams from the different countries staked out their positions. The row between France and Germany over the cost of the CAP finally upset the process, and other respondents reported that the sense of common effort apparent at the earlier Brussels Council disintegrated as France's President Chirac rejected the most radical elements of the reform package. Degressivity, according to PolicyMaker1, expired at Berlin as the Dutch backed down, leaving only Sweden, the UK and Italy to support it. Pro-reformist delegates left the conference disappointed at the final outcome:

*I wanted it sorted out. The day afterwards it was very much that we had to go through the whole process again – still a feeling that it hadn't gone far enough. How far did people think it should have gone? As far as Cork, really (PolicyInfluencer19).*



#### 5.2.4 Knowledge

The Agenda 2000 negotiations were carried out against a broad background of knowledge relating to global issues of trade and markets, and the relentless pressure on the EU to enlarge to accommodate the Central European Countries of the former Communist Eastern Bloc. Crucially they were also shaped by experiences across the Union with reforms of the Structural Funds and the introduction of the Accompanying Measures in the 1992 reform of the CAP. Some of these issues are discussed briefly below.

##### *The WTO*

Respondents in this research expressed many different opinions regarding their perception of the forces driving CAP reform. However, pressure from the WTO to lift tariffs and reduce subsidies in the agriculture sector was the driver most cited. Some thought it was more important than others in relation to competing issues. Those respondents in MAFF closest to the Agenda 2000 negotiations were the most sceptical about the threat posed by the WTO, believing that while the US subsidised its agriculture the Blue Box payments would continue. This scepticism was reflected by the comments of a senior policy implementer, who did, however, accept the need to move generally in that direction:

WTO was in the background, not really at that stage a major driver. The people who had done the MacSharry reforms had dealt with the Uruguay round aspect. People were looking ahead and could see that in the future there would be what we are now calling the Doha Round – that there would be some very much greater significant pressures on the CAP. So I think there was partly a scene, well we need to be moving in that direction, this is the start, it is a trial experiment or whatever, that the WTO pressures weren't acute (PolicyImplementer5, pers.com).

An agricultural business consultant suggested that the balance between the WTO desire to expand world trade to increase everyone's prosperity, and protectionism, was typical of all political processes ... "composed of two equal and opposite forces hopefully resulting in some sort of compromise" (PolicyAdviser3, pers.com). In his view, as was the case with the majority of respondents, the WTO posed a huge threat to the CAP. Made up of all the major trading nations with policy agendas of their own, the WTO was the single biggest exogenous constraint on the CAP's protectionist policies, and the Agenda 2000

negotiations had failed to satisfy its requirements. A Policy Influencer at the negotiations expressed this sense of failure:

Following Agenda 2000 [the DGVl officers] had the whole issue that they were in a terrible position with the WTO. Nobody was particularly pleased with it. There was recognition that it would have to be reformed again and everyone was just facing the debate they'd had for the past five years. *Was the WTO more important than domestic issues?* Yes, that was my impression. I think it was all the other things as well, but they could have sorted those out in other ways. It was the WTO they couldn't sort out in any other way (PolicyInfluencer19).

To some of those on the periphery of the policy community, however, the RDR was merely a simplification of existing legislation brought about by pressure from the WTO:

When it appeared, all it was, was bringing together a number of regulations that already existed into one regulation. The way I used to talk about it was that it wasn't very new. It simplified for me the funding structure. The RDR was now clearly in the Green Box (PolicyAdviser2, pers.com).

### ***The Budget and Enlargement of the Union***

As noted above, the Brussels Council of Agriculture Ministers was dominated by the finance ministers forcing acceptance of a reform package that would help to stabilise the CAP budget in the face of serious pressures from both inside and outside the EU. However, Agenda 2000 was a reform not just of the CAP, but of the whole EC budget. Uncertainty over the Euro at the time, together with the prospect of enlargement and the threat of WTO sanctions, demanded a reduction in the cost of the CAP and a reallocation of the structural funds. The most significant change, according to a policy maker, was likely to come from plans to enlarge the Union with the accession of the eastern European countries:

Most of the structural funds were going to Spain, Portugal and the UK, and there was a recognition that if they were going to bring about enlargement successfully, they had to shift the emphasis away from Spain and Portugal and Ireland to those new parts of the EU. So you had to do something about agriculture, you had to do something about the budget overall, you were uncertain about the Euro, uncertain about economic growth in the Community. Germany had just unified and that was very expensive. There were lots of uncertainties, and Santer set up the process to reform the budget. He gave Fischler a very clear authority to progress radically with CAP reform (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).



The main problem with accession for the CAP, he suggested, was the increased cost of supporting large, inefficient farming systems in the former Communist states, and the potential unevenness of their contribution to the EU budget. With relatively modern agricultures, Slovenia and the Czech Republic would almost certainly be net contributors. However, Poland, as a backward economy with a very substantial number of inefficient, small-scale farms, would be a net beneficiary:

The issue really is that the enlarged EU would enlarge the total income of the EU, enlarge the total market for all new producers of food products, financial services etcetera and it would enlarge the cost of the CAP. The issue really is, what are the trade-offs and balances? (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).

Significantly, as noted by PolicyInfluencer19, Member States had not been prepared to put more money into the European budget during the Agenda 2000 negotiations, creating a situation of intense lobbying for increasingly scarce funds.

### ***The Structural Funds Reform***

The Structural Funds reform of 1988 brought some relief through the Objective 1 designation to rural areas suffering the negative economic effects of previous rounds of CAP reform. This was greatly enhanced in 1994 by the introduction of Objective 5b, which was specifically aimed at promoting RD by assisting structural adjustment in exclusively rural areas which were particularly vulnerable, especially those which were sparsely populated. It had three main priorities: 1) support for the development and diversification of agriculture and forestry; 2) the development of new SMEs (small to medium enterprises) and the creation of services for assisting businesses; and 3) the development of rural tourism as an additional source of income for farmers and their families. Other measures contributed to the regeneration of villages, providing the potential for job creation while protecting the local heritage (European Commission 1996a).

The opportunities provided under Objective 5b were additional to those provided under the existing horizontal Objective 5a, which was specifically directed at preserving viable farming income by creating new opportunities both on and close to the farm. The measures under 5a included both direct transfers to farmers in the most disadvantaged areas

(mountainous or other naturally disadvantaged areas covering about 56% of usable agricultural land in the Union) and transfers designed to restructure and develop the sector (e.g. increasing competitiveness, encouraging diversification, support for young farmers, early retirement of farmers, improving product quality by investment in processing and marketing of agricultural produce).

According to the first Cohesion Report estimates suggested that more than half a million jobs would be created or preserved in Objective 5b areas as a result of the programme (European Commission 1996a). However, when assessing the effects of Community intervention for 1994-1999, Inforegio observed that unemployment had risen marginally since 1995, but pointed out that it was still much lower than the EU average. They also noted that regions had sometimes opted for the easiest approach in their analysis of causal factors and remedial processes, seemingly content to pursue existing or insufficiently targeted measures (ibid).

### ***The Accompanying Measures***

The so-called Accompanying Measures of the 1992 MacSharry Reform of the CAP signposted a new direction for CAP support by bringing AE, farmland afforestation and early retirement for farmers<sup>51</sup> into the Guarantee section of the EAGGF alongside the market measures. The significance of this was not only that AE measures were being brought into the heart of the CAP, but that the Guarantee Fund was not subject to the same budgetary restrictions as the Guidance Fund. Expectations were that the AE budget would increase from ten million ecu in 1990 to 1.3 billion by 1997 (Lowe and Whitby 1997). This followed on from publication by the Commission in 1998 of 'The Future of Rural Society', in which it acknowledged that agriculture could no longer be the main focus for EC rural policies (CEC 1988).

In terms of consequences and influences, Regulation 2078/92 set certain precedents for agricultural policy. Most significant were: 1) the principle that farmers of all sizes and

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<sup>51</sup> The Accompanying Measures included: an Agri-Environment Programme (EEC Regulation 2078/92); Forestry measures (EEC Regulation 2080/92); and an Early Retirement Scheme (EEC Regulation 2079/92).



scales could potentially benefit from a policy that rewarded de-intensified agriculture and countryside management; and 2) the introduction of subsidiarity into agricultural policy. This latter precedent had the potential to be a double-edged sword, responses reflecting the regional variation in rural environments, but also highlighting resource and capacity variations regionally and nationally (Lowe and Whitby 1997).

The causes and effects of the AER have been dealt with in Chapter 1 of this thesis. To recap, the regulation, as a ‘common policy’, was intended to contribute to cohesion across the Union while redirecting support for commodity production into compensation payments. It attracted a wide consensus from liberalising and environmental groups and provided a means for complying with GATT pressures. However, its critics maintained that the regulation had not gone far enough in integrating the environment into CAP reform. Also, in spite of early predictions regarding funding, by the mid-1990s it accounted for only about 4% of the total CAP budget (ibid). However, it had provided the platform for an enhanced public debate about European agricultural policy; a debate that continued in the negotiations for the Agenda 2000 reforms.

### **5.3 Framing the idea - summary**

The first part of this chapter has shown that, against a background of broad societal change, the traditional rationale for support for agriculture through the CAP was challenged by alternative visions promoted by groups with different policy agendas. The fundamental shift in the philosophy of the CAP introduced through the 1992 reform provided the impetus for calls for a further broadening of the scope of the CAP. The multiple roles of agriculture, advocated by the EC in the face of CAP budgetary crisis, started to become a reality through the Agri-Environment Regulation (AER), although progress towards a more integrated RD as envisaged by the Buckwell Group was severely constrained by the EC’s continued adherence to traditional CAP values. In the face of threats to the CAP from the WTO and future accessions, and influenced by reforms to the Structural Funds and the CAP, a broad coalition of consent formed round the idea of RD as the way forward for

European agriculture, but this coalition was split between factions who perceived RD in very different ways. To some, including the UK, RD was viewed as a means to an end, the end being the radical reform of an expensive and wasteful CAP. To others, including France, RD meant the protection of their agriculture industry from global competition and the maintenance of small family farmers on the land to support rural communities and jobs. A middle way involved the adoption of SRD defined in relation to a number of principles including the integration of objectives, diversification, subsidiarity, sustainability, simplification, programming, public/private financing, local capacity-building and learning.

In promoting the ‘middle way’, the EC as policy entrepreneur failed to gather the support necessary to marginalise the other two positions, but its legacy can be found in the RDR which was promoted as ... “a sustainable and integrated rural development policy” (European Commission 1999d, p1). This arrangement, however, while being heralded as a radical development within the CAP, may have contained the seeds of failure within both its concept and its context. The next part of this chapter analyses the rationales, goals and rules of the RDR, using these elements of the policy design framework to see how this construction of RD has been embedded in the policy.

## **5.4 Embedding the Idea**

### **5.4.1 Rationale**

The rationale for the RDR is fourfold: 1) as a ‘common policy’ it should contribute to policy objectives as per Article 33(1) of the Treaty of Rome (ToR), and to economic and social cohesion in Objective 1 & 2 regions; 2) it should help agriculture adapt to changes in the policy context brought about by market evolution, trade rules, consumer demand and EU enlargement; 3) it should facilitate the integration of agriculture into the wider rural economy; and 4) it should simplify existing legislation<sup>52</sup> by reorganising a range of

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<sup>52</sup> The RDR combines the following instruments: Council Regulation (EEC) Nos. 2052/88 (Objectives 5a & 5b); 4256/88 (implementing 2052); 867/90 (improving processing and marketing conditions for forestry products); 2078/92 (Accompanying measures); 2079/92 (Early Retirement); 2080/92 (forestry measures);



complex instruments into one legal entity. Simply put, these rationales can be extrapolated as *cohesion*, *multifunctionality*, *integration*, and *simplification*. These are explained now in a little more detail.

### ***Cohesion***

As a ‘common policy’<sup>53</sup> the RDR had a number of aims in terms of addressing the social, economic and environmental objectives of all member states. At the same time its status allowed adaptation to suit the agrarian ideology of the different states, and this raised the spectre of distorting the level playing field upon which the ethos of the EU was predicated. Clearly this had important implications for UK farmers as the government decided how to use this discretion to promote their liberalising agenda. It was also an important opportunity for the environmental lobby, squeezed as it was between the big agendas of pro- and anti-reformers. As a driver for CAP reform, however, cohesion was barely recognised by respondents, most of whom were unaware of the complexities of the RDR as a common policy.

### ***Multifunctionality***

Multifunctionality was clearly an issue, with the EC coming under pressure from a number of sources: from the WTO to liberalise its trade rules and compensation regimes; from prospective member states for access to markets; and from the public for protected environments and better quality, safer, and cheaper products. The introduction of support for the production of public goods proved to be a useful mechanism for maintaining farmer incomes in the face of mounting pressure on agriculture, and the structural adjustment and RD measures introduced in the RDR were designed to give greater scope for diversification. However, the regulation still only provided for this on a relatively small

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951/97 (improving processing and marketing conditions for agricultural products); 950/97 (improving the efficiency of agricultural structures); 1260/99 (financial rules). The accompanying measures are to be supplemented by the LFA scheme and areas with environmental restrictions. It repeals the following: 2084/80, 220/91, 860/94, 1025/94, 1054/94, 1282/94, 1404/94, 1682/94, 1844/94, 746/96.

<sup>53</sup> Common measures have multiple objectives, regarded by Clarke et al (1997) when considering the AER as a serious flaw in the sense of policy design because it dilutes the environmental basis of the policy and is an inefficient mechanism for achieving policy goals, being a single measure instituted to address the social, economic and environmental objectives of both northern and southern states.

scale compared with the support for the commodity regimes, leaving environmental organisations sceptical about its true value for SiRLU.

### ***Integration***

The integration of agriculture with the wider rural economy was a rationale that should have appealed to the liberalisers in the CAP reform debate. Based on the shrinking contribution of agriculture to rural GDP, the argument in the UK, for example, was that agriculture was no longer a special case, warranting high levels of public support for the production of unwanted goods. The AER represented a move towards integration with its multiple goals, and shifted some support from the production of private to the production of public goods. However, to talk of integrating agriculture with the wider economy implied an overarching rural policy that the RDR certainly did not provide, separated as it still was from Pillar 1 after the Agenda 2000 reform. It was not at all clear from the form of the regulation, how this integration was supposed to take place, except through the limited scope of Article 33 (see below).

### ***Simplification***

The final rationale for the regulation was simply one of administrative rationalisation. Most people who cited this as a possible explanation for the appearance of the RDR did so in a cynical way, expressing doubts about the effectiveness of a policy brought about by brigading together disparate regulations in the name of simplification. At the same time, the inclusion of measures addressing economic, environmental and social issues in the same policy should have represented an agenda for the sustainable development of rural areas. It was, therefore, significant that SD *per se* was not mentioned as justification (rationale) for the policy, the discourse of sustainability being used only once as an overarching term in conjunction with ‘rural development’ in explaining the function of the regulation in Title I, and once in relation to the way that AE instruments should support rural areas (Council of the European Communities 1999, para.29). Throughout the rest of the text, ‘rural development’ was the term used to describe the aim of the policy.

In stating these rationales for the regulation, the RDR also specified some important criteria:



- The regulation is to cover *all rural areas*
- Rural development measures should *accompany and complement market policies*
- Support will be based on a *single legal framework* establishing measures, objectives, and eligibility criteria
- The rural development policy should follow the principle of *subsidiarity* – emphasis on *participation* and a *bottom-up approach*.
- The basic support criteria is laid down at EC level to avoid distorting competition and ensure *consistency with other CAP instruments*
- The EC is to hold *all implementing powers* in order to ensure flexibility and simplify legislation

(CEC 1999)

Together the rationales and accompanying criteria seem to suggest an agenda for SD, particularly in respect of the concepts of integration and discretion. However, these criteria give rise to three observations. Firstly, the designation of RD measures as ‘accompanying and complementing’ market measures makes the interpreting rhetoric, ‘2nd pillar’ of the CAP, seem very optimistic. Secondly, while the emphasis on participation and a bottom-up approach is welcome from the member states’ perspectives, the caveats that consistency and flexibility require EC control would appear to negate the benefits of regional distinctiveness and discretion. Thirdly, the fundamental synergy between regulations being brigaded into the RDR is questionable as they had all been developed and administered separately in response to different issues and circumstances.

#### 5.4.2 Goals

According to the policy design thesis, the rationales of policy should have a close fit with actual policy goals and reasonable expectations of effects. Thus the goals become the link between intended and actual outcomes. The RDR in its preamble (paragraphs 1-53) addressed five main areas of concern with its specific aims: structural adjustment/farmer incomes, protection of the environment, forestry, rural development, sustainable agriculture and administration/finance. These are summarised in the table below:

**Table 5.1 The Implied Goals of the RDR**

<b>Goals</b>	<b>Specific aims</b>
<b>Structural adjustment/ Farmers incomes</b>	To modernise agricultural holdings and improve viability thereby ensuring a fair income and living conditions for farmers and their families. Investment aid eligibility for this must be simplified
	Specific benefits to young farmers to facilitate the establishment and subsequent structural adjustment of holdings
	Training for agricultural/forestry workers including management, production and marketing
	Training for farmers in agricultural methods compatible with the environment
	Early retirement to be encouraged
<b>(Overlap)</b>	Support for LFAs to contribute to the continued use of land
	LFAs to have a common basis for classification
<b>Environmental protection</b>	Support where environmental restrictions exist
	A prominent role to be given to AE measures to support the sustainable development of rural areas and to respond to society's increasing demand for environmental services
	Existing support to continue to take into account experience gained in implementing Regulation 2078/92
	The AE scheme to be used as a tool for the 'common good' by improving the environment, natural resources, soil, genetic diversity and maintenance of landscape and countryside
<b>Support for rural development</b>	Support for the improvement of processing and marketing of agricultural products
	Support for other measures relating to farming activities and their conversion based on the need for rural development to be partly based on non-agricultural activities and services
<b>Forestry</b>	Support for forestry measures that avoid distorting competition and are market neutral, taking account of international undertakings regarding climate change
<b>Sustainable agriculture</b>	Organic aid improves the sustainability of farming activities and thus contributes to the aim of the RDR. Aid includes production, processing and marketing
<b>Administration/Finance</b>	RD measures should comply with Community law and be consistent with other Community policies and other CAP instruments
	Support will come from the Guarantee Fund except in Objective I areas where only the accompanying measures are



	supported under the Guarantee Fund
	Monitoring and evaluation is to be carried out using ‘well-defined’ indicators
	RD measures should be eligible for member state support without any Community co-financing. Specific State Aid rules should be established

Source: (Council of the European Communities 1999)

From this it can be seen that the rationale for *cohesion* is supported by the AE scheme, which was to be used as a tool for the ‘common good’; that for *multifunctionality* by the structural adjustment and RD measures. It is not clear quite how the *integration* rationale is supported by the goals, while the goals for forestry and sustainable agriculture seem to be included as contributing to SD, but with no clear rationale for that being stated. There is thus an implicit assumption in the text that SRD will be achieved through these activities without stating that it is a policy rationale. The final rationale of *simplification* is not supported by any of the goals of the policy, and there is no other reason given for the reorganisation. It does not imply that simplifying the legal administration of disparate regulations will inevitably lead to some sort of synergy. It does, however, seem to suggest that the basis upon which the RDR is framed has no particular coherence, and no radical rationale beyond administrative convenience and the structural adjustment of the agriculture sector.

### 5.4.3 Rules

A programming approach, adapted from the Structural Funds Regulation (Regulation 1260), was adopted for the implementation of the RDR. The effect of this new requirement on member states’ agriculture departments cannot be overemphasised. Taking the UK government as an example, MAFF had, up to that point, operated in virtual isolation from the other government departments. Its functions had been to support and administer the CAP commodity regimes and address public health and veterinary issues. Now it was being called upon to produce a plan, in consultation with partners, which purported to support the much broader issue of RD. At the same time, however, it offered an unprecedented

opportunity for liberalising governments to take advantage of the discretion offered in Article 33 to divert Guarantee funding away from farm businesses and into the wider rural economy (see Chapter 6).

The programming approach was supported by the Implementing Regulation<sup>54</sup> (Regulation 1750) published in July 1999, two months after the RDR itself (Regulation 1257).

Regulation 1750 made it quite clear that the financial accountability of member states to the EC was a major issue, the allocation and administration of budgets remaining outside the general assumption of subsidiarity that the regulation espoused. While this was clearly a response to the problem of fraud, and public confidence in the fairness and honesty of Community budget management, it removed the element of local discretion that distinguished the allocation of Structural Fund money. The RDR measures, as noted above, had been selected with farmer/landowner interests at their core. The programming was based on the structural funds model and monitoring and evaluation of the programme would also be established on the basis of that model. In the meantime, the financial administration was to be governed by CAP financing rules, and budgetary disciplines would apply in addition to any specific RDR rules. There were rules for the structure and content of RDPs, and detailed provision in terms of financial planning for Guarantee measures including a regular reporting regime to the EC. This burden of regulation was likely to have a negative effect on the implementation of the programme in terms of administrative time, the cost implications of that, and flexibility. On the other hand the positive elements of Regulation 1750 were the discretion allowed to member states in the definition of conditions for support under Article 33, the requirement to establish a standard of Good Farming Practice, and the observation of minimum conditions in connection with AE support.

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<sup>54</sup> Commission Regulation (EC) No 1750/1999.



## 5.5 Discussion and Conclusion

The new regulation<sup>55</sup> was an amalgamation of largely existing measures including the accompanying measures, previously financed by the Guarantee section of the EAGGF and the Structural Fund Objective 5a/b measures (European Commission 1999d). On the face of it, it represented a departure from traditional CAP policy making, particularly in terms of its funding and form. However, as noted above, it may have been conceptually and contextually flawed. Conceptually the regulation attempted to combine measures that were based on ‘public goods’ payments (including the agri-environment component of the accompanying measures of the 1992 reform and the LFA scheme) with those to promote the structural modernisation of agricultural holdings and associated activities (including new measures within Article 33 for non-agricultural activities). Clark *et al* (1997) comment in relation to the AER of 1992 that the design of ‘common measures’<sup>56</sup>, *i.e.* those that are instituted to address social, economic and environmental objectives across the Union, is seriously flawed in the sense that they dilute the environmental basis of the policy.

Contextually, because the majority of the measures contained within the RDR existed in some form prior to the Agenda 2000 reforms, there was an infrastructure within which they were likely to continue to be promoted. RD was the umbrella under which these disparate measures were brought together, but there was no explicit formulation given by the Commission as to what sustainable integrated rural development (SIRD) should be, or how it should be achieved, given the inherent lack of synergy between the two types of measures. The fact that Member States were free to make their own interpretation of the regulation (save for the fact that it was compulsory to adopt an agri-environmental programme) was likely to result in different models of RD arising, dependent on the position of member states in relation to the core CAP principles.

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<sup>55</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain Regulations.

<sup>56</sup> Co-financing for common measures is permitted on the grounds that schemes have ... “a direct link with the improvement of (agricultural structures), the rationalisation of farming practices or the ensuring of a fair standard of living for the agricultural population” (Potter 1998a, p123).

In essence, then, the RDR framed RD as an *idea*, based on the multifunctionality of agriculture, leaving it to Member States to decide what form RD should take to fit in with their particular social, environmental and economic agendas. From a policy design perspective, the flaws identified in this chapter are likely to seriously compromise the ability of the policy to achieve its stated aims, such as they are. There are few direct links between the rationales and the goals of the policy; the Implementing Regulation imposes a heavy burden on implementers, while the basis upon which the policy is founded is likely to seriously dilute its effectiveness. The *idea* of RD supported in rhetoric the tenets of IRD identified in Chapter 3, but there was no end result specified. It appears, then, that SIRD from the perspective of the EC revolved around the multifunctionality of agriculture, with viable farm holdings contributing to the maintenance of environmental benefits, sustainable agriculture and the social infrastructure of the countryside. In this respect, therefore, the policy remains largely embedded in the sectoral discourse of agriculture despite the introduction of RD as a new policy paradigm.

This short analysis of the RDR justifies to some extent the conclusions of the first part of this chapter. The regulation tended to mirror the divisions and the different constructions of RD in an ... “uneasy mix, some things pulling one way and some things pulling another” (PolicyAdviser7, pers.com). It introduced the *idea* of RD to the CAP policy making arena, but raised doubts about the effectiveness of the mechanisms designed to implement it, these being based on competing policy models. As the ‘rump’ of Fischler’s ‘middle way’ for CAP reform, the RDR was a peculiar mixture, involving a top-down policy that was to be programmed and implemented at a regional level (Lowe and Brouwer 2000). It stitched together a raft of disparate, existing regulations, lending them greater credibility and apparent synergy in the process, the EC disseminating information about the regulation under the banner of ‘sustainable integrated rural development’. In doing so it provided the environmental lobby with a vehicle for integrating economic and social concerns into their hitherto mainly single-interest agendas. Thus the discourses of SD and RD were brought together in a way that suggested they were synonymous, while making no attempt to define



the concepts or implicate them in the policy rationale. It is only in supplementary literature from the EC that SIRD is stated specifically as a policy objective, further supporting the contention of this chapter that RD was essentially an *idea*, a ‘catch-all’ phrase that could be manipulated and used to distract attention from other, possibly unstated, objectives of policy makers.

## **Chapter 6 The Social Construction of Rural Development as ‘Tool’: Framing Rural Development in England**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This is the second of the empirical chapters dealing with the social construction of rural development (RD). Chapter 5 examined the discourses of RD emerging during the Agenda 2000 negotiations through the lens of Schneider and Ingram’s (1997) (S&I) policy design model. This revealed the divisions within the CAP policy arena over what exactly was construed as RD by the different actors, the influence of various forces on the constructions of RD, and the form of RD embedded in the RDR. This chapter uses the same framework (the ‘framing’ element of the policy design model) to explore the way that RD was socially constructed in the context of implementing the ERDP. As before, interview data and secondary data are used to analyse the *societal conditions* and *events*, and identify the *groups* and *knowledge* involved in the CAP reform policy arena. It was impossible to make this analysis comprehensive within the scope of this study and therefore this chapter has been restricted to an overview of those issues within these four headings that had direct relevance to the subject of this thesis.

### **6.2 Societal conditions**

The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food (The Curry Report - 2002), reporting at the behest of government in the wake of the Foot and Mouth crisis, identified a programme of ‘reconnection’ as the solution to the problems facing British agriculture: reconnecting farmers with their market and the rest of the food chain; reconnecting the food chain with a healthy and attractive countryside; reconnecting consumers with what they eat and where it has come from. ‘Reconnection’ links the rhetoric with the perceived ‘disconnection’ of agriculture from the rest of the rural economy as the latter went through a series of changes, from the managed economy emerging in the inter-war years (Winter, M. 1996) through the industrialisation of agricultural production after World War II (Ilbery,



B. and Bowler 1998) to entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) and the CAP. The responses to these changes, including overproduction, the destruction of environment and agro-ecosystems, farm income inequality and a change in the composition of the workforce, did not arise in isolation, but were accompanied by increasing pressure from various sources for reform. Not least among these pressures was the more assertive environmentalism alluded to in Chapter 3. Tentative attempts by governments to respond to the polemics of this environmentalism<sup>57</sup> met with further criticism, a situation that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was only able to redress through acknowledging a new role for the farmer as ‘environmental steward’ (Clark and Jones 1998). During this time of intense conflict and debate, the concept of agri-environmentalism was born, allowing MAFF to knit together the hitherto elusive goals of conservation and sound farming practice (MAFF 1989).

The development of the concept of RD has been described at some length in Chapter 3. Suffice it here to say that it evolved in isolation from agriculture, the language of RD being used largely at a regional level in the context of the Rural Development Commission (RDC). This language started to change as the EC embraced the concept as a new direction for CAP reform (see Chapter 5). In the UK, however, policy rhetoric revolved around the concept of environmental sustainability, the AER, for example, providing the focus for concern regarding the integration of environmental issues into agricultural policy making (Bowers 1995; Potter 1998b; Winter, M. *et al.* 1998; Brouwer and Lowe 2000; Buller 2000). Meanwhile, according to respondents who had worked at the time for the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS)<sup>58</sup>, there was a certain consensus forming round the notion of linking agriculture, the environment and RD in a more holistic approach to rural policy making. However, RD was still not a phrase commonly used by

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<sup>57</sup> The farmer had been famously cast by Marion Shoard (1980, p9) as ... “the executioner [of the] English landscape”.

<sup>58</sup> The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service replaced four groups of advisory experts in 1971 to provide a state funded consultancy and advisory service for farmers with a substantial research facility (Winter, M. 1996). This service was forced to become market-oriented in the mid-1980s, and is now a commercial consultancy organisation. It undertook the Ex-Ante and Mid-Term Evaluations of the ERDP together with SQW Ltd.

the agricultural policy community in connection with agriculture. This was corroborated by PolicyImplementer5:

I would question the statement that people in the UK weren't thinking about rural development. I think it would be fair to say that MAFF or the agricultural establishment weren't thinking about rural development (PolicyImplementer5, pers.com).

While the agricultural community dragged its feet in relation to the new discourse, the prior experience of the Peak District IRD Project (Blackburn *et al.* 2000) and later experience with Objective 5b and the Bodmin and Bowland initiatives was providing the basis for a model of IRD. Acknowledgement of the new term became widespread as the Agenda 2000 negotiations began, MAFF using the words to encompass AE and wider issues:

We started using the language because it became clear that was the way things were going to happen. It is not language we would ever have chosen, but there was no particular reason to object to the words (PolicyMaker1, pers.com).

## **6.3 Events**

A policy arena is constantly affected by events that occur both within it and in the wider policy context. There were, however, two events that, according to respondents, had a major influence on the agricultural policy community in the years leading up to the Agenda 2000 CAP reform: BSE and the farm incomes crisis. Their combined impact brought farmers and farming methods into the public gaze, subjecting both to intense scrutiny and criticism in terms of food safety and reliance on production subsidies. These two events are briefly described below.

### **6.3.1 BSE**

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is a disease of cattle and was first identified as such in 1986 in the UK. This discovery led to a mounting crisis in the beef industry over the following decade and a half, involving a slaughter policy, feed ban, export ban, cattle



passports, public inquiry<sup>59</sup> and dispute with France and Germany (Defra 2003). The crisis was deepened by the further discovery that BSE was linked to the human disease, Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease (CJD). This episode placed a severe burden on farmers in terms of increased bureaucracy and the viability of their businesses. It also brought into sharp focus the dangers to human health of the industrialisation of agriculture, and the need for a reconnection of the industry to the rest of the food supply chain.

### **6.3.2 The Farm Incomes Crisis in the UK**

The UK farm incomes crisis, according to a farm business consultant, was largely a function of farmers operating in an advanced western economy (competing for high cost labour, land and other resources), and exchange rates, particularly the pound versus the euro<sup>60</sup>. Farm Business Survey (FBS) data show that the crisis affected all types of farming, and that it was largely currency-driven (PolicyAdviser2, pers.com). In real terms the total income from farming (TIFF)<sup>61</sup> fell from over £6 billion in 1995 to less than £2 billion in the calendar year 2000, recovering by 2003 to £3.2bn, representing an income of only £7861 per whole time entrepreneur in 2001. The trend has been steadily downwards over the last 20 years (see Appendix 9 – TIFF per person), interrupted by rising incomes in the early 1990s followed by a sharp fall after 1996. The rise and fall of farmer fortunes during the 1990s closely followed the Exchange Rate; a factor that consultants believed was the most important reason for the decline in TIFF (Mordaunt 2002).

The state of the industry can be summed up by comparing the public spending in UK agriculture with the TIFF. Direct payments to farmers including the Arable Area Payments Scheme (AAPS), livestock headage, agri-environmental and Hill Farm Allowance (HFA) amounted to £2.6 billion in the year 2001-2, compared with TIFF of just £1.7 billion in 2001. A further £0.6 billion of indirect support was made available through export refunds,

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<sup>59</sup> The Phillips Report published in October 2000.

<sup>60</sup> The European agricultural (protected) exchange rate, which disappeared with the start of the single currency on 1 January 1999.

<sup>61</sup> TIFF is the UK measure of aggregate income. It covers the incomes of a wide entrepreneurial group including farmers, partners and directors and spouses, if working on the farm and most family workers. It represents the compensation to these persons for their manual and managerial labour plus the return on their capital (Defra 2004).

intervention and BSE payments, and an extraordinary payment of £2 billion for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) recovery, making a total of £5.2 billion pounds in all for 2001/2 (Mordaunt 2002).

## 6.4 Groups

The policy arena extends from strategic national (England) organisations and actors influencing policy making at the highest level, to regional and local administrators, implementers and target groups. These actors cluster around agendas and respond to events that coalesce the forces for change into new directions for policy. The policy communities identified in this chapter are not coherent, tightly-knit groups in the style of the ‘corporatist’ arrangements that existed between the old MAFF and the National Farmers Union (NFU) (Winter, M. 1996). Rather they are based broadly on the hierarchy of government and include networks of other actors from the policy arena, operating within and between institutional hierarchies. It should be understood that there are some vertical networks within these hierarchies, individuals operating at more than one level. This, however, was found from research to be uncommon, information tending to circulate horizontally rather than vertically, even within organisations. The groups thus identified in England for the purposes of this analysis are: *a national policy community*; and *a regional policy community*. This section of the chapter explores the way that these groups influenced the RD debate, and how the new agenda coalesced around the production of the Cabinet Office Report in 1999.

### 6.4.1 National Policy Community

Since the 1992 reform of the CAP and the introduction of the AER, the agricultural policy community in England has broadened to incorporate other government departments, agencies and farming groups, and a wide range of hitherto excluded environmental and social groups. The National Policy Community identified and analysed here, however, reflects the scope of this thesis insofar as it is restricted to organisations and individuals who were directly concerned with the implementation of the RDR in one way or another. Power to affect change tends to reside with policy entrepreneurs, according to S&I and



Kingdon (1984), and it is they, working at the national level, who are crucial to the development and promotion of ideas. This short analysis is restricted to exploring the contribution of these organisations and individuals.

### *Central Government*

While no-one from elected government was interviewed for this thesis, data provided by several key individuals from the national policy community, including academics and senior GA/NGO policy advisers, gave some brief insights into the influence of this group. The New Labour government had made it quite clear from the beginning that it wanted to be at the heart of the European project in contrast to the preceding Conservative administrations, and that this would be a distinctive feature of its administration. There were, however, problems with monetary union, curbing its ambitions to a certain extent and diverting them to more peripheral policy areas, including the CAP. Thus, PolicyAdviser5 noted that tension was created between holding principles and acknowledging the pragmatics of the situation in terms of CAP reform, and the liberalising stance that the government took. Certainly the British government's radical position was the rejection of a CAP dominated by common market measures in favour of a CAP that allowed the external market determination of prices rather than subsidies, that was better for the environment, and that allowed a better use of taxpayer's money. Interview data suggest this was a view with which few commentators in Britain entirely disagreed, although there were many different perceptions of this position.

The new Labour administration, however, adopted a less confrontational attitude to CAP reform than the previous Conservative government, reappraising the approach in a more strategic way:

I think ministers, possibly starting with Jack Cunningham, saw rural development as a means to an end, and he had a lot of meetings and discussions with various people ... to find out what this rural development stuff was all about, and what its politics were in a European context (PolicyInfluencer23, pers.com).

Even so, Cunningham was seen as an authoritarian figure, and his agenda to commence a restructuring of the agriculture industry met with opposition and protests from farming

groups and, furthermore, from countryside interests, coalescing under the banner of protecting rural Britain. To some respondents his successor, Nick Brown, appeared to be less committed to reform, giving the impression that his mandate was to placate rural unrest. They pointed to the fact that while Brown earned the respect and understanding of the farming community at this time, helping to sell the idea of modulation to the NFU, the environmental and consumer groups who had clustered around the new agenda were disillusioned at the extent to which the government were prepared to renege on their commitment to change. While this is a simplistic overview of a much more complex situation, it gives an idea of how policy responds to changing political circumstances.

### ***MAFF***

Structural and intellectual differences within MAFF were seen to be major constraining factors by the countryside and environmental agencies in the late 1990s, leading to frustration on the part of those already using the language of RD to drive forward the agenda for change. MAFF was seen to be attempting to balance the opposing forces of the farming groups and CAP reform. Thus it is significant that, when questioned on this point, the former head of Rural Division affirmed that the ‘Self and Storing’<sup>62</sup> image of the past in relation to the department’s close association with farmer groups had subsequently been cast off. This study has not sought to verify this statement, the farmer groups being excluded from the national implementation structures of the ERDP (and thus the interview schedule) by default (the National Rural Development Forum met only once in June 2000). In any event, most respondents viewed MAFF as maintaining the culture of a sectoral payment agency, prompting often very blunt criticism in terms of its dynamism, inflexibility and managerialism. This culture had not prepared the department for the complexity associated with RD, and, while staff at Rural Division tasked with setting up the ERDP regarded themselves as being at the ‘cutting edge’ of rural policy making, little thought had been given to the concept prior to the Agenda 2000 negotiations. A member of the original implementation team at Rural Division noted the culture then and now in the department:

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<sup>62</sup> Self and Storing (1962) identified the phenomenon of policy being administered through a committee and a state advisory service working closely together, thereby combining state and industry interests; what Winter (1996, p108) refers to as a ‘local corporatism’.



I think in MAFF at the time there was not a great deal of thought going on on rural development. I mean I think it is astonishing when you look at Defra now, to think what MAFF was doing in 1999 when a lot of this was going on ... It has changed incredibly ... MAFF was a big department doing mainstream CAP subsidies and payments (PolicyImplementer9).

Thus the stance of the British negotiating team in Brussels was interpreted by PolicyInfluencer23 as being driven by the desire to secure CAP reform, with the RDR as a means of achieving that, rather than as a means of developing rural areas in the UK.

### *The Government Agencies*

The government agencies (the Countryside Agency (CA), Environment Agency (EA) and English Nature (EN)) were credited with being the source of many ideas, although these tended to co-evolve in response to events and the interests of the agency. In terms of CAP reform, PolicyAdviser7 confirmed that those developing ideas within the agencies on this subject tended to be small groups of experts and specialists, and while the broad thrust of their work would have been approved on an inter-agency basis, the majority of staff would have been ignorant of most of the detail. The porous boundaries of agencies enabled the transfer of these agendas as staff moved between them, the ideas and discourses thereby gaining strength. An example of this was the then chairman of the agriculture group in Wildlife and Countryside Link who was a major influence in the policy community, having worked on the CAP reform agenda (including the Cork Conference) on behalf of the Countryside Commission (CC) and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) before joining EN in 2001.

The agencies used consultants quite extensively to help them develop a range of other ideas. Two examples of consultations undertaken by the CA involving RD were the review of the Peak District IRD Project which was carried out jointly by the Universities of Plymouth and the CCRU in Cheltenham (see (Blackburn *et al.* 2000)) and an exploration of

IRD through the RDR, Leader+<sup>63</sup>, and Structural Funds by SQW Limited (see (SQW Limited and LUC 2001)). They were both part of a broader agenda by the Agency, launched in 2000 with a literature review commissioned from Land Use Consultants in 2000 ((Land Use Consultants 2000), to define what was meant by integrated rural development (IRD). The IEEP played an important role under advisory contract to the Land Use Policy Group (LUPG)<sup>64</sup> which, according to the CA, would have been much weaker without it. It contributed to a range of debates through conference proceedings and reports, for example, EU enlargement, the development of rural targets and indicators, and CAP direct payments, together with different perspectives on integrated rural policy and the implementation of the RDR (see for example (Petersen 1998; Dwyer 1999, 2000)).

Both the strength and the weakness of the government agencies appear to lie in the generally narrow scope of their responsibilities and interests. As a consultation forum they potentially form a powerful and influential force for environmental protection and enhancement at a national level in their statutory roles as government advisors, but this influence is often diluted by a lack of cooperation as they each pursue their own spending budgets and agendas. Thus, while the CC in conjunction with the LUPG had jointly attempted to establish an agenda round the concept of IRD following the Cork Conference<sup>65</sup>, separately they pursued their own statutory roles and interests. This contributed to the evolution of a multi-stranded rural funding policy that had no strategic coherence, and that included the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the Local Authorities administering various strands of the Structural Funds. The EA, for example, was only marginally involved in the ERDP consultation, partly because it was less well established at the time of the Agenda 2000 debate<sup>66</sup>, but also because it questioned the extent to which the RDR would further its agenda of resource protection and education.

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<sup>63</sup> The Leader Programme was a European Union initiative for the development of disadvantaged rural areas of the Union. Its title means 'Links between actions for the development of the rural economy'. The programme had four measures: A – acquiring skills; B – rural innovation programmes; C – transnational cooperation; D – European network for rural development (European Commission 1998a).

<sup>64</sup> The GB statutory conservation, countryside and environment agencies.

<sup>65</sup> This included producing joint policy statements for the EC and UK government, organising joint meetings with the EC and joint policy influencing events, and commissioning joint research.

<sup>66</sup> The EA was formed in 1996 (see Appendix 3).



The situation subsequently changed as the agency recognised the necessity of fitting in with other interests in pursuing its agenda. It was, however, still firmly committed to its original objectives:

There may be a sub-plot on our part of resource protection... Our particular objective through reform of the CAP is to get more funding and mechanisms for dealing with resource protection issues built into the RDR, particularly probably into AE schemes (PolicyInfluencer1, pers.com).

According to CA staff, the separation of agendas can be linked to the sponsor departments for the agencies. During the Agenda 2000 negotiations the CC was linked to the DoE, which operated largely as a separate lobby group from MAFF, making it difficult for the agency to promote their relationship with the agricultural sector through the existing mechanisms. Now within the Defra 'family', the CA enjoys influence at the highest level of policy making through Ewen Cameron, Chair and Rural Advocate, and its chief executive, Richard Wakeford, who has a seat on the Defra board. This, however, is a double-edged sword, with the agency constrained in its output by its close 'family' relationship.

### *The Academics*

Three broad themes structured academic contributions to the emerging RD debate during the 1990s. Two emanated from concern with the damaging effects of productivist agriculture and the recognition of the need for new conceptualisations of agriculture within a changing rural policy environment. The first concerned the effects of the 1992 CAP reform and the introduction of the AER, which received considerable academic attention. The wide ranging research carried out by Winter *et al* (1998) on behalf of the Countryside Commission demonstrated that the reform had done little to encourage a more integrated approach to achieving environmental, social and agricultural objectives. Discourses of sustainable agriculture from the 1980s spilled over in a critique of the AE programme (e.g. Bowler and Ilbery 1987; Whitby and Ward 1994; Bowers 1995; Baldock *et al.* 1996; Whitby *et al.* 1996; Potter 1998b), creating a post-productivist discourse in which local participation and collaboration could be seen as more effective than productivism and state regulation (Ilbery, B. and Bowler 1998). Winter, Brouwer, Lowe and Baldock drew attention to the lack of integration between agriculture and the environment achieved

through the AER and the dualism of commercial and non-commercial farming (Winter, M. and Gaskell 1998; Brouwer and Lowe 2000; Lowe and Baldock 2000; Winter, M. 2000), leading to calls for social learning in terms of environmental policies for agriculture (Curry and Winter 2000).

The second theme was the Agenda 2000 proposals which provided a platform for these discourses to coalesce through a critique led by Buckwell, Buller, Winter, Lowe and Ward, together with the government agencies, who were seeking a new model for rural support. The new model was based on the 'Land Use Pyramid'<sup>67</sup>, which first emerged as a defined conceptual model during the mid to late 1990s (although with much earlier philosophical roots in the history of environmental land use policy). It was used initially as a means of conceptualising the objectives of the statutory countryside agencies and voluntary conservation bodies for a more integrated and complete set of AE measures in the Agenda 2000 reforms (Land Use Consultants 2005). This model was subject to various subsequent revisions to produce a revised 'pyramid' model of RD which linked rural environmental management and protection, the multifunctionality of agriculture and rural and regional policy, together with ideas for a Europeanisation of rural policy, with discretion leading to a more local approach to policy making and implementation and an end to the unified European Agricultural policy (Buckwell 1997a; Winter, M. and Gaskell 1998; Lowe *et al.* 1999; Winter, M. 2000; Lowe *et al.* 2002).

With the changing rural policy environment came new discourses of governance structures and networks, with Marsden (1998) emphasising the importance of linking development and culture, Murdoch (Murdoch 2000) proposing consumption networks as a new paradigm of RD, implicating food safety, amenity, landscape and ecological improvement, and Ward (1998) reconfiguring RD on the model of Objective 5b. Wide ranging policy communities gathered around these discourses; for example, academics from the Centre for Rural

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<sup>67</sup> The first public manifestation of the pyramid model in the UK appears to have been in January 1998, with the CC outlining its proposals to reshape the CAP using the model of a five-sided pyramid, with each side representing a different aspect of the environment: landscape and local character; biodiversity; archaeological heritage; environmental resources of soil and water; public access to the countryside for spiritual refreshment (Land Use Consultants 2005).



Economy (CRE) at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne believed that the RD debate was an opportunity to link CAP reform, the reform of the Structural Funds and agricultural restructuring through the prism of 'regions' and developed ideas involving the creation of Regional Agricultural and Rural Development Strategies (RARDS) (Lowe *et al.* 1999). The policy community clustered around this agenda included local representatives of the RDC, the County Council, the LGA Rural Commission, the UK 5b Partnership, national actors including Alastair Rutherford and David Baldock, and the EC Agriculture Commissioner, Franz Fischler (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com).

The third theme was concerned with the broader social consequences in Europe of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion, issues taken up by, for example, Shucksmith (1994), Cloke (1994), and Lowe (1994).

Often academics influence policy making through the work they are commissioned to do for government, agencies and other organisations. A good example of this, and one that had significant outcomes for the development of a RD agenda, was the production of the Cabinet Office Report, 'Rural Economies', in 1999, that involved a major contribution from academics at the CRE (University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne). This report, built on a mandate to 'think the unthinkable'<sup>68</sup>, formed the basis for the subsequent Rural White Paper consultation document (DETR 2000). Based on the rejection of compensation payments as a politically sustainable basis for the CAP, and a 'middle way' for CAP reform, the report reflected proposals for change that suggested RD, supported by modulation, as a politically acceptable argument, reflecting the evolution of New Labour from Old Labour, and marking a distinct shift in the philosophy of CAP reform (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com: PolicyAdviser5, pers.com). Clearly discourses need to capture the imagination of policy makers in the first instance, and to do this they need to be promoted by a policy entrepreneur who is in the right place at the right time:

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<sup>68</sup> The final report was considerably edited in spite of the fact that No.10 was quite happy with the ideas, the analysis, and the direction it set (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com).

All those things fit into place. I mean if people at any stage say I have influenced that decision it's critically only because everything else was (in the) right place, or necessity, and these things were then injected ... and the major influence ... is actually putting in the right ideas at the very time, just when they're needed, and if they come at the right time they just pick them up and take them up (PolicyAdviser5, pers.com).

In this particular instance the policy entrepreneurs had the support of other influential groups. For example, the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) had a role in selling modulation to the Cabinet Office Review, having organising a meeting in 1999, together with the CA, on the French approach to the RDR at which modulation had been raised as an issue, and having also held a meeting with the review team during its information gathering phase (PolicyAdviser7, pers.com).

Two views were expressed about the influence of academics by respondents. The first related specifically to 'Rural Economies', but it could be applied more broadly to policy proposals:

The Cabinet White Paper was pretty limited I think. Certainly having talked to Ward and Lowe about it, I think your view is absolutely right, they did write a very influential paper with a relatively small catchment of individuals feeding into it. And it was a view, a view that's put forward, and the problem is then, these things gradually creep through the system and people say, don't panic, it's only for consultation, but of course it's not. What happens if nothing else, because somebody's written it down, it starts to shape other peoples' thinking. Other people then will move back towards that, and everybody else on the outside who's a consultee feels they're on the back foot (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

The second was a sceptical comment that may reflect deeper divisions between policy makers and advisers:

What I think is very difficult to see is endogenously good ideas originating from the academic community and finding their way into government institutions. It may be that it is an impossible process to see because it all happens in a diffuse way....There are a handful of people who do seem to have influence ... Mike Winter, Philip Lowe, Mark Shucksmith and one or two others. But as much as anything those individuals stand out for having as good an analysis of what's going on as anyone else. They don't necessarily stand out as people who generate new and robust ideas (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).



#### 6.4.2 The Regional Policy Community

Regions<sup>69</sup> are potentially rich sources of ideas, according to PolicyAdviser7, but the policy community generating these ideas can be difficult to pin down. Regions are distinguished by their environmental, economic and cultural characteristics. So, for example, respondents from the North East describe it as a relatively small region with a very strong regional identity. It has a history of regarding itself as an entity, with a body of people thinking about its challenges, its spatial dynamics, and its relationships with other regions and the UK (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com). The South West, on the other hand, as the largest of the regions, encompasses a diversity of characteristics within its six counties. The peripherality of the far west is sharply defined both geographically and culturally, and by its designation under the structural funds<sup>70</sup>, contrasting with the more prosperous counties in the east of the region (MAFF 2000c). The region is perceived by some, however, to be united by the quality of its natural environment, not only in terms of the economic benefits to agriculture and tourism, but also as a cultural artefact, affecting the consciousness of the people who live and work there. This is translated, especially in parts of Devon, into sub-regional cultures that are still strongly influenced by the tradition of family farming, although the contribution of that sector to the rural economy is very small, and the majority of people living in the area are not connected with agriculture in any other way (PolicyInfluencer26, pers.com).

The Business Link sponsored conference, ‘Revitalising British Agriculture’, highlighted this differentiation between deeply traditional farming communities in disadvantaged areas, and the larger, more prosperous farms of the eastern counties, concluding that it had led to a fracturing of the agricultural lobby as farmers, landowners and their representative groups staked out their positions regarding the RD agenda (Business Link 2002). This was illustrated in the difficulties encountered by the regional NFU as it promoted a vision for the future in its 2000 policy statement on farming in the South West (NFU 2000). Based on

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<sup>69</sup> As defined by the Government Office boundaries.

<sup>70</sup> Objective 5b in Cornwall and parts of Devon from 1994-1999; Objective 1 in Cornwall and Objective 2 in North Devon and West Somerset from 2000.

the idea that farming would have to change from small-scale, high cost commodity production to small-scale, high cost, *high quality* food production, the plan set out an agenda for change, highlighting the need to raise skills levels and trade much more on quality in terms of farming systems, care for the environment, animal welfare and the eating quality of food, because it could no longer compete on quantity. It also accepted in principle the modulation of production subsidies in spite of the national NFU stance against it. This, however, would require a significant change in culture on the part of the industry:

This would require a sea change in attitude. Farmer's attitudes would have to be led by consumers rather than driven either by their own production instincts or by the politicians, and they must learn to regard the environment as an asset rather than an obstacle to efficient farming and consciously to aspire for quality in everything they do. And that will require a very significant culture change on the part of the industry, but the ERDP was an opportunity to start that process (PolicyInfluencer8, pers.com).

The regional NFU and other NGO practitioners admit however, that changing hearts and minds is a long-term commitment, requiring farmers to overcome their fear of new directions and associated risks, with many farmers remaining deeply suspicious of their representatives' views on CAP reform.

Interview data show that the policy community in the region was not cohesive in as far as it was not clustered around any particular agenda, with the possible exception of SD.

Produced in response to the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development by Sustainability South West, and headed by Jonathon Porritt, the SD framework document for the South West, commissioned by GOSW and the RA, drew together organisations and government departments to promote the sustainable economic, social and environmental well being of the region. The agenda was important for the South West as the demands of the region's core land use industries of tourism and agriculture posed threats to the natural capital of the area: 60% of the nation's protected coastline; over one third of the region nationally designated for its landscape quality; and the largest concentration of built heritage in the country (Sustainability South West 2001). As such it is interesting that MAFF was not one of the partners who cooperated in the development of the framework. This could be an



indication of the extent to which agricultural policy was separated from other agendas in the region before the Agenda 2000 proposals:

As you say we had the RDC and the CC working but it was completely divorced from agriculture. Agriculture was in one area and it was about CAP and then you had work on rural communities done separately and the two weren't joined up at all at that stage in the broad political thinking (PolicyImplementer5, pers.com).

It may also be a reflection of the government attitude at that time towards SD more generally, the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) being, according to one academic, ... "a relatively low profile part of the Whitehall machine lost within the DETR and with little influence beyond that department" (Ward 2000, p40).

Interview data indicates that GAs and NGOs within the region tended to work at an operational rather than a strategic level, delivering their own grant aid schemes with little reference to any sort of strategic framework. Some were very narrowly focused in what was described by several respondents as a 'silo' mentality, concentrating only on issues that were of direct concern to them. This extract is from an interview with a regional GA director:

I took a limited interest in (the RDR) because I was busy doing other things ... in terms of the immediate impact on most of the people who worked in the (organisation), it was relatively minor because of course most of our staff are implementing more directly responsible schemes. Around the region most of our staff aren't working on anything like that at all (PolicyInfluencer2, pers.com).

Local authorities, because of their broad social, economic and environmental responsibilities, had carried forward a holistic agenda for change, with partnerships cooperating in the production, amongst other things, of Local Agenda 21 plans. Some local authority respondents, however, reported that until the introduction of the RDR/ERDP, and the inclusion of MAFF in the regional Government Office network, their agenda had largely excluded agriculture *per se*. An exception to this was the involvement of Devon County Council in the Objective 5b programme. PolicyInfluencer4 explained how, having become deeply involved in the 5b network, he promoted the integration of the agricultural industry with the rest of the food chain through the European Rural Exchange (ERE)

network. Continuing the work of the Objective 5b Network, this organisation was praised by several key respondents for having made a significant contribution to the RD debate, campaigning in Brussels during the Agenda 2000 negotiations, and developing an inter-regional network of individuals working towards the goal of RD.

## **6.5 Knowledge**

Examples have been given above of the way that knowledge of the issues surrounding the phenomenon of RD was created through the interaction of academics, consultants and organisations. In addition to this theory-driven body of research, knowledge of a different kind resided in those areas that had been designated under the Structural Funds. It emanated from the experiences of implementers and target groups in using the discretion available under these projects to form networks and alliances in pursuit of the practical application of RD. Thus, in England, the knowledge underpinning the RD debate in the CAP reform policy arena emanated largely from experience with implementing the Objective 5b programme during the 1990s, and the last part of this analysis briefly examines some aspects of this programme.

Objective 5b was important to the RD debate for two reasons. The first was that the sub-clauses of Article 33 of the ERDP came from the 1994 5b regulation, and had been embedded in Objective 1 programming prior to that. The second was that valuable lessons were learned in both Objective 1 and 5b areas about partnership working; lessons that needed a long period to learn and that, according to PolicyAdviser4, contributed to institutional and local capacity-building in those areas. LUC in its report to the CA (see above) recommended drawing on the networking and exchange of practice found in programmes such as 5b and LEADER<sup>71</sup> in case study research to identify principles that were transferable to a wide range of settings. It was regarded by some, therefore, as the potential basis for a new model of RD. According to a consultant, stakeholder interest in 5b in the RD debate was focused at the strategic level, rather than coming from the bottom-up,

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<sup>71</sup> Leader II was a European Union initiative for the development of disadvantaged rural areas of the Union. Its title means 'Links between actions for the development of the rural economy'. (European Commission 1998a).



although the programme had been popular, according to PolicyAdviser7, with target groups for a number of reasons. Farming groups particularly liked the ‘civil service angels’, the facilitators who ... “really took the string out of bureaucracy” (PolicyInfluencer8, pers.com). They also liked the umbrella projects that made it easier for small farmers to apply for funding (ibid). Strategic level stakeholders saw the value of partnership working and the inclusive nature of the implementation structure, while regional practitioners appreciated the facility to target locally significant issues ... “it wasn’t wonderful because it was totally new to everyone and took so long to get going, but at least we could target what was recognised locally as key issues” (PolicyInfluencer10, pers.com). Many interview respondents, and some of the contributors to the Defra Integration Workshop, commented on the loss of local capacity built up in the designated areas over the duration of the programme and regretted the decision to abandon the model as a basis for RD in the ERDP.

Some respondents in this study, however, did not share this enthusiasm for the programme. Three questioned the validity of a largely client-oriented programme that may have been more concerned with diverting money to follow their own agendas than being focused on delivering policy objectives, and from which many consultants benefited. This, according to a Policy Adviser, represented the old MAFF argument about ‘going native’, which provided the excuse for abandoning facilitation. Another questioned the lack of integration between 5b areas and the wider landscape or county perspective. Concern was expressed about the complexity of the programme in terms of integration of the funding (coming from ERDF, ESF and EAGGF), and the fact that stakeholders had to ... “scrabble around” (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com) to put together a funding package, while a respondent from a large NGO could see a threat to the organisation’s objectives in partnership working (PolicyInfluencer27, pers.com).

Interview respondents seemed divided on the benefits of partnership working. One view held by many policy influencers was that partnership working was intrinsically ‘right’, being the closest to a democratically organised and agreed distribution of the funding available:

You know, partnership activity comes with a cost, you know, the cost is ... occasionally it can be the lowest common denominator and you need a degree of maturity and a degree of self-sacrifice, but that's better than a centralist approach ... with a one size fits all mentality (PolicyAdviser9, pers.com).

The other view, most often expressed by policy makers and implementers, was a belief that the centralist approach was the only fair way to ensure that funding reached those for whom it was intended. This is a comment about 5b from a respondent who was one of the original Rural Division ERDP implementing team members:

I think organisations felt they could get their hands on (Defra) *sic* money which they could then spend on things which they shouted about. It's this organisational politicking again, quite honestly, um, because you've got a chunk of money and you don't have that many strings attached to it ... and organisations get their hands on that money and they like that, and they can't do that with the ERDP. The money is actually going straight to people on the ground and not to organisations to spend on programmes of work (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out to analyse the way that RD was socially constructed in the context of implementing the RDR in England. Using the policy design framework it has briefly explored the context and the influence of groups, events, and knowledge that contributed to the climate of ideas existing at the time of the Agenda 2000 negotiations. With RD as the new European language of CAP reform, the discourses of agricultural economics and environmental sustainability that had dominated the UK rural policy arena finally started to coalesce around this new agenda, providing as it did a greater legitimacy for both. The idea was promoted in a number of ways. Small groups of policy entrepreneurs already pursuing separate agendas for reform operated mainly at national level, crossing porous borders between state and private institutions as they built support for the new agenda. Institutional actors tended to be reactive to the proposals, with MAFF adopting the language when change appeared inevitable, and the CA reviving past research into IRD to support the new way forward. The SW regional policy community hardly existed as a coherent whole, being fractured by geography and the culture of institutions. It did, however, support a small



number of key individuals capable of strategic thinking who were unilaterally driving forward the agenda for RD.

Events such as BSE and the farm incomes crisis provided evidence that the isolation of farmers within the rural economy and society was a fundamental problem both for rural areas and for the food supply chain generally. The new Labour government, seeking ways to reconcile its goal of radical CAP reform with its desire to be at the heart of European policy making, recognised the potential of the agenda for RD and took steps to legitimate a new direction for agriculture based on its broad precepts. RD was an ‘idea in good currency’, occupying as it did the middle ground between the failing productivist CAP model of agriculture and the strong protectionist agenda of the environmental lobby. The chapter concludes that this idea, together with a change in language, provided government with a potentially useful *tool* – RD - with which to restructure the agricultural industry, suffering as a result of exogenous and endogenous forces, while also pursuing its agenda of environmental protection and radical CAP reform.

## Chapter 7 The Social Construction of Rural Development as ‘Tool’: Designing the ERDP

### 7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 explored the context of the CAP reform arena to analyse the way that rural development (RD) was framed in the context of European and UK agendas. Broadly they concluded that RD was framed as an *idea* in the European context, and as a *tool* in the UK, the latter using the new discourse to further its agenda for change. This chapter now focuses more narrowly on the issues raised through the design of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) with the aim of identifying the particular construction of RD that was embedded in the policy, and whose agenda was being served in the process. Starting with an account of the key elements of national discretion in the implementation of the RDR in England, and using the SW of England as a study area, the first part of the chapter explores the process of designing, which, according to the policy design model, involves three sets of issues: leadership; consultation; and discretion; all of which are important in shaping the final form of the policy. Still using the SW of England as a study area, the second half of this chapter analyses the ERDP using the ‘policy designs’ part of the framework provided by the policy design model. The empirical elements selected from the model for analysis are: rationales, goals, implementing structures, and logic chain and assumptions. According to Schneider and Ingram (S&I) (1997, p2) ... “the texts of policy are part of the design as are the practices that reveal who does what, when, with whom, with what resources, for what reasons, and with what kinds of motivating devices”, and the objective of this chapter is to explore text and practices in achieving its aim. The chapter sums up by comparing the models of RD embedded in each part of the policy and concludes with some comments regarding the implications for sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU).



## **7.2 The Key Elements of National Discretion**

There were three main elements of national discretion ceded by the EC to Member States through the Agenda 2000 reforms that directly affected the implementation of the RDR: 1) modulation; 2) devolution to and within ‘national’ territories; 3) choice of measures. These are briefly described before going on to examine the details of the designing dynamics.

### **7.2.1 Modulation**

The Agenda 2000 reform gave Member States discretion to reduce compensation payments to farmers by up to 20% according to various farm-based criteria. The funds thus recovered could then be used as additional EC support for the new ‘accompanying measures’ of the RDR, which included AE, LFA, early retirement and afforestation. This additional support required 100% match funding from domestic sources (Cabinet Office 1999). The UK government, recognising that the UK’s very low budget allocation of 3.5% would barely fund existing AE commitments, was one of only two Member States to opt for modulation from 2000 (the other being France), using the enabling provisions in Article 4 of Regulation 1259/1999. Convincing the Treasury to provide the match funding was the first and most important task for the Rural Division team set up to implement the RDR in England.

### **7.2.2 Subsidiarity**

The RDR states that, while the EC should set the basic support criteria and retain all implementing powers, it would follow the principles of subsidiarity. Thus Member States were given the discretion to draw up plans ... “at the geographical level deemed to be the most appropriate” (Article 41, para 1). In Britain three RDPs were prepared, one each for Scotland, Wales and England (Dwyer and Baldock 2000), with a further plan for Northern Ireland, recognising territorial diversity and political autonomy within the Member State of the UK. In England consultation was held on the form that the plan should take, with consensus on a national plan containing nine regional chapters. The regions were based on Government Office boundaries rather than the existing MAFF Regional Service Centres,

reflecting a move away from the focus on a sectoral agricultural policy towards partnership with other areas of regional government.

### **7.2.3 Choice of Measures**

Member States were bound by the Regulation to implement AE measures throughout their territories, but were free to choose between the others. In making this choice they would need to ... “ensure the necessary balance” (Article 43, para 2.2) between measures and employ a participatory and bottom-up approach. In England the existing AE programme was retained as well as WGS and FWPS for forestry and the LFA aids, and three ‘new’ schemes were introduced to take advantage of support offered for RD and farm restructuring under Articles 4, 9, 25-7 and 33. Measures which were not regarded as a high priority nor the best way of using limited resources were the general capital investment grants for agricultural holdings, early retirement aids and the aid scheme for young farmers (although the latter interest is taken into account in assessing project-based schemes at regional level).

Article 33 offered thirteen measures relating to farming activities and their conversion, and to rural activities which fell outside the scope of any other measure. Nine of these, together with measures offered under Article 4 for diversification, were incorporated into the England plan as the Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES). Article 9 was used to create a new Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) and articles 25-7 stimulated the more modest revision and re-launch of aid for processing and marketing produce (formerly offered in the 1980s) as the Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) scheme. Together, because these schemes involved one-off projects rather than regularised annual payments like the AER, LFA and FWPS aids, the RES, VTS and PMG were named the ‘project-based schemes’.

A mixture of pragmatism and politics appear to have guided government in allocating regional discretion for the administration of schemes. The accompanying measures associated with the 1992 MacSharry CAP reform, as well as the LFA aids, were regarded as reflecting national (England) needs and priorities (MAFF 2000b, p108) and the design of



their form and a common process for awarding funds and their administration was dictated by MAFF at a national level. On the other hand, the deployment and allocation of funds for the new measures were allocated to the regional delivery apparatus. In effect this meant that the largest part of the ERDP budget continued to be controlled by MAFF centrally, leaving the regions to deal with the much smaller budget of the RES, PMG and VTS. This had the effect of separating the land-based schemes (LBS) from the project-based schemes (PBS) both ideologically and practically, constraining the implementation of the RDR through a lack of integration.

### **7.3 Designing Dynamics**

The draft RDR was delivered to member states for consultation in March 1998, and the final version was approved in Berlin in March 1999. Member States were charged with producing rural development plans (RDPs) that had to be lodged with the European Commission (EC) by the end of December 1999. The first meeting of the National Planning Group (NPG), convened to oversee the preparation of the ERDP, was held on the 2 September 1999, and the team delegated to lead the drafting of the regional chapters was given the go-ahead on the 9 September. That left just three months for the whole process of consultation, planning, drafting, and approval to be carried out. This timeframe has been the subject of severe criticism by the majority of stakeholders and observers, some of whom were frustrated by the failure to anticipate the final form of the regulation and start working towards the new programme earlier:

Well, there's something British about it ... we've got to wait until the regulation's fully negotiated and agreed otherwise it might change ... there's a pretty good idea that you're going to have to have ... a programming document for the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar, and then there's going to be an analysis, and we've got a decision to make about what is the appropriate geographical scale, let's make a decision and get on with (it) ... got all of the RDAs doing their regional economic strategies, you know, why don't we do this together ... it could have just been one big dose of holistic regional thinking and analysis so that the diagnosis was there, the strategy was roughly there – it didn't happen (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com).

One of the things that angered me is that, you see I was plugging to get this work done a long time ago ... I was trying to get the plan for ERDP created, and I wanted to do it in January. I was leading the rural economy schemes and the land use work. I wanted to get

that going, you know I saw all the pressures and problems of doing that (PolicyAdviser11, pers.com).

The decision to delay starting work on the ERDP resulted in serious logistical problems for Rural Division who were producing the national plan, and the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) who were coordinating the regional chapters. Exacerbated by the reorganisation of the FRCA in the summer of 1999 in order to cut costs, the timetable, according to a senior officer, was ... “absolutely hair raising in terms of how do you actually get the thing done and put together” (PolicyAdviser11, pers.com). There is no doubt that the leadership team at Rural Division earned the respect of many partners with whom it worked during that time for actually getting the job done on time:

I think [they] worked miracles. I have a great respect for [Policymaker5] and what she achieved because where we started from and the negotiations that had to take place to get the money and the way she did it, I mean, I have the highest admiration for what was achieved in that time and I think [they] deserve every applaud (sic) (ibid).

That, however, was less important to most stakeholders than what the programme was expected to achieve:

So, the ERDP was constructed hastily, messily, that's my perception, without time for there to be a genuine change around in the thinking of senior and middle officials in the spirit of being joined-up and integrated (PolicyInfluencer21, pers.com).

In this process, three issues emerged as crucial to the final form of the ERDP: the leadership necessary to actually comply with EC requirements by the due date ... “There were a lot of people who thought we wouldn't do it and actually said so, so it was quite comforting to show that we could actually do it” (PolicyMaker5); the initiative taken by Rural Division to follow the principles of the regulation in relation to dealing with arrangements at the most appropriate geographical level and the requirement for wide



consultation contained within the regulation<sup>72</sup>; and the expectations about the extent of regional discretion raised by the process. These issues are briefly explored in the following sections.

### 7.3.1 Leadership

The policy design model acknowledges the importance of the policy entrepreneur in the design process. In the case of the ERDP, Policymaker5 stands out as making a major contribution to the design and implementation of the policy. Her colleagues applauded her for her dedication and initiative, appreciating her wealth of knowledge and experience in land management drawn from her background in ADAS and MAFF. She brought to the job a network of contacts and a good understanding of how policy worked and what the EC were looking for. These personal accolades extended to colleagues in the regions, although at this level they were qualified:

I didn't terribly object to [her] leadership. She was pretty strong and she was very clear with a fabulous grasp of it all, but wasn't as open perhaps to alternative views. She was too rigid; too black and white ... what she achieved was quite phenomenal. Just to negotiate it all, set it all up and get it in place in that timescale was huge (PolicyImplementer8, pers.com).

The team that was put together to lead the development of the ERDP was very small, only a handful of people being engaged in the early stages of the process. Expertise from other divisions was seconded, but it was PolicyMaker5 who negotiated with the EC over the wording of the Implementing Regulation at the same time as drafting the national plan and negotiating with the Treasury over match funding for modulation. A member of the ex-ante evaluation team recalled the situation:

Nick Brown, I think, believed that they had to actually show some form of leadership, and [she] provided the push at the time to actually get the modulation. The actual sea change to actually introduce modulation and pull the money in, that was a coup in its own right (PolicyAdviser11, pers.com).

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<sup>72</sup> While this level of consultation was explicit in the implementing regulation, Rural Division had taken the initiative, according to one of the team, in picking up the government's collaboration and partnership ideals and using them to try and make a flagship example of implementing the RDR.

She drew on economic analysis and modelling to help conclude the issues about which measures to exclude from the plan (*e.g.* Early Retirement), and, while she insisted that stakeholders views had been taken during the period when the RDR was being developed, a team member admitted that ... “very, very few people put together the proposals for consultation” (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

### **7.3.2 Consultation**

The consultation process was dominated by three sub-issues: the short time-scale; stakeholder interest in the process; and the top-down nature of the process.

#### ***Short time-scale***

The national consultation on implementation of the RDR was undertaken following the Agenda 2000 agreement in March 1999. It was conducted between April and November 1999 in tandem with consultation on the government’s proposed New Direction for Agriculture that had commenced in January 1999. According to PolicyMaker1, this involvement in two processes had the effect of making it difficult for the Rural Division team to get early answers to the consultation documents, further exacerbating the situation described above. Consultees were required to comment firstly on the form that the plan should take in relation to the programming options (England plan, regional plans, hybrid plan), and also on the level at which measures should be dealt with (national or regional), who should be consulted/involved, who should operate the schemes, and whether regions should be involved in the distribution of the limited funds available for non-accompanying measures. The consultation closed on the 25 June 1999 (MAFF 2000b), a hybrid plan being chosen incorporating a national plan with nine regional chapters. This then involved consulting at the regional level on the form and content of the regional plans.

The regional consultation commenced with the formation of the Regional Partnership, established on the 22 September 1999, and jointly chaired by MAFF and the GO. Membership of this body was limited to the government agencies, the LGA, the RDA and the Sustainable Development Round Table for the South West. The responsibility of the



partnership was to help develop the regional strategy for the RDR and provide information, analysis and assistance in compiling base data for the regional chapter. The partnership met five times between 22 September and 9 December 1999, agreeing the first draft of Section 1 (the description of the current situation) by mid-October, and the regional aspirations, goals, SWOT analysis, objectives and potential measures/actions by the 25 October in preparation for scrutiny by Rural Division by the 31 October. During this period other organisations had been given the opportunity to comment through partnership members, including farming groups having discussions with MAFF.

### *Stakeholder interest*

The significance of the consultation process lay in the wide range of stakeholders now being involved by MAFF in the policy making process. This included community development actors who, for the first time, were able to influence the process alongside traditional agricultural sector actors. The problem with the process was the very limited scope for these stakeholders to make any kind of difference because of the constraints imposed in various ways by the traditional culture of MAFF (see below), and the very short time scale for implementation. These two problems led to a third: that consultees lost confidence in the process and ownership in the product. A wider consultation was held on the 3 November in Taunton where 53 out of a total of 107 organisations invited attended (see Appendix 10). Organised jointly by MAFF and GO, the event, which was unique to the South West, was co-funded by EN. The attendance seemed low in relation to the novelty of the proposed programme, but may have been a function of the short notice given to organisations. While it could have been expected that some of the non-agricultural interests would not attend, it was surprising to note that three of the four small and family farm organisations were absent. The short notice given by MAFF, as mentioned above, may explain this. On the other hand, the dissemination of information prior to the event may have been inadequate. Other noteworthy absences from the event were the colleges and district level local authorities, with only six out of nineteen training organisations and eleven out of twenty six local government authorities sending delegates. The lack of interest by these LA bodies could indicate a continuation of the traditional separation of MAFF from other areas of the rural economy.

### ***The top-down nature of the process***

The consultation forum was divided into three syndicate groups (environmental, economic, and social) to consider the aspirations, goals, objectives and SWOT analysis previously drafted. Their comments were fed back to the drafting team and the Regional Partnership and, where practicable, amendments were made to the regional goals and objectives (MAFF 2000c). However, in spite of some interest generated by the one-day conference, stakeholder perception of the consultation process generally was largely negative, a function of the top-down approach adopted by MAFF. Some were more outspoken than others:

It was hopeless, useless ... they'd already written it. It's the old MAFF culture, leave it to us, we know best, we'll work the strategy and then we'll produce it, and there you go, there's the strategy, do you agree with that? The thing was written before we even realised it was happening. It was far too long, far too dull. It should be an inspiring sort of document, a real strategic document, and it should have been written with us and the other players. The RDA in particular should have been involved (PolicyInfluencer8, pers.com).

Some of the NGOs felt sidelined by the process:

It wasn't a particularly open process. I remember trying to get hold of drafts – got severely reprimanded – it was clearly a statutory agencies initiative ... As a consultative thing it wasn't particularly open, generally... I didn't feel that it was a consultation – just asking us for the information when they needed it (PolicyInfluencer11, pers.com)

One of the problems was the consultation at the time. It was a very, very poor consultation ... The process was driven top-down. The main concern was that the regional consultation didn't embrace all stakeholders. I know time was the problem but it was very much 'in-house' from government agencies. We felt that farmers were the people who ultimately had to deliver the policy, and to be told that along with RSPB, FWAG etc they only wanted one side of A4 of our opinions ... (PolicyInfluencer10, pers.com).

Many thought the process was not only top-down, but also superficial, as these comments from regional GA and NGO directors suggest:

It was fairly heavily centrally controlled and there is an issue about the degree to which it was genuine consultation, and the degree to which it was going through the motions of consultation, giving people the opportunity to have their say, but not necessarily for that to be incorporated in what came out (PolicyInfluencer18, pers.com).



We had various meetings with EN who responded on behalf of the consortium (EN, RSPB, WLTs and others). It's been so long since we contributed, but nothing actually really stands out. There's an element of cosmetic participation in all of this process (PolicyInfluencer12, pers.com).

An environmental organisation felt the process was disjointed in terms of the separation of elements within the plan:

We were concerned about the manner in which the consultation was being pursued and the fact that they were consulting on all the different elements within the plan from a totally different perspective. They used different definitions of sustainability, different language – we couldn't understand how it all fitted together ... The priorities were set separately from the people who were consulted ... we were just realistic in terms of the extent to which we could influence it ... it makes little difference whether you write a lot or a little, so we kept it brief and to the point (PolicyInfluencer3, pers.com).

The forestry interests at the Taunton conference objected to being separated into 'silos' for consultation, feeling that their industry spanned all three sectors (PolicyInfluencer16, pers.com), while the FRCA, who facilitated the event, admitted the shortcomings of the process:

Whether we went through the process to achieve a truly regional view or whether we just went through the process, there's most probably a question over that. The trouble with facilitated consultations is the difficulty of knowing whether the result is what the group wanted or the facilitator. When you look at things like the regional chapters, there's quite a strong national steer being applied to how they will be done and delivered and for those of us who had to do that, we've been very much going down the route of marching our way through the process, you know, jumping through hoops (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

### **7.3.3 Discretion**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the allocation of discretion in the implementation of the ERDP was an issue at both national and regional levels, the different agendas incorporated in the design of the plan causing problems of interpretation leading to difficulties later in the process.

### ***The National Plan of the ERDP***

The national plan and the regional chapters were drafted simultaneously, the process being observed and, to a certain extent, facilitated, by the consultants carrying out the Ex-Ante Evaluation required by the EC. According to a member of the Rural Division team, drafting of the national plan was done fairly objectively in terms of data collection, drawing on the collective knowledge of partner organisations to produce figures to fill the gaps left by inadequate analysis of the ‘rural’. About half a dozen groups made what the head of Rural Division described as ‘significant’ contributions at this time, based on their depth of knowledge and their particular interest in the process. In spite of the fact that MAFF was criticised by one respondent for not having the motivation to write a genuine rural development plan, the small team at Rural Division<sup>73</sup> involved in planning and drafting the ERDP testify to trying very hard to create a holistic document, one that reflected the team leader’s interpretation of what the RDR was really trying to achieve ... “The core idea behind it is the focus on sustainable development and achieving it through a system of checks and balances on farmers and other players in the rural community” (PolicyMaker5, pers.com). The concept of sustainability, together with the EC requirement for the involvement of local actors, thus underpinned the decision to involve the regions in the implementation process. It also meant that the regions were deliberately encouraged to take a very broad view when identifying their aspirations, a situation that was to be significant in terms of interpretation of the policy in the South West. PolicyMaker5 explained her strategy in this way:

[T]hey were deliberately encouraged to look across the piece and not narrow their thinking to what was deliverable through the ERDP because sustainable development is making sure you are using all programmes to achieve what we would hope would have been common objectives. So they were quite deliberately guided in that direction ... It obviously leads to expectations about the extent to which people can then have freedom to do what they want but that is a rather different issue (PolicyMaker5, pers.com).

There were, however, a number of constraints affecting the discretion that Rural Division had in drawing up a RDP. It was initially constrained, according to a national policy

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<sup>73</sup> Two of the three key people involved in editing and producing the ERDP were seconded into Rural Division specifically to perform this task, together with a number of other temporary recruits from various divisions and organisations.



consultant, by its own traditional approach to policy making, in particular the need to obtain Treasury approval for the extra funding required to implement a viable programme, and its deference to a narrow and lengthy legislative process:

[T]his is the kind of view that you get from MAFF, that you can't design a policy until you know how much money you've got, and to some extent that's true, but to another extent it's complete nonsense ... there is a characterisation from the Brussels level that ... the UK, by comparison with other member states tends to be a country which is very concerned with the detail and not with the big picture (PolicyAdviser7, pers.com).

I think what happened within MAFF at the time was that [those] who were leading the process did have an aspiration ... to produce something that was broad and integrated, but they also at the same time with their MAFF hats on were immediately thinking about which regulations shall we make and what will they do (ibid).

It was further constrained by the logistical arguments in favour of adapting existing schemes for the ERDP. It was the case that a number of them had been running for some time, particularly the AE programme, and according to a senior member of the Rural Division team, a degree of pragmatism was employed in allowing continuity in funding this programme. The administration of the AE schemes had produced a largely top-down, sectoral approach; a form of institutionalised conservatism that was unsuited to the new bottom-up concepts being mooted in relation to the PBSs. Furthermore, administration of the AE programme was seen as having been successful, making it politically difficult to change that structure, especially for divisions fielding executives of the same grade. Ideas about regionalising the AE schemes were floated, but the team considered that this posed a delegation problem for a historically agricultural ministry, and in any case, time and money militated against such a move. The policy consultant however, could see that, instead of creating a 'new' policy with a new approach, it was, rather, continuing the 'silo' thinking of the past, with experts and communities of stakeholders in particular areas carrying on as before.

One way in which MAFF attempted to overcome this problem, and take advantage of the discretion available to member states through the RDR, was to introduce a 'new' rural economy scheme, the Rural Enterprise Scheme (RES). Described by the erstwhile head of Rural Division as ... "the most important product of discretion" (PolicyMaker1, pers.com)

the scheme was based on the measures available under Article 33 and part of Article 4 of the RDR. In line with government priorities in terms of structural adjustment for farmers and a repositioning of agriculture in the rural economy, the Article, for the first time, contained measures that apparently extended the scope of the CAP beyond the farm gate. Originally included in the 1993 Objective 5b regulation, Article 33 provided ‘basic services for the rural economy’, but negotiations prior to the final draft of the RDR ensured that the measure was largely directed towards agriculture and associated activities rather than to the wider economy. Furthermore it was to be more explicitly competitive, lacking the facilitation provided under the Objective 5b scheme. MAFF exercised its discretion in using Articles 4/33, justifying this decision as structural adjustment to help agriculture change direction, and Rural Division flagged up as national priorities diversification, rural tourism and the marketing of quality agricultural products. However, according to a senior Rural Division official, these priorities were informed by consultation with the FRCA and an initial analysis of their relevance to MAFF’s perception of the situation in England *prior* to the regional consultations, thereby steering the outcomes of those consultations in that direction.

PolicyMaker5 maintained that, while MAFF was certainly constrained by its own national and institutional cultures in implementing the RDR, the issue of EC control over the whole process could not be overstated, undermining the subsidiarity explicit in the regulation:

I think a lot of people will probably never understand, or not want to understand the degree of control that the EC chose to exert over the sort of quality and substance and structure ... There’s a serious problem about the degree to which they are prepared to let member states take responsibility for the controls applying to the disbursement of EU funds. They want to retain central control in Brussels, over exactly how funds are disbursed and how you audit it and everything else. They are all great problems ... The principle of subsidiarity is the right one and it’s got to be more relevant than anything else that the CAP is doing, but what they’ve ended up with is a system that gives you choice but without responsibility which you need to operate effectively (PolicyMaker5, pers.com).

A further problem for MAFF, according to PolicyImplementer9, was that the EC challenged the inclusion of a social priority in the ERDP because of the high priority placed by the UK on environmental and economic objectives. This resulted in the national plan



having only two priorities, economic and environmental, making it difficult to reconcile the content of the programme with its title:

*The ERDP has only two priorities, with no social priority as such? That was the EC. I remember that debate going on because we had something wider and the EC said, well, can you give this some focus? What are your priorities? And given the fact that the things we would be able to impact on were going to be economic and environmental sort of stuff – that's why those two came out (PolicyMaker9, pers. Com).*

### ***The SW Regional Chapter***

The regional chapters were drafted on the basis of sustainable integrated rural development (SIRD), which in the case of the South West region meant SD defined as balancing economic, social and environmental objectives. Very few people outside the small circle drafting the national plan realised that there were now only two national priorities (see above), particularly in the regions:

*There was no social priority in the national plan. Were you aware there wouldn't be? I don't remember that frankly. I don't recall even noticing that ... in terms of that being something that was a declared statement early on, I don't think that actually registered with me. I'm not sure who else on the team it did register with ... We saw it as a relatively blank sheet of paper in terms of really wanting to capture what the region thinks in terms of the three legs, and that's what happened in that regional workshop and the subsequent writing up (PolicyImplementer6, pers.com).*

The most important thing about the ERDP to regional stakeholders was the prospect of exercising the discretion implicit in the decision to include regional chapters as part of the plan. However, the top-down approach of Rural Division to the drafting process implied a lack of confidence in the capacity of regional staff. In the SW a team of three 'drafters' were selected from GO and FRCA resources to collate information and work up the analysis for the regional chapter. Other GAs were involved in writing specific parts of the text, while the Regional Partnership produced a 'vision', and a facilitative workshop produced the outline objectives. One member of the drafting team reported that during this process there were constant drafters meetings, the IT system was inadequate for communicating with MAFF, and the process was heavily 'top-down' in the sense that MAFF strictly controlled the agenda and format templates, often changing ways of working as they went along. PolicyImplementer14 reported feeling there was no time for any

innovative thought, even if they had been required to produce any, the ideology of the programme having already been encapsulated in the national plan. Rural Division's perspective at the time is clear from this statement by one of the implementing team:

You can't control what they do in the regions, but on the other hand, part of the problem is the capacity for policy analysis thinking in the regional teams at the time. They're not people who are trained to do that so the way of carrying out that sort of analysis and engaging others in doing that was something that some people felt more comfortable with than others, and you have to steer it without feeling they were being overly controlling (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

However, the FRCA team leader admitted that there was also a feeling amongst those who were participating that they were being 'railroaded' by the time constraints, an accusation that Defra do not now deny.

In spite of these initial problems, the regional implementing team tackled the task of producing the regional chapter as though they had significant discretion in terms of producing a 'vision' for the SW region. Viewing the consultation day with hindsight, the FRCA team leader felt it had probably worked as well as it could, bearing in mind the state of the rural policy arena at the time. The fact that it had to be conducted in 'silos' reflected that policy situation:

Silo conveys principally how it was done. That way you can get some focus but you don't necessarily get enlightenment. But it was probably too early for enlightenment, if that's not too heinous a thing to say! (PolicyImplementer6, pers.com).

Environmental issues tended to dominate, largely due to those interests taking the lead in influencing the process. The FRCA admits that they were able to do this because the environmental lobby was well established, and there was a great deal of shared experience between it and MAFF in dealing with the AE schemes in the region. It was thus easier for the team to appreciate environmental issues as opposed to social and community issues, with which they had little prior experience. This obvious imbalance, however, created some tensions within the region:



I don't know if we would ever want to go back to revisit the chapter. It's such a painful process. Actually writing it and delivering it was a nightmarish task because you can't – the sort of thing that you try to write by committee but you can't and in the end you have to drop it on one or two individuals and say, go away and do that and then partner organisations say, yes, we'll feed into that and we'll let you have our comments, but they don't, and you only get some of them. So then with lots more information coming from the EA and EN you open the chapter and it starts to read like an environmental handbook, but it doesn't deal with all the social aspects (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

However, the greatest tension during the drafting process flowed directly from the fact that the ERDP was not designed to achieve the goals that regions had been encouraged to set. Because there was a weak social element in the RDR (PolicyMaker1) and no social priority in the ERDP, the measures available through the programme were not going to deliver the regions aspirations for SRD. Thus, in order to ensure coherence between the regional and national plans, an exercise was devised that would 'fit' the general activities identified by the regions to the measures selected for the programme. In the South West region, twelve activities had been scored against the full range of criteria, and a rank order established, which expressed their ability to achieve IRD (see Table 7.2, p202). At the top of the list were three cross-cutting themes designed to create an environment within which integrated rural development could be developed. A further matrix mapping exercise was subsequently undertaken which measured how closely the activities generated at the regional level fit with the full range of measures available under the RDR. The resulting ranking relegated the RD activities to the bottom of the list, to be picked up by other mechanisms in the region, while environmental land management, processing and marketing, forestry, tourism and diversification occupied the top five positions.

This process was in line with what Rural Division already knew to be the case *i.e.* that the ERDP would have to operate alongside other funding mechanisms to achieve SRD. A member of the Rural Division implementing team gave her explanation of MAFF's perspective:

[The regions] were meant to be doing it at a fairly generic level without thinking of the mechanism, and then see which bits of the schemes would deliver it. They weren't meant to be changing their whole list of priorities to fit with the schemes. It was more about seeing what could be delivered through the ERDP schemes when they finally arrived, and then looking to see who else could contribute to these objectives through schemes they were

funding ... MAFF didn't have a remit to go and do... so ERDP was not going to do all those things (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

However, Rural Division had apparently failed to make it clear to the regions that the goals of the programme could not be met by the RDR measures, and inclusion of social objectives in the regional plans would be largely redundant under the programme, having to be picked up by other funding streams. The same member of the national implementing team recognised MAFF's failings in this respect:

I think there is not enough time spent discussing what you would describe as policy rhetoric. There is not enough time spent saying what is all this about, what are we trying to achieve here, what is this concept about, before starting going into design ... there is a big gap between [the aims and objectives of a policy] and a whole series of smaller bits and pieces of policy and schemes ... and how they connect up to deliver these fine aims. There is not enough debate on that gap (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

Ex-Ante consultants noted that while some regions were more astute in grasping the situation as an opportunity for identifying further policy mechanisms for achieving SRD, this basic misunderstanding of the conceptual foundations of the policy proved to be a particular problem for the South West. It was not, however, considered by Rural Division to constitute any sort of policy vacuum:

I'm not there in the region, but there are structures you would have thought ought to have picked that up in the region. I mean that's what Government Offices are for. If they are not there to pull everything together and get things joined up and plug the gaps I don't know what their job is frankly ... I see that as a very clear job for them which is ensuring that the various programmes which help deliver rural development in its RDR sense are working together and filling each others gaps and being complementary rather than being competitive (PolicyMaker5, pers.com).

From the perspective of the regional implementation team, the 'fitting' exercise had removed the element of discretion that had motivated and excited them in the initial stages of the process:

Then we reached the relationship to the national priorities. OK, this is where you have to start taking a train that's been running along the regional track and make it switch track onto a national track along with all the other regional trains. That's effectively what happened here. So everything that follows on – now that we've had all these good ideas, free thinking,



everything we want to do – which of these fit within the RDR and are consistent with national priorities? And as such different regions lost a certain degree of ability to emphasise certain things for the sake of consistency of things that are going to be nationally applied – have to have certain common things that everybody does. Yes, to be honest the last section [of the chapter] was the collision of the regional with the national and the tensions between the two ... It would have been better if they'd just said, these are the things we're absolutely going to do, and not hem it around with some kind of quasi-scientific process to make it look as if it had to change. It was a difficult kind of end to the process (PolicyImplementer3, pers.com).

No one who was involved in that process escaped the tension created by the feeling of being 'bounced' at the last minute. PolicyImplementer6 remembered a heated exchange between a member of the drafting team and the project coordinator at the time:

I refuse to say what happened between this discussion and what finally happened but there were some heated discussions ... over this issue of the prioritisation and I think that it was very late in the day in terms of getting the thing in and what you see there was just cobbled together at the end ... I think probably because of that final twist there was a sort of 'disownership' that describes the attitude when it was gone. There was a sense of relief that it had made it to Brussels – also a sense of, well, not quite sure what happened there (PolicyImplementer6, pers.com).

Viewed from a policy analysis perspective, the situation was, according to a member of the Ex-Ante Evaluation team, simply part of a learning process ... “a right process and a good process” (PolicyAdviser10, pers.com) directed towards the greater goal of national rural priorities. This concurred with the perspectives of those academics promoting a regional agenda:

One has to have a sense of, some of that is disappointing, but basically it was set up, the beginnings of a regional strategy whereby regional groupings could begin to take a view about their regional countryside ... and that's very novel, and you know, out of this it's best not to have a really naïve view of policies, implementation etcetera. Some of this is also about changing mindsets (PolicyAdviser5, pers.com).

The Ex-Ante Evaluation of the programme was carried out during this period as an integral part of the policy drafting process, the consultants becoming closely involved with both the national and regional actors. It became part of their task to negotiate the difficult ground between the two. One consultant remembered the problems:

That exercise was a necessary exercise to resolve the tension that we started off talking about ... Now, it was a painful exercise for everybody as I recall, and it may well be that in

the end process, in the flipping into the ERDP objectives, meant that you actually lost something that was actually quite an important part of the exercise which was what were the objectives and priorities that dropped out ... But it was always in a sense acknowledged as a result of that ERDP exercise, that it would both advise the focus for ERDP and more broadly the rural development priorities in a region or sub-region. The fact that it's not been picked up by anybody I don't think would worry Defra unduly (PolicyAdviser6, pers.com).

The Ex-Ante report concluded that the ERDP had been constrained by its contextual history and its contextual future, seeing regional capacity-building as a major contribution to future sustainability. Integrated measures of rural development needed to be established across social, economic and environmental dimensions, while the state of regional SRD was a subject for investigation in a dynamic manner (SQW Limited 2000). A short analysis of the Ex-Ante Evaluation is included at Appendix 11.

## 7.4 Summing up Designing

*“You've had a good session with [PolicyMaker1], have you, because he'll tell you the story of the RDR from a different perspective to me”* (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com).

A fascinating aspect of designing the ERDP was the interplay of different perspectives in that process. While the actor referred to above felt that Rural Division was at the 'cutting edge' of RD policy making in the UK, PolicyMaker5 recognised at a very early stage that the Implementing Regulation of the RDR would not allow the kind of partnership working associated with RD (such as the Objective 5b style), and that, in the interests of financial accountability, funds would only be able to be allocated at the individual or farm scale. In this sense, she felt that the regulation had failed to capture the essence of SRD:

Well, my feeling was that the regulation had the potential to be quite fundamentally flawed because all it did was to put together nine different regulations, based on two rather different purposes with very different knowledges and it didn't really work very well as a coherent whole because nobody had given enough thought to the, well, when I've done the putting together what are the consequences of that? And structural funds, which are the origin of half the regulation and the old accompanying measures have very different ways of operation and they do have rather different purposes and they don't sit very comfortably in one regulation with a common set of overarching sort of controls. So it's very difficult to actually construct at a ground level schemes which bring all that together in a synergistic



way. So there're problems with the structure of the regulation which tend to impede an awful lot of what you can do (PolicyMaker5, pers.com).

This meant that, while she continued to pursue SD as the spirit of the RDR through a devolved approach to the regional chapters, in practice this was only ever going to be a ... “step change” in the direction of SIRD, a phrase used to describe the situation by two other members of the implementing team at Rural Division.

Enlightenment for the regions came only after the process in many cases, the SW region having failed to appreciate the reality of the situation. With hindsight some of the actors acknowledged the limitations of the RDR itself and the process of implementation. The regional FRCA team leader was optimistic about the outcome:

I have no problem with the approach. I suppose the question is then, what about the outcome? I think that goes back to – I think a lot of us didn't see this as the end of the road anyway. Maybe it wasn't as regionalised as we had hoped it would be but then, perhaps we had been overoptimistic early on. But we don't see that as having totally missed the boat. It's a slightly different boat but there is still something to work with. I think in GO and Defra and RDS there is still a feeling that a) there is still a job worth doing; b) we can still bring some influence to bear; and c) possibly I think that we are now better engaging people than we were previously ... So I am not despairing – we can always do better, yes, but I don't think we have actually missed the boat (PolicyImplementer6, pers.com).

Another team leader felt that, despite the disappointment engendered by the process, there was a tangible value in terms of generating interest through participation. This perception was echoed by an ex-ante consultant:

But what it actually did ... what you had here was for some regions the very first time that you had a bunch of people sitting round the table trying to understand the dynamics of their rural area, what was going on in it, what the drivers and interactions were, and therefore what needed to be done. I think if we look at the bigger picture the fact that those groups were given a wide brief to consider it from all angles was actually a very good part of the process (PolicyAdviser10, pers.com).

GAs who had fed into the process had to adopt a pragmatic attitude to the outcome:

I mean we were all pragmatists in the end. I don't suppose anyone was 100% happy with what happened, and I mean the regional bits, there wasn't any point reading them because

they weren't going to be changed, or it didn't feel that there was time to change them, so you had to be realistic, they had to go in by a certain date (PolicyInfluencer28, pers.com).

One final view, from the perspective of the GO Director in Plymouth, was measured, thoughtful, and ultimately probably captured the actual reality of the situation in a way that was more difficult for participants in the process:

I think it was true that in the regions there were people who had hoped to see a slightly more delegated framework, but I think I would again offer this as a set of decisions that were being taken in the wider context of change, where the department was reviewing a whole range of issues in terms of how to deliver and it was followed up shortly thereafter by the creation of Defra. What I think I hesitate over personally is whether one would have ended up with exactly the same set of decisions if they'd been taken a couple of years later. It wasn't a set of decisions taken in a static political environment. It was an evolving environment, which was moving away from a historical tradition in the department, old MAFF, of really quite centralised decision making on policy issues of this kind (PolicyImplementer11, pers.com).

In summary, research revealed that the process of designing the ERDP was largely top-down, driven by a determined and capable leadership in Rural Division but constrained by time and by the implementing regulation of the RDR. The broad consultation undertaken by MAFF was perceived by respondents as being largely cosmetic, the time scale and mechanisms employed allowing little scope for a meaningful dialogue to take place amongst stakeholders. The discretion explicit in the RDR was compromised at the national level by EC constraints on the design of the ERDP, resulting in the production of a RD plan with no social priority, while discretion at the regional level, implicit in the form of the ERDP (a national plan and nine regional chapters) was limited in scope and effectiveness, leaving some stakeholders feeling disappointed and disenfranchised. The design of the ERDP was, according to the ex-ante evaluation, carried out in the spirit of the regulation, but failed to achieve its aims on a number of counts.

## **7.5 Policy Designs – an analysis of the ERDP**

The last part of this chapter is devoted to a short analysis of the ERDP. The objective is to explore the texts and structures of the policy, using the 'policy designs' section of the



policy design framework to define the particular construction of RD that it promotes. This analysis is carried out under four main headings: *rationale for the plan; form, goals and objectives; implementation structures; logic chain and assumptions*.

### **7.5.1 Rationale for the plan**

According to S&I the rationale for a policy or programme is the justification, publicly given, for its design. This in turn is legitimated by the context within which the policy arose, giving it credibility. It is important for the rationale to have a close fit with the actual goals of the policy, providing a reasonable expectation that outcomes will justify support. The rationale for a public policy in England also has to be justified to the Treasury, where it is subject to an intensive process of challenge, according to PolicyMaker8, in terms of the best use of public money. In the case of the ERDP the rationale was twofold: the concept of market failure and the structural adjustment of agriculture (MAFF 2000a):

[W]ithout intervention, the provision of non-market, or ‘public’ goods – in particular the range of environmental goods such as biodiversity and landscape appearance – will not occur; and the externalities arising from an activity are not reflected in the costs e.g. environmental damage from recreation. Similarly, the weaknesses identified in some rural economies and communities e.g. the high adjustment costs caused by remoteness and population sparsity could worsen without government intervention (ibid, p74).

In broad terms the market failure rationale justifies government intervention in supporting the production of environmental goods through the AE schemes, according to a senior Defra respondent:

[No-one] can own the goods, nor get a clear economic benefit from it. Therefore it is perceived as a legitimate use of public money to pay for the Royal Opera House, the view in Devon and the godwits in Kent. That’s legitimate and justifies the largest part of the RDP (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).

The structural adjustment rationale supports the rural economy schemes:

One of the justifications for government payments is where you have exceptional trading conditions or industries in transition. At the moment the British farmer is in transition and

we're in a situation where it is the legitimate job of government to assist those people who want to change their farm businesses, to diversify, add value etcetera (ibid).

PolicyMaker7 explained that structural adjustment, by its very nature, was intended to be a time-limited intervention designed to provide assistance in the short-term. With an exit strategy, it was about trying to broaden the business base of farmers so that their reliance on subsidy was reduced over time.

Both of these rationales for intervention, according to senior Policy Makers, were in line with the government's long-term national objectives to reduce the cost of the CAP, and to promote environmental land management in pursuit of its obligations under other EU directives. In the short term, the farm incomes crisis had provided a strong rationale for structural change in the industry, justifying the use of public money to help farmers establish other income streams and thereby reduce their dependence on subsidy. The Objective 5b programme had been set up as a structural mechanism for change, but, as indicated in Chapter 6, critics doubted whether it had achieved this in reality, as this comment from a Policy Implementer illustrates:

When you actually look at the outcomes from 5b there were lots of things funded that on their own might have been quite nice projects, but whether they achieved any structural change is a different question, and I suspect a lot of them didn't achieve structural change – they achieved support for nice little projects... (PolicyImplementer5, pers.com).

In drawing up the ERDP, policy divisions adopted the position that targeting individuals and businesses was more likely to achieve this short-term structural change, contributing to value for money and thereby satisfying Treasury criteria. This position was clearly also influenced by the restrictions imposed by the EC on paying agencies. This did mean, however, that a dichotomy existed within the ERDP in terms of the overarching rationale for the programme. On the one hand, there was a basic argument, as used by the CA, for continuing subsidy in rural areas because people there were disadvantaged, they always would be, and needed money to help them overcome this. A Policy Adviser explained the problem:



The market failure argument can be used both on the environmental side and on the social side to justify putting in subsidy ... It's not so much that it has been used in the existing ERDP, because I don't think it has, but if you look at the rhetoric that is coming out of the CA in its reports on the state of rural areas, it is building a rhetoric for continuous social support. Whether that should be from the CAP or other roots is another debate (PolicyAdviser7, pers.com).

On the other hand, she said, it was about pump priming to get people to operate in a different way so that in the long run they did not need continued subsidy. The argument for continued subsidy, either for public goods or structural adjustment, was supported by the majority of stakeholders and observers, but there were concerns on a number of levels about what the programme was actually trying to achieve. For one Policy Influencer these included programme funding:

The need for restructuring, I believe, is probably accepted by the majority of folk involved, but it's how that restructuring can be undertaken to provide those that remain with sufficient income and standard of living, and sufficient funds to be able to involve environmental goods because that doesn't come cheaply (PolicyInfluencer12, pers.com).

For one Policy Implementer the problem was the extension of funding beyond the farm gate:

The further it moves away from farming the more it undermines the rationale. You must remember that the money comes from the CAP so the core priorities should remain the farming industry (PolicyImplementer3, pers.com),

while a Policy Influencer could see difficulties with 'grant chasing':

The competitive nature of the project-based schemes seems to define to what extent those broader objectives are achieved. I think it's difficult for farm businesses putting forward proposals with understandably financial gain in mind to be, even if they respect the environment and live within a community, to actually be putting that into practice over and above exploring a new market or whatever. It's a bit difficult for them culturally ... I think there's a danger there almost of social engineering (PolicyInfluencer15, pers.com).

A Policy Adviser was concerned about the different perceptions of sustainability:

Well, it might be about sustainable farm businesses, but that's different. I don't think it's anything to do with sustainable agriculture (PolicyAdviser3, pers.com).

The rationale is mediated by two issues. The first is that government has to be pragmatic in policy making, choices often being constrained by previous decisions. Thus the strong environmental bias of the funding in the ERDP was ascribed, according to a senior Policy Maker, partly to the legacy of the 1992 CAP reform, rather than to an absolute policy choice:

One of the issues about agri-environment schemes that the Treasury is very conscious of is that they are quite difficult to switch off. They're different from the project-based schemes that the Treasury liked better (PolicyMaker1, pers.com).

The second is that policy is driven by spending constraints, the economic rationale taking precedent over all other considerations. Thus the economic argument for AE payments in terms of good value for money, and the economic opportunities linking landscape and tourism, were strongly emphasised in the plan alongside the environmental benefits to be achieved through addressing the degradation of the countryside:

Results from a range of studies, for environmentally sensitive areas, indicate that these schemes provide environmental benefits which are significantly greater than the associated costs. Coupled with the fact that there are substantially more projects that would provide good environmental benefits than can currently be funded, a significant increase in expenditure on these environmental schemes will provide good value for money bringing benefits to biodiversity, landscape, heritage, tourism and amenity (MAFF 2000a, p78)

A further issue in terms of the ERDP policy rationale is that neither the structural adjustment nor the public goods argument justifies the provision or promotion of sustainable and integrated farming systems along the lines suggested by Evans *et al* (2001). Rather, the public goods rationale developed in the policy supports field or farm level interventions alongside the existing intensive system, while structural adjustment largely provides opportunities for diversification into non-farming activities.

The twin rationales of structural adjustment and payment for public goods underpinned all the measures selected by policy makers for inclusion in the ERDP, under the national priorities of economy and environment. The rationales were supported by a mixture of impact indicators and targets for measurable objectives, and output targets where impacts



could not be measured. These provided the framework within which the regional objectives were set. The following sections analyse the form, goals and objectives of the programme. The latter lie at the heart of the policy, and make an important link between the process of design and its subsequent translation by implementers and target groups. They reveal the assumptions and social constructions made by policy makers during the designing process.

### **7.5.2 Form of the policy**

The ERDP consists of a national (England) plan<sup>74</sup> supported by nine sub-regional chapters, including London. This option was chosen from three possible configurations (an England (regional) plan, sub-regional plans, or a hybrid plan) as a result of consultation in April 1999 (MAFF 1999). The consultation paper emphasised the need to ensure that measures under the Regulation were integrated and transparent irrespective of the level at which they were planned and implemented. It also discouraged the choice of sub-regional plans by referring to the stringent financial audit standards to be imposed by the EC on prospective paying agencies. Using the discretion available under the Regulation to plan at the most relevant geographical level, the choice of a national (England) plan with sub-regional chapters appeared to demonstrate concern that the diversity of the English regions should be balanced against Community and national priorities, with particular attention being paid to differing regional needs and the encouragement of local participation.

The national plan of the ERDP provides an overview of the current situation, specifically noting that this draws on the detailed descriptions and SWOT analyses contained in the regional chapters. It also provides a framework for the programme in terms of the national priorities and objectives for rural areas. The ERDP implements RDR measures through ten schemes. Three of these are nationally operated, four are national schemes with regional targeting, and three are schemes operated at regional level, consistent with national priorities and within national guidelines:

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<sup>74</sup> Please refer to Paragraph 4.8.2 for definition of the terminology associated with the geographical levels of administration in both the RDR and the ERDP.

**Table 7.1 The ERDP Schemes**

<b>RDR Measures</b>	<b>Schemes in England</b>	<b>Operational Level</b>
Investment in agricultural holdings (Articles 4-7)	Rural Enterprise Scheme Energy Crops Scheme	Regional National/Regional targeting
Training (Article 9)	Vocational Training Scheme	Regional
Processing and marketing of agricultural products (Articles 25-28)	Processing and Marketing Grant	Regional
Forestry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Afforestation of agricultural land (Article 31)</li> <li>- Other forestry measures (Article 30)</li> </ul>	Farm Woodland Premium Scheme  Woodland Grant Scheme Energy Crops Scheme (SRC), establishing SRC producer groups	National/Regional targeting Ditto Ditto
Article 33 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting-up of farm relief and farm management services</li> <li>- Marketing of quality agricultural products</li> <li>- Basic services for the rural economy and population</li> <li>- Diversification of agricultural activities etc</li> <li>- Agricultural water resources management</li> <li>- Development and improvement of infrastructure etc.</li> <li>- Encouragement for tourist and craft activities</li> </ul>	Rural Enterprise Scheme	Regional
Less Favoured Areas (Articles 13-21)	Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances (2000) Hill Farm Allowance Scheme (2001-2006)	National National
Agri-environment (Articles 22-24)	Countryside Stewardship Scheme  Environmentally Sensitive Areas Organic Farming Scheme	National/Regional Targeting National National
Article 33 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renovation and development of villages</li> <li>- Protection of the environment in connection with agriculture</li> </ul>	Rural Enterprise Scheme	Regional

Source: (MAFF 2000a)



According to the national plan the regional chapters have two functions. The first is to provide the basis for implementing the RDR at a regional level by producing goals and objectives based on the particular context of the region. The second is to help the development of complementary domestic regional strategies by deliberately broadening the scope of those goals beyond that of the Regulation. These two functions are critical to the assessment of the potential of the policy to deliver SiRLU, the regional goals becoming the yardstick by which SiRLU is measured, and the development of domestic regional strategies relying on a much broader policy community than that clustered around the national plan.

### **7.5.3 The goals and objectives of the policy**

#### ***The National Plan***

The national plan of the ERDP does not have goals as such. Rather, the priorities selected by government flow from its rural and countryside policy developed through the Cabinet Office White Paper (Cabinet Office 1999) and the 2000 Spending Review. The national plan therefore begins its strategy section with a statement of the government's overall aim as set out for the first time in the review:

To sustain and enhance the distinctive environment, economy and social fabric of the English countryside for the benefit of all (MAFF 2000a, p59).

The plan then goes on to elaborate the five national objectives for rural and countryside policy<sup>75</sup>. Four of these are used to inform preparation of the plan through key relevant national priorities for SRD: priorities for the rural economy, notably agriculture and forestry; priorities for rural communities; priorities for the rural environment; and priorities

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<sup>75</sup> 1) to facilitate the development of dynamic, competitive and sustainable economies in the countryside, tackling poverty in rural areas; 2) to maintain and stimulate communities, and secure access to services which is equitable in all the circumstances, for those who live or work in the countryside; 3) to conserve and enhance rural landscapes and the diversity and abundance of wildlife (including the habitats on which it depends); 4) to increase opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside; and 5) to promote Government responsiveness to rural communities through better working together between central departments, local government and government agencies, and better cooperation with non-governmental bodies (Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 2001).

for countryside enjoyment. Before selecting priorities for the ERDP, the text makes it quite clear that the scope of the policy is very limited:

Government seeks to deliver its national rural and countryside policy through the combined use of a range of Community measures and national instruments. The specific priorities identified for this Programme, and the measures under Regulation 1257/1999 used to deliver them, will contribute to the attainment of the government's overall key national priorities for rural development but will not alone be sufficient to achieve them. The Programme will be complemented by other initiatives which will be described in the forthcoming Rural White Paper (ibid, p64).

It also establishes the limiting factors and guiding principles that have to be taken into account in the selection of priorities. The former include the narrow sectoral scope of the Regulation generally, the constraints imposed by the EU financial allocation, and the opportunity offered by modulation, while the latter include full respect for the principle of sustainable development, the encouragement of local solutions, and full integration in implementing measures nationally, inter-regionally and intra-regionally. Taking these factors and principles into account, in the context described by the plan, and following assessment of the key issues highlighted by the SWOT analysis, the government selected two priorities for the Programme:

**Priority A      Creation of a productive and sustainable rural economy**

**Operational Objective:** To assist projects which will contribute to the creation of more diverse and competitive agricultural and forestry sectors and new jobs in the countryside, encourage the development of new products and market outlets and greater collaboration and provide targeted training to support these new activities.

**Priority B      Conservation and enhancement of the rural environment**

**Operational Objective:** To increase significantly the area covered by schemes operated under these measures over the Programme period and to maintain the sustainable management of an appropriate area of the Less Favoured Areas.

(MAFF 2000a)



Countryside recreation and tourism, social issues and less localised economic issues would generally be addressed outside of the Programme, although rural economy and environment measures would contribute both directly and indirectly to these other national priorities (MAFF 2000a). Overall, the government expected that, notwithstanding the allocation of measures to priorities under the Programme, most measures would contribute either directly or indirectly to more than one priority, including those not selected for the Programme. Furthermore, the brigading into one programme of disparate measures to contribute to rural economy and land-based objectives was expected, according to policy rhetoric, to result in synergy adding up to more than the sum of the parts:

[B]y bringing together nine former regulations in a single coherent package, the new Regulation provides an opportunity to harness the potential synergy arising from the integrated management of a suite of measures, over and above the significant impact each measure can make in its own more narrow target area (ibid, p88).

This statement counters the personal view of the head of Rural Division quoted in the first part of this chapter. Integration in the delivery of the measures was expected to be taken forward through implementation arrangements. There was acknowledgement, however, that assessing this additional impact would be difficult, particularly as macro-level impacts of the Programme as a whole were likely to be masked by the plethora of other funding streams currently operational in rural areas, and by external factors such as global markets, the strength of sterling and environmental actions. Assessment of the impact of the whole Programme would therefore be indicative only. Appendix 12 (Indicative Priority Level Impact Indicators and Targets) shows the impact indicators and impact targets for the objectives established under each priority. The indicators and targets are all quantitative, dealing with numbers of projects, jobs, training days, BAP targets, hectares and percentages. What is not clear from this is how these outputs will contribute to SiRLU. This is because, as noted above, the Programme is deliberately vague about its contribution to the ‘sustainable rural development’ mentioned briefly in its preamble to the selection of priorities. At the level of measures, selected by government from the RDR as the most appropriate for delivering its priorities, the operational objectives can be classified as being either structural adjustment or public goods arguments (or both), or as achieving a specific

government target. What is not clear from the Programme is whether these are all contributing to a broader vision of SRD, as this concept is not defined in the text.

### ***The SW Regional Chapter***

The SW Chapter of the ERDP differs fundamentally from the national plan in terms of its approach to the concept of RD. Required to produce an inspirational vision for the region, the Chapter identified land management as the key driver for sustainable and integrated environmental, social and economic development, recognising the interdependence of these three elements, and recommending balance through delivery mechanisms for incentive, support and advice. The Aspiration Statement for the RDP flowing from this vision is:

To enable the South West's rural communities to retain and strengthen their cultural distinctiveness, economic viability and quality of life through integrated rural development which conserves the special character and diversity of the Region's environmental assets (MAFF 2000c).

Qualifying the language used in this statement, the Chapter goes on to emphasise four major points:

- the importance of true ownership and the active involvement of local people to positive policy outcomes,
- that the diversity of 'rural communities' displaces the need for a cohesive regional identity,
- that 'integrated rural development' means development that is sustainable and seeks to strike a balance between economic, environmental and social concerns and
- that the region's environmental assets underpin the economic and social well-being of the South West.

The structure of the Chapter is modelled on the national plan, with a description of the regional context preceding a SWOT analysis, goals, objectives and activities. Where it deviates from the model of the national plan is in its strong focus on integrated rural development (IRD). The SWOT is based on the thematic terms linked to SD (environmental, economic, social), and is used as a reference document in setting objectives



for IRD in the region. Three separate SWOTs are presented under these thematic terms, a separation of form and function that continues throughout the Chapter in spite of the strategic emphasis on the integration of themes to achieve SD. At paragraph 2.3.2, an attempt is made to explain the importance of integration. Using the language of Brundtland and the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development it talks of a holistic approach to IRD, but stops short of explaining how integration can be achieved through the Programme.

From the SWOT analyses, twelve goals are identified, four for each of the themes (see Appendix 13). For each of the goals, themed objectives are developed which describe the means of achieving both the goal and IRD. Altogether forty objectives are proposed, twelve each for the environmental and economic goals, and sixteen for the social goals. From these a range of general *activities* are identified that would achieve the objectives. These general activities are ranked in three different ways in the next section of the Chapter. First they are scored according to their ability to achieve IRD. Activities involving integrated advice, research and pilot projects all score highly because of their wide-ranging scope and applicability, but those activities that relate particularly to sectoral, or thematic, objectives do not. A further ranking is therefore carried out to establish the order of activities according to sectoral objectives. This is followed by a third ranking which takes direct account of the scope of the Measures available under the RDR through which the activities can be delivered and the goals and objectives addressed. The results of these three rankings are shown in Table 7.2 below:

**Table 7.2    Ranking of activities**

Activities identified by the region	Regional priority in terms of meeting regional objectives for IRD	Regional priority in terms of meeting sectoral objectives (economic, environmental, social)	Rank of activity in terms of ‘closeness of fit’ with measures
Provision of integrated environmental and business advice to sustain regional diversity and distinctiveness	1	-	8
Demonstration projects and pilot initiatives to inform and disseminate good practice in IRD	2	-	10
Feasibility studies to explore and develop new			

approaches to IRD	3	-	11
Rural tourism and recreation initiatives	4	4	4
Development of rural services and improved take-up and quality of existing services (transport, shops, ICT)	5	3	12
Establishment and management of forestry and woodlands	6	5	3
Support for environmental land management	7	1	1
Provision and promotion of training to enhance skills and competencies	8	7	7
Processing of primary agricultural commodities into products, and their marketing and distribution	9	6	2
Establishment of new enterprises and land uses	10	8	5
Investment to reduce pollution in sensitive water catchment areas and river floodplains	11	2	9
Introduction, development, growing and use of new and novel crops for food, energy and industrial uses	12	9	6

Source: (MAFF 2000a)

Finally, the general activities are mapped against all the measures to be pursued under the RDR, taking into account the regional prioritisation exercise, to reveal a ranking of measures that are most relevant in delivering these activities. The simple table below shows the results of this exercise:

**Table 7.3 Mapping exercise**

Rank	Description of Measure	Activities	Priority
1	Agri-environment:Organic Farming Scheme  Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowances: HCLAs, HFAS  Afforestation of agricultural land and other forest/woodland management: WGS, FWPS, ECS	Organic Conversion  Upland Grazing Systems  Enhance woodland features	High for SW
2	Agri-environment: ESAs  Agri-environment: CSS  Afforestation of non-agricultural land and Other Forestry, including Short Rotation coppice	Environmental land management  Novel crops	High for SW



	Diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative incomes	Financial support for diversification	
3	Marketing and Processing Grants	Processing of primary agricultural products	High for SW
4	Marketing of quality agricultural/forestry products	Marketing and supply chains	High for SW
5	Protection of the environment in connection with agriculture, forestry and landscape conservation and animal welfare	Soil erosion measures	High for SW
6	Encouragement for tourist and craft activities  Training	Stimulating tourism  Enhancing skills	High for SW
7	Agriculture water resources management	Investment in farm water resources	Medium for SW
8	Renovation and development of villages and protection and conservation of the rural heritage	Local IT information points	Medium for SW
9	Investment in agricultural holdings (energy crops)	Financial support for energy crops	High for Miscanthus establishment as energy crop
10	Development and improvement of infrastructure connected with the development of agriculture and forestry  Financial engineering	Rural service infrastructure  Venture capital business plans	Medium for SW
11	Farm relief services	Skills pool	Low for SW
12	Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters	Flood damage recovery	Low for SW
13	Basic services for the rural economy and population  Reparcelling	Community support networks  Conservation site assembly	Low for RDR but High for SW through alternative funding mechanisms  Very Low for SW
14	Land improvement	Field water supply	Very Low for SW

Source: (MAFF 2000a)

This lengthy and complicated process served to ‘fit’ the aspirations of the SW Regional Planning Group to the scope of the RDR and the national priorities. The ranking exercises effectively reversed the priority for the SW region from a programme of SIRD, to a programme of land management and structural adjustment. The goals, however, remained

the same, and are used by regional teams to assess project-based applications for ‘regional fit’.

#### **7.5.4 The implementing structures**

The national programme document outlined the implementation arrangements through which integration would be taken forward, and discretion allocated. A careful reading of the arrangements indicates that, while all the structures appear to support a devolved approach to the management of the implementation process by setting up strategy, programming and consultation groups, the actual discretion allocated was limited. The roles of the groups, which were all to be chaired by MAFF, were consultative and advisory rather than strategic, a matter of contention for most stakeholders being their exclusion from the process of project appraisal. The document also made clear the limitations of the ERDP, underlining the responsibility of each region in promoting the achievement of objectives in the regional chapters that could not be taken forward under the ERDP.

The main points are summarised here:

- The Programme will be implemented by the paying agencies (MAFF and FC) with the assistance of other interested government departments and the government agencies
- The Programme will be delivered by MAFF’s regional organisation, supported by its Resource Management Division and its Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)
- Structural change in MAFF will result in a single CAP Payments Agency, a strategic MAFF presence in the GOs, and a new rural programme delivery service, a key function of which will be the delivery of the ERDP.
- Implementation of the Programme will be overseen by a National Strategy Group (NSG), based on the membership of the National Planning Group that prepared the Plan. The membership of the group is described in Chapter 4 – Observation. The role of the group, chaired by a senior MAFF official, includes consultation and



advice on strategic matters relating to the Programme, monitoring the overall progress of the ERDP against targets, assisting and guiding the Regional Programming Groups and promoting the Programme to the public.

- In each English region a Regional Programming Group, based on the membership of the Regional Planning Groups and chaired by the MAFF Regional Director, will oversee the region's contribution to the Programme. The membership will reflect that of the NSG, but may be expanded at the discretion of the region. The role of the group will include advising the NSG on the progress of the programme at a regional level, annual reporting to the NSG, consideration of the regional strategy, consultation in relation to implementation, liaison with Objective 1 and Objective 2 areas, working with regional partners to promote the achievement of objectives in the regional chapters that cannot be taken forward under the ERDP, and promotion of the Programme.
- A new National Rural Development Forum and Regional Rural Development Consultation Groups have been set up, based on the former national and regional agri-environmental consultation arrangements, but broadened to reflect the wider scope of the Programme. The text indicates that these have been set up for communication and consultation between MAFF and its governmental, statutory and non-governmental partners on all aspects of the Programme.
- None of the above groups will be involved in the consideration of individual projects, which will be approved by the Regional Project Appraisal Panels. This panel will comprise MAFF and FRCA officials together with a representative from the GO.
- MAFF and the FRCA will track the progress and effectiveness of the implementation of the Programme by means of monitoring and evaluation in accordance with Articles 41-45 of Regulation 1750/1999.
- The mid-term and ex-post evaluations will be carried out by independent evaluators as was the case with the ex-ante evaluation.

### 7.5.5 Logic chain and assumptions

The logic chain for a policy, according to PolicyAdviser6, starts in the context within which intervention becomes necessary. The context of the RDR/ERDP has been described and explained in previous chapters. This chapter shows how two rationales supported the case for intervention: the ‘public goods’ argument that underpinned measures selected to provide environmental benefits; and structural adjustment, to enable funding of rural economy schemes. The rationale as stated locates funding largely in the agricultural sector, as the largest landowners and as an industry in crisis. Previous policies and choices have influenced the form of the Programme, as has the Treasury requirement for ‘good value for money’. The programme sets out very simply its expected impact:

Measures introduced under the Programme will safeguard and improve the environment and provide opportunities to create additional or new sources of income and employment in rural areas (MAFF 2000a, p90).

It explains in some detail the expected impact on farmers, stating that most farmers will lose revenues as a result of modulation while some will gain revenues through participating in the schemes. It is much less confident about predicting the impact on the wider rural area, as its broad aims and priorities indicate:

[I]t will be extremely difficult to identify the extent to which the Programme and the various measures within it will have contributed to the overall state of rural economies, the rural environment and rural communities given the overriding influence of external factors (ibid, p92).

The programme document clearly explains that measures available under the RDR, and the budget allocation for the UK, will constrain the delivery of RD objectives. Instead, it says, the ERDP will contribute to a range of rural initiatives that together will achieve those objectives.

This simple logic chain, however, was complicated in the SW region by the adoption of ‘sustainable rural development’ as an aspiration and goal. While the regions were directed to develop regional strategies for RD as a specific outcome of the Programme, utilising the



perceived inherent synergy in the integration of measures and other rural funding streams to help achieve these, the SW clearly expected more of the programme itself in terms of its contribution to this goal. Furthermore, integration was to be facilitated by MAFF, traditionally the most autonomous of government departments, through implementation arrangements that consisted of three disparate strands within MAFF: *strategic direction*, provided by the NSG and the RPGs; *operational delivery* provided through a rural delivery service based on the FRCA; and a broad *consultative forum* with no statutory role. Integration in these circumstances appeared an unlikely outcome; while discretion was narrowly constrained by the top-down nature of MAFF's implementing arrangements.

The logic chain, then, was fragmented, and RD was presented in the Programme in several different ways. As far as the national plan was concerned, it was a RD programme in name only, being functional in design and approach. In this construction, RD was either the wider goal of government generally for rural areas, or a useful phrase to describe the rural economy measures, as this excerpt from the Executive Summary shows:

The Programme ... explains government's strategy for using the measures in the Regulation to run schemes in England to support environmental improvement and rural development (Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 2001).

From the government's perspective the RDR/ERDP provided a useful and appropriate tool for pursuing policies designed to restructure the agriculture sector, achieve international biodiversity targets and promote further reform of the CAP. Policy makers assumed that most measures within the ERDP would contribute either directly or indirectly to more than one priority. Another assumption made by policy makers in the design of the programme was that its novel form would eventually contribute to integration of its objectives, and synergy between its disparate measures, in spite of suspecting that the opposite would be true. Yet another was that discretion could be said to be allocated as opposed to being seen to be allocated. From the regional perspective, RD was the goal of the policy, and the assumption was that the RDR/ERDP would enable the delivery of SIRD according to the aspirations of regional stakeholders. Together with the construction of RD as *idea* in the RDR, this resulted in three different constructions of RD in the policy as a whole. This is

represented graphically in Figure 7.1 below, with the different constructions set against the conceptualisation of RD developed for this study:

SiRLU	RDR	ERDP National Plan	ERDP SW Region
RD as holistic concept involving the integration of policy objectives and bottom-up participation in policy making	SIRD as multifunctionality of agriculture. Agriculture to provide economic, social and environmental benefits to rural areas.	RD as short-term structural adjustment for farmers and protection of the environment	RD as SRD Balancing economic, social and environmental elements
<b>RD as CONCEPT</b>	<b>RD as IDEA</b>	<b>RD as TOOL</b>	<b>RD as GOAL</b>

**Figure 7.1    Constructions of RD implicated in implementing the RDR in SW England**

### 7.6 Conclusion

Using the framework for analysis provided by the policy design model, this chapter has attempted to identify the particular construction of RD embedded in the ERDP and the agendas being served or otherwise by this situation. In exploring the process of policy design, the three fundamental issues of leadership, consultation and discretion were examined. This revealed a largely top-down process that employed a broad consultative strategy to comply with EC requirements and the guiding principles of SD, but that was perceived by stakeholders to be largely cosmetic. Lack of communication between national and regional levels resulted in misconceptions about roles and responsibilities, leading to diverging agendas for RD. The resulting constructions of RD embedded in the national and regional plans differed fundamentally from one another. The national plan, while employing the language of RD, was quite clear about its objectives and limitations, using the discretion available under the RDR to further the government agenda for structural adjustment of the agricultural industry and environmental protection. The SW regional chapter, on the other hand, made SRD its goal, to be achieved through the balancing of economic, environmental and social concerns. Linking this to the analysis of the RDR in



Chapter 5, this meant that there were essentially three different constructions of RD involved in the implementation of the RDR: RD as ‘idea’ (the RDR); RD as ‘tool’ (ERDP National Plan); and RD as ‘goal’ (ERDP SW Regional Chapter). The implications of this for policy design and the potential within the programme to deliver SiRLU are that, with no specific logic chain between the rationales and goals at each level of policy making, outcomes are likely to be inconsistent. There was no continuity between the different levels of the programme and no priorities stated at the outset as to what RD was expected to be. While a prescriptive model of RD may have failed to accommodate the diversity of European rural areas, some structure in relation to EC priorities would have been helpful in constructing a credible logic chain between policy formulation and outcomes.

## PART III IMPLEMENTING THE RDR IN SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

### Chapter 8 Constructing Sustainability

#### 8.1 Introduction

The thesis moves on in Part 3 to consider how the construction of rural development (RD) that formed part of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) was translated and operationalised through the implementation structures of the Programme. It begins in this chapter by providing a rough analysis of the myriad ways in which sustainability was understood in the RD policy community. This analysis is important to the study in three main ways: 1) it contributes to the first research question insofar as it identifies the many ways in which sustainability is perceived and articulated within the England rural policy context; 2) in doing this, it broadly identifies the way sustainability is constructed by the different populations used to segment data in this thesis (see Chapter 4); and 3) it provides the data with which to compare the model of sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU) constructed by policy makers in the design of the ERDP.

From the interview data a total of five constructions of sustainability were distilled from over fifty different versions of what sustainability is, or might be, or should be.

Respondents often contributed to more than one theme, the boundaries between them becoming blurred and porous. With the exception of environmental GAs and NGOs, many of the responses were vague, respondents drawing repeatedly on the classic representations of sustainability commoditised by the Brundtland Report and the ‘Rio’ Conference (see Chapter 3). The constructions identified were: a *balancing* model; three *Russian Doll* models – *environment*, *social*, and *economic*; and an *integrated* model. In Chapter 3 (sub-heading 3.2.1), four popular conceptualisations of SD were identified from the literature to illustrate how different interpretations have significant implications for the implementation



of sustainability through policies and programmes. This chapter examines the extent to which the two sets of models can be compared, and analyses the way that different populations approach discussions of sustainability.

## **8.2 Constructions of sustainability**

### **8.2.1 The Balancing Model**

The balancing model is essentially a shorthand version of the Brundtland definition (see Figure 3.2) that aims to balance social, environmental and economic elements. In this guise, according to PolicyInfluencer23, it tends to miss the really important concepts of the original: futurity, equity, and environmental limits. Few respondents actually referred specifically to the Brundtland definition, although some mentioned the underlying concepts in their constructions. Most, however, avoided the inherent difficulty with this global definition; that of reconciling the dichotomous notion of ‘sustainable’ with ‘development’, in favour of the commoditised version described above. This tendency was noted by a Policy Adviser:

SD was also all about north/south relations, about poor and rich, about developed and undeveloped. We completely ignore that, utterly. In terms of SD policy within UK agriculture, I mean to be genuinely sustainable, you want to get rid of all the supports and let African states export their coffee to us without any import control (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).

Thus the balancing model has become a construct, used to simplify and make sense of the different perceptions and standpoints of sectors in society. Descriptions of the different ways in which this model are usually portrayed in the literature are included in Chapter 3. Respondents in this study produced some memorably mixed metaphors while striving to explain their understanding of the models. This anonymous example may seem comical, but the unintended humour only serves to emphasise the very simplicity of the imagery:

If you want true sustainability ... you say it's implicit but it's the very best way to demonstrate it, because if you take one leg from the tree it falls over – it's a very good image to major on (Anonymous).

The important point about this model and the way it is interpreted is that it results in a simplistic, segmented view of the policy arena in which environmental, social and economic elements are considered separately, common ground becoming hard to find in the process. A Policy Influencer summed this up:

That's probably not hitting all the buttons of the sustainability triangle – well, square really if you put in use of resources, but you're never going to hit the middle of the triangle (PolicyInfluencer18, pers.com).

Included also in this construction are the Defra model and the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) model. These rely on four aims being achieved at the same time: social progress which recognises the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; the prudent use of natural resources; and the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment (Defra 2002). This can be compared with the 'virtuous circle' model described in Chapter 3. However, with the exception of one Policy Influencer, respondents did not use this conceptualisation in conversation, referring usually to a triangular representation of social, environmental and economic elements. This is unsurprising, given the emphasis on these three elements in the text of the ERDP and the use of triangular symbols in the graphics to reinforce the message.

### **8.2.2 The Russian Doll Model – Environment**

This model relies for its validity on the concepts of natural capital, environmental limits and the necessity of putting the environment first in any conceptualisation of sustainability. It draws strength from the global environmental movement that was instrumental in challenging models of economic development. Like the balancing model, it relies on the idea of society being segmented into three distinct elements. This time, however, the three are not concentric, but nested inside each other like a Russian Doll:

The point is that each doll provides a constraint for the doll within it, and the big doll, the main doll, is environment, and the ones inside are social and economic and you can't breach those environmental thresholds without causing major social and economic damage. The environment encapsulates and provides the fundamental baseline for social progress and economic development (PolicyInfluencer23, pers.com)



There is a suspicion voiced by a Policy Maker that the sustainability debate has historically been both promoted and hijacked by environmental interests, which could have adverse impacts for sustainable development:

We mustn't forget, as an objective [the term sustainable development] includes sustainable and that includes economic objectives. So economic objectives means people making business decisions, finding markets, adapting buildings and land for business. That is a real live thing that will happen, and if that's an objective then that's part of sustainability. Therefore we mustn't create sustainability as anti-development, anti-growth, anti-economy (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).

The problem is, and always has been, the difficulty of reconciling the apparently opposing concepts of environmental protection and economic growth, and defining the new shorthand terms. The basis for the environmental model is illustrated by these comments:

You have to go back to the principles of sustainability in terms of natural capital and intra/intergenerational transfers. The underlying issue is its compatibility with the integration of social, economic and environmental issues. My own view is that environment is a base. Protecting the environment is the basis of sustainable rural land use. Economic and social sustainability are incredibly hard to define. What are we looking for in terms of economic sustainability? Farm survival is beyond the reach of any policy, markets etcetera (PolicyAdviser1, pers.com).

We wouldn't accept the traditional approach that it is where the three interact. We wouldn't accept that it's any bits of that. We wouldn't accept that it is balancing or integrating the environment with the others. If you want a construct that we would think about, we would start with the Earth. That's the only thing we're sure about, and we need to live within the confines of the Earth and the economy is just a means by which society transacts economically. The other construct we use is thinking about natural capital (PolicyInfluencer3, pers.com).

The problem with this conceptualisation is that it works equally well for those espousing either the economy or society as the biggest doll, leading to constructions that lack environmental limits. They thus become something other than SD as envisioned by Brundtland.

### 8.2.3 The Russian Doll Model – Social

The social model is the least well defined of all those presented in this analysis, being a concept that people found difficult to interpret in a strategic way. It was usually conflated with ‘economic’, which is a much simpler element to quantify and discuss. There is no counterpart in the models presented in Chapter 3, and, according to a Policy Influencer, very few people would argue that the social part of the Russian Doll is the biggest. Interviews with Policy Makers revealed an acknowledgement of the general failure of MAFF and subsequently Defra to deal with the social elements of policy making:

I think we’ve failed generally to include the social dimension of SD in our analysis, in our research, in our programmes, in our evaluation, in the political dialogue, and we glibly turn round and say social exclusion’s important to us and the countryside, but I don’t think we understand much about it. One of the things Defra’s going to be doing, significantly in the future, is investment in a better evidence base for the social issues in rural areas, working closely with the CA. But we’re a long way from getting a properly balanced understanding of SD (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).

Perhaps the closest to a social model that the ERDP gets is through its HFA scheme, but here again, the dividing line between what is social and what is economic is finely drawn:

What you’ve got to do is think about where the HFA fits as part of the ERDP family. It might be perfectly acceptable for us to say, well, it is essentially a social instrument in that if it’s the government policy that if someone is willing to live and farm in the hills then we should be giving them some kind of financial support. Whether you agree or not farmers should actually get that support is a different issue (PolicyInfluencer23, pers.com).

It is the case, according to a Policy Implementer, that there are many differences of perception in assessing successful outcomes from a social perspective. He quoted the case of Cornwall as an example:

From a spatial point of view Cornwall is very interesting. It’s hugely distributed and nothing like as deeply rural as North Devon, particularly in the far west, where you’ve got a community of distributed villages rather than market towns and rural areas (PolicyImplementer11, pers.com).



#### 8.2.4 The Russian Doll Model – Economic

As economic growth underpins the modern liberal capitalist economies it is clearly inaccurate to suggest that environment as the main doll is a realistic representation of the current situation, although, as shown above, it is an aspiration for many groups and individuals. This leaves society with the conundrum of delivering SD in a market-driven economy where, if economics fail, everything else fails also (PolicyInfluencer23). There was overwhelming acknowledgement among the policy community that SiRLU depended firstly on the existence of a profitable agricultural sector, and that intervention to support the production of public goods was an essential part of achieving that. There was a great deal of debate, however, about whether the methods employed in encouraging and maintaining the competitive and diverse agriculture sector envisaged in the Cabinet White Paper and subsequently the ERDP would result in a sustainable form of development. Encouragement for organic farming, essentially promoted as contributing to more sustainable farming practices, is limited to set-up costs in England, unlike some European countries, where production is also maintained through grant aid. This means that farmers are likely to revert to previous production methods when prices fall. The AE schemes were almost universally condemned by respondents as being inadequate to achieve sustainable agriculture. This was, they believed, largely due to the limited scope of the schemes:

I would argue that the ERDP does not promote agricultural sustainability at all because it's always based, and is still based, on British AE schemes which essentially separate out plots of land that are conserved and plots of land that aren't. And that's not SD. That's the classic British zonal approach to conservation planning (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).

All agreed, however, that profitability must underpin any sustainable farming system, and, as far as the AE schemes contribute to farmers' incomes by providing 'public goods' payments, they were contributing to sustainable agriculture. The following quotation provides a sense of how economics contributes to the sustainability of communities in the round:

It has to be profitability. You cannot avoid the fact that people are in farming to earn a living from it. If they don't, something gives somewhere. That could manifest itself in all sorts of different ways. It could mean that people give up and their holding is split up, units get bigger and bigger which may be farmed intensively. The more that happens then the

fewer individual businesses you have. Having more individual units means more infrastructure, accountants, etcetera, which is very important in deep rural areas (PolicyInfluencer10, pers.com)

The growing emphasis on the multifunctionality of agriculture acknowledges the need for a system that can provide these multiple benefits for rural areas. There was some doubt, however, about whether the model of multifunctionality represented by the ERDP was a model that could produce a sustainable agriculture. The crux of the issue, according to a Policy Adviser, was that a multifunctional agriculture should deliver SiRLU, and the ERDP does not:

The notion of multifunctionality – I mean, we did all these interviews with MAFF three years ago and we said, well, what about multifunctionality? And they all laughed and said it was a French notion, you know, we don't believe in it. We don't have multifunctional farming in England. And I think the implementation of the ERDP has revealed that we don't have multifunctional farming. We have farming that is economically rational, and business, you know, the ERDP is turning into a sort of business handbook for rural enterprise, whether it be farm or non-farm. But it is nothing to do with sustainability (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).

### **8.2.5 The Integrated Model**

The concept of an integrated model relies on the constructs of environmental, social and economic elements, but unlike the other models, it insists that they should be considered together rather than as separate entities:

At high level, a critical theme/approach is about trying to integrate rather than balance. You still see a lot of people talking about balancing the competing demands etcetera. The more you approach it from that perspective, thinking this is about balancing, this is about compromise, much more likely you are to find yourself in the situation, you know, win-win-lose. A much more healthy perspective is to start trying to see what really going in for win-win-win ... think about integration. It sounds like people are being pedantic when they talk about that, but it's really quite important (PolicyInfluencer17, pers.com).

However, the idea of an integrated model holds the seeds of a conundrum. On the one hand it is regarded as the key to SD by locating the centre of the 'triangle' of separate elements. On the other it is regarded in some quarters as a threat to the concept of SD, the small



amount of influence found for environmentalists through the AE programme becoming lost with the shift towards the rural as opposed to the agricultural. This threat is compounded by the more acceptable face of integrated rural development (IRD) as opposed to SD, as this observation acknowledges:

In European programmes, environment and SD are seen as factors which attempt to stop things going ahead, so they're negative, very, very much so, and SD is just seen as environmental development in all honesty, and it's seen as a negative, and more about conservation and preservation and so integrated development is less threatening. A lot of the general issue for IRD is about the level of development rural areas are prepared to see to make themselves sustainable (PolicyAdviser9, pers.com).

To the sceptics an integrated approach resolves many of the problems inherent with SD, and some regard it as a more convenient conceptualisation of SD in rural areas. For those concerned with social and economic issues the new conceptualisation has clear benefits ... "You could think about 'sustained'... sort of IRD. I think I would probably be a bit more comfortable with that. The environment kind of fades a little bit into the background" (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com). This notion of greater acceptability, however, should not completely subsume the underlying concepts of SD, according to another Policy Adviser:

With the benefit of the work we did for the [Agency], I argued that IRD as opposed to SD should be used. Integrated is the term used because I think it appeals to joined-up thinking and gets away from nasty awkward definitions of 'sustainable'. But underpinning the notion of IRD is, I think, the SD definition, bringing together economic, social and environmental without damage to any one, at the same time as it acknowledges that that will require integration between the silos in which those usually sit (PolicyAdviser6, pers.com).

The main way in which conceptualisations from interviews differed from the integrated models presented in Chapter 3 is that they only involved the articulation of the need to integrate the three elements of SD without proposing the means to achieve this. No one mentioned a governance approach to the concept and few respondents were able to suggest how integration could be operationalised. A suggestion from a Policy Adviser was that the problem lay with a missing link between strategy and delivery:

For a start, there is something missing like you said, and I think the thing that is missing is any concrete mechanism to promote the 'win-wins' in SD. So what you've got is that the top level have had a great commitment to this, you know, three pillars being in everything,

but at the operational level, given the schemes and the way they are promoted, is an approach that is much more likely to say, if it's damaging we'll try and change it; if it's benign, OK, but it might not be good enough; if it's good then, yes. But it's a reactive approach, and not sufficient perhaps emphasis on the proactive approach in trying to make links in joined-up thinking, which means that the stuff that comes forward in the first place is as positive as it could be (PolicyAdviser7, pers.com).

### 8.3 Constructing sustainability

The second part of this chapter examines the data using the intersection of ‘population’ with ‘constructions of sustainability’ (see Chapter 4). This gives a rough indication of the way these groups thought about and discussed the issue of SiRLU. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there were as many constructions of sustainability as there were respondents. Therefore attempting to analyse these constructions provided a challenge in terms of producing coherent results. The table below shows the numbers of respondents discussing the various constructions in the course of their interviews. The total number indicates that many offered more than one construction.

**Table 8.1    Constructions of Sustainability**

<b>Construction of Sustainability</b>	<b>National Bureaucrats (Policy Makers)</b>	<b>Regional Bureaucrats (Policy Implementers)</b>	<b>GA/LA/NGO  (Policy Influencers)</b>	<b>Academics Advisers Consultants (Policy Advisers)</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Balancing</b> (incl. Defra, Balancing, SDU, Brundtland)	6	10			16
<b>Russian Doll Environment</b>			13	1	14
<b>Russian Doll Social</b>	3	2			5
<b>Russian Doll Economic</b> (incl Sustainable Agriculture and Public Goods)	2	2	20	5	29
<b>Integrated</b> (incl Capacity Building)		4	13	5	22
<b>Totals</b>	11	18	46	11	86



While this analysis is something of a blunt instrument, it does draw attention to several issues that are significant for understanding the interpretation of the ERDP by implementers and stakeholders. Policy Makers articulated sustainability through the balancing model, but refuted its tenet that all the elements of sustainability actually needed to be balanced. They acknowledged that the RDR was limited in scope and that it was not important for it to address social issues. They made no explicit reference to IRD as a model of sustainability. Policy Implementers were more concerned with operationalising the balancing model, articulating the difficulties involved in that process, and invoking the normative/empirical dilemma inherent in the implementation process.

Policy Influencers did not use the language of balancing in their discussions about sustainability. Just less than one quarter of respondents espoused the environmental model, while nearly one half acknowledged the overriding importance of economics to sustainability in a market-driven economy. Most thought that farmers needed a decent income, where environmental responsibility was linked with profitability and benefits trickled down to the local community. Integration was not the prime focus for this group although it was the subject of a certain amount of intellectual interest, particularly at the national level and from key individuals at regional level. The Policy Adviser group were not distinguished by a preference for any particular construction; only by the fact that none used the language of balancing. Constructions varied, but some agreed that integration was more difficult in practice than rhetoric. A couple of respondents indicated that there was not necessarily much value in the concept of SD and only one espoused the environmental model. The following sections describe the responses from interview data in a little more detail (the constitution of the populations are described in Chapter 4).

### **8.3.1 The Policy Makers (National bureaucrats)**

Most of the discussions about sustainability within this population centred on the balancing model of sustainability and can be summed up quite succinctly by the remark that ... “sustainability for government means balance and making the electorate feel good” (PolicyMaker1, pers.com). This must be done in a rational way to minimise the impacts

while maximising the benefits, the main question being, how much should be done at which level? There was no need, according to both RDD and the SDU, to have a perfect balance between all the elements of sustainability, provided there were no negative effects on any one, and policies certainly did not need to contribute in a positive way to all three:

A rather idealised interpretation which is what it says in the strategy<sup>76</sup> is that you have to achieve all of these objectives at the same time, and as I've said to you, when you go through the appraisal process for instance it becomes clear that if you are going to make any decision, that somewhere along the line you are going to have some negatives. But if you try to involve those and you try to mitigate them of course, then that's probably as good as you can get (PolicyMaker9, pers.com).

This is in line with a pragmatic sense that the RDR cannot do everything and it is impractical to try to look at too big a picture. However, according to the SDU, their aim was to try to maintain progress in all three sectors, ensuring that policies from Defra took full account of environmental, social and economic issues at the same time.

The Russian Doll models attracted few comments from respondents in this group. As stated above, there was a sense that the sustainability debate had been hijacked by the environmental lobby, to the extent that the SDU, according to PolicyMaker9, would not now endorse 'sustainability' preceded by 'environmental' (or indeed 'social' or 'economic') in any text issuing from the department. One or two respondents commented on the limited scope for social objectives in the ERDP, while a very senior Defra officer appeared to be unaware that the Programme lacked a social priority. Getting the economics right, according to this individual ... "should in itself bring benefits on the social scale" (PolicyMaker6, pers.com). As far as the economic model was concerned, the primary aim of Defra was to promote SD in the context of sustainable agriculture, and the department was looking for a type of agriculture that was efficient, market-led and environmentally responsible (PolicyMaker3, pers.com). Remarkable by their absence were any specific constructions of IRD.

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<sup>76</sup> UK Sustainable Development Strategy (DETR 1999).



### 8.3.2 The Policy Implementers (Regional bureaucrats)

Like the Policy Makers, this group mainly related to sustainability through the balancing model. There were some differences in interpretation, depending on whether individuals were concerned with strategy or delivery, so that while Defra officers were still talking about balancing the three legs, the concern of the RDS was with operationalising the model rather than with the conceptualisation itself. SD was about choices and trade-offs and was, according to one respondent ... “a damned difficult thing to achieve in reality” (PolicyImplementer3, pers.com). It all came down to the scoring system in the project assessment process which, according to another, is a combination of objectivity and subjectivity; usually largely subjective. He identified some of the problems facing an assessor:

In the job we do, you have to have some sort of mechanism that says, well, what are the yardsticks by which you measure things – what are the baselines? I mean, who defines what’s social? Where is the boundary between what’s social and what’s economic? What’s economic and what’s environment? What is environmental capital? What’s the value of that oak tree out there? *Some people wouldn’t agree with the idea of balancing them.* I don’t think you have to balance them *I thought that was how you assessed sustainability?* No, not at all. Loads of projects we look at are completely unbalanced. The further you drill into the topic the more difficult it becomes to identify which way things are going. What you don’t do is balance them (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

One senior respondent said he distanced himself from sustainability decisions because he found himself slightly out of step with the department definition, arguing that the latter did not equate to sustainability. Two other respondents talked about looking for lasting benefits and opportunities for future generations in their assessment of sustainability.

None of the respondents in this group espoused the environmental model of sustainability, although one said he thought that the ERDP was focused on environment as a way of delivering against the government’s targets for biodiversity. There was, however, a single, passionate defence of the social model:

At the end of the day it’s about people. SD is about people, not about the lesser spotted woodpecker. That’s the point where we’re judging things, the impact on people. We value the environment because we like to go and watch wildlife and people like to go and walk in

a pleasant landscape and don't value it for its own sake. To me, SD is about the core needs of people (PolicyImplementer3, pers.com).

Likewise, there was one clear advocate of the economic model:

I think really the ERDP clearly fits the environmental bill and it's also very important that it hits the economic aspect because frankly without that you aren't going to get the environmental and you don't actually get the social either, so I always think the economic side is by far and away the most important aspect ... by strengthening the economics you strengthen the community and strengthen the ability to do something about the environmental side (PolicyImplementer5, pers.com).

As far as the integrated model was concerned, there were various comments made about more joined-up thinking between Defra and EN, the creation of rural economies that were more contributory and encompassing, and the necessity of integrating documents at top level to provide clear guidance. One respondent admitted frustration with the SiRLU debate in England:

Sustainable rural land use is the thing I understand least well of all the things we have talked about, but it is something I get a little dispirited about because one tends to find oneself talking to people who come out of one of three camps. They are either trying to retreat to the middle ages or they have given up or they have a sort of emotional belief that somehow there is a conservation agenda that is going to create a whole new industry in rural England .... Channelling it away from that and into something that is much broader I think is terribly important (PolicyImplementer11, pers.com).

Another articulated the dichotomy of the normative/empirical problem, where policy rhetoric actually has to be translated into meaningful action ... "Sustainability is multifaceted. It's never been clear exactly what it means, and it's still not. Whatever it is, though, it has to work in practice" (PolicyImplementer2, pers.com).

### **8.3.3 Policy Influencers (GAs, LAs and NGOs)**

Members of this population largely eschewed the balancing model in their discussions. According to a RCG member, the conceptualisation ... "comes from an incredibly crude analysis of the world and the way it works ... it has outcomes in terms of the core objectives, but the disbenefits are often massive" (PolicyImplementer26, pers.com). A NSG



member concurred with this view, regretting the commoditisation of Brundtland through this new, balancing model, thereby losing the freshness and vision of the original. Some environmentally biased respondents were beginning to talk about the growing importance of being more balanced in their approach to the three elements:

If you go back to a triangle of economic, social and environmental wellbeing, we obviously start from the environmental side, that's what we're here for. But we do have a statutory duty to further SD and we do have a requirement on us to consider costs and benefits. So, whilst coming firmly from an environmental perspective, we have to be mindful of other options, and there is a balance to be struck, and we have to be open to the other sides in coming to that balance (PolicyInfluencer18, pers.com).

A couple more mentioned long time scales and leaving things no worse for the future, but altogether this model did not form the basis for the population's language of sustainability.

With just under half of the respondents belonging to environmental agencies or organisations, it was unsurprising that the Russian Doll – Environment model was a popular conceptualisation of sustainability for this group. All these respondents, to a greater or lesser degree, maintained that environment was the biggest 'doll', but several acknowledged that environment could not be separated from social or economic elements:

So whilst the environment is the land, I'm very much aware of those social issues associated with quality of life. I'm also aware of economic links. The natural environment is probably the greatest asset the region's got and the RDA has said that the main driver for economic development in the region is the environment. But I do see it from an environmental point of view because that's my job (PolicyInfluencer11, pers.com).

One respondent thought perhaps the ERDP was biased towards the environmental model, but another was more cynical:

We certainly do support the policy, but I tend to have the opinion that the environmental aspect is a sop. *That's an interesting view.* It's a personal view, I have to say. *Why do you think that when the AE schemes get the lion's share of the money? Did they get the lion's share of a mouse's feast?* (PolicyInfluencer27, pers.com).

Yet another had a much more succinct view on what constituted sustainability ...  
"sustainability is environmental sustainability" (PolicyInfluencer16, pers.com).

In spite of the bias towards the environmental model within this group, just under half of all responses concerned the Economic model. From the perspective of the public goods debate, one respondent felt there was a compromise inherent in expecting market economics to deliver SD:

I think it's a societal issue and it's up to government to deliver those societal objectives. It's not up to markets to deliver societal objectives. They deliver with responsibilities to consumers and shareholders, not to society (PolicyInfluencer23, pers.com).

Another, however, expressed disappointment with a market that failed to deliver economic activity without degrading the natural environment. It was, he said, a cultural issue, with countries like France having markets that worked to benefit the environment. This view was shared by members of the GA group interview who cited the Bowland initiative in support of finding ways for the market to work.

Within the Economic model, the issue of sustainable agriculture commanded the greatest attention from respondents, all of them quite clear about the importance of maintaining a profitable agriculture industry. A view expressed by two agriculturally biased respondents was that organic farming was probably not sustainable in the long term, the costs being high and some of the environmental impacts damaging (for example, soil erosion through excessive tillage). Most respondents felt that farmers needed a decent income, and that the economic activity thus created would benefit the local economy and communities:

It has to be profitability. You cannot avoid the fact that people are in farming to earn a living from it. If they don't, something gives somewhere. That could manifest itself in all sorts of different ways. It could mean that people give up and their holding is split up, units get bigger and bigger which may be farmed intensively. The more that happens then the fewer individual businesses you have. Having more individual units means more infrastructure, accountants, etcetera, which is very important in deep rural areas (PolicyInfluencer10, pers.com).

One mentioned the diversity of small farms contributing to the rich diversity of the South Hams in Devon while another suggested that the closure of family farms could be an 'own goal' for sustainable agriculture. Those involved at a regional level were convinced that



sustainability for agriculture in the SW lay in profitable rural *businesses*, some believing that this could only be achieved through public support:

You won't have environmental sustainability unless you've got economic sustainability because the environment doesn't manage itself. The environment is managed by people and the people who know the environment most of all are farmers. Those farmers need to be farming in such a way that they are enhancing rather than damaging the environment, and if they are being expected to manage the countryside they need to be in business in the first place. So, our approach is to use the value of the environment as an economic activity – the production of public goods – to use that as an important component of total income mix for South West agriculture (PolicyInfluncer8, pers.com).

A couple of the environmentally biased respondents had visions of extensive farming systems supporting families within communities, but for a local authority respondent the pragmatic definition of sustainability was the linking of environmental responsibility to profitability.

The Integrated model was clearly one about which some respondents had given thought. One explained that his (environmental) organisation was currently considering the concept. He could see problems, however, with its operationalisation:

Integration is very hard work. One of the reasons why I think we've ended up in a rather divergent world is it is very hard to do these things together, particularly with public programmes and the way in which they are structured. There are people who come from different disciplines, different backgrounds, different views of the world and I think it's quite hard to find someone who can actually draw all those together (PolicyInfluencer26, pers.com).

He went on to say that there was a shift afoot towards the 'rural' and away from the environmental focus of the past few years, providing threats and opportunities for the organisation in terms of its relative influence. He believed that people were reinventing IRD, the concept returning as a different translation of the SD agenda with the latter in essence being simply about integration. Another respondent felt that policies should not be expected to deliver all three objectives of sustainability. Rather they should contribute to an overall level of sustainability. Yet another expressed concern about the shift towards RD as a developmental concept, pointing out that essentially RD was 'development in rural areas', which could be good or bad. One respondent thought that integration as a concept should be

applied to the people who were currently working and thinking in ‘silos’, new ways of looking being combined with new forms of ‘knowing networks’. Thus, while all were aware of the issues regarding integration, this again was not the prime focus of this group’s aspirations for sustainability.

#### **8.3.4 Policy Advisers (Academics, Advisers and Consultants)**

The contribution of this population to the current exercise tended to be in providing a commentary on their observations rather than through any affiliation to a particular construction of sustainability. As an exception to that, one economic consultant mentioned balancing the three legs and the overriding importance of the economic element to the survival of the others. There was only one respondent who supported the view that the environment was the biggest ‘doll’:

You have to go back to the principles of sustainability in terms of natural capital and intra and intergenerational transfers. The underlying issue is its compatibility with the integration of social, economic and environmental [objectives]. My own view is that environment is a base. Protecting the environment is the basis of sustainable rural land use. Economic and social sustainability are incredibly hard to define. What are we looking for in terms of economic sustainability? Farm business survival is beyond the reach of any policy (PolicyAdviser1, pers.com).

He linked this with his belief that SiRLU was some distance in the future taking into account the fact that the ERDP was more about the multifunctionality of agriculture than sustainability, and that there was little in the programme to improve the current situation with regard to farm practice, whole farm integrated and management schemes, and catchment area planning. This view of the ERDP in relation to sustainability was echoed by another respondent, but he also doubted whether the programme was about multifunctionality:

I think the ERDP, certainly in the way it’s written and the way it’s been enacted is not a document for SD in the sense in which we understand it. It’s an ecological modernisation approach or it’s going back to the Stockholm notion of eco-development – reconciling the two. ... I think the implementation of the ERDP has revealed that we don’t have multifunctional farming; we have farming that is economically rational, and business, you know, the ERDP is turning into a sort of business handbook for rural enterprise, whether it be farm or non-farm, but it is nothing to do with sustainability (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).



A farm business consultant felt that mainstream agriculture was already sustainable, and that the ERDP was doing nothing to make it more so:

I think the words are total nonsense. Mainstream agriculture or indeed niche agriculture is, by definition, a sustainable process that's been going on for 5000 years. It is sustainable. Nobody's ever shown me a satisfactory explanation of what Defra would call sustainable. I think the whole thing is nonsense and farming is sustainable (PolicyAdviser3, pers.com).

As far as the integration model was concerned, one respondent was doubtful whether 'bolting together' institutions or words could actually result in sustainability:

You've just got to look across Europe now and the way in which agricultural ministries are now embracing the environment, environmental ministries are embracing transport and industrial planning and things like that. There is a sense in which there's an institutional assumption that sustainable development can be made simply by bolting together all these organisations. *This is not sustainable development, then?* I don't think it becomes sustainable development – joined up intersectoral development perhaps (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).

Several respondents believed that integration was much more difficult to achieve in practice than in rhetoric, requiring capacity-building and partnerships at local level. Another pragmatic economic consultant wondered how RD differed from SD, believing that nothing had changed and that it was going on anyway. Another did not use the concept at all, believing that those who did use it were generally environmentalists aiming to further an environmental agenda.

## 8.4 Some other constructions

Two other constructions of sustainability emerged from respondents across the populations: a *regional model*; and a *step change* model. In addition there were a significant few who found difficulty in defining SD at all. A regional perspective was espoused by two Policy Advisers as having the potential to be more interesting and imaginative than the centre-driven, individually-targeted model adopted in the ERDP. This view was echoed by several Policy Influencers for a variety of reasons including the perceived distance between Whitehall and the local level:

I think the regional level just about provides a scale at which you can begin to do this sustainability stuff. I think it's very hard at a level above that because the distance between the decisions and the actuality is too great (Policy Influencer26, pers.com).

This respondent, however, qualified his statement by adding that few places in his experience have actually defined what sustainability means to them, while the GA group interview members identified a failure amongst regional organisations to take the lead in coordinating the integration of elements. These views tended to be linked to the 'step change' model, where the focus lay in simply trying to achieve a 'better' outcome from interventions. One Policy Adviser liked the Defra definition of sustainability for this reason; while the GA group interview respondents felt that incremental change for the 'better' was a reasonable aspiration:

The way we tend to approach it is not thinking about what an ideal of sustainability might be. It is rather looking at what practices and looking at what things we can do that would be an improvement on what we've got at the moment. And that also encourages you to think rather in terms of steps that can be taken; manageable steps rather than looking at systems and saying, you're sustainable and you're not, because that seems more reasonable. It also seems to be something that everybody can discuss and deal with and manage (PolicyInfluencer28, pers.com).

Amongst those who were unable to define what SD actually meant were both doubters and believers in the concept:

*What would you say a sustainability measure was?* Well, that's what I was going to come on to. I'm not entirely sure, and I don't know if I should be admitting this, you know, working for [this agency] (PolicyInfluencer23, pers.com).

Sustainability is not the same as SD. SD is the process, sustainability is the ultimate goal. We probably don't know what sustainability is – we wouldn't recognise it if it bit us (PolicyInfluencer3, pers.com).

I just think the whole sustainable thing is really woolly, vague. People talk so stridently and emphatically about it, yet it just dissipates into mush – it's all mushy (PolicyAdviser4, pers.com).



From an operational perspective it appeared that government and its agencies did not need to have a firm line on the concept:

In the specific context of the ERDP I don't remember there being any discussion about what constitutes sustainability and what its definition should be at any particular level (PolicyAdviser6, pers.com).

In relation to SD and agriculture, the agency has two different policy heads dealing with those topics. So there is some division within the agency about where SD starts and ends, how it impacts on agriculture and rurality in the round (PolicyInfluencer18, pers.com).

I tend not to get involved (PolicyInfluencer19, pers.com).

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the diversity in translation of the concept of SD in the rural policy community. This was important for identifying the expectations of stakeholders and assessing the way that outcomes of policy are perceived by different groups within the policy arena. The diversity found in the data reveals that many respondents based their constructions on a mixture of 'givens' derived from the plethora of existing definitions of SD in the policy community. Evaluating the data proved difficult, but several important points can be made as a result. The first is to note the almost total absence of IRD from the language of the Policy Makers. The second is that the balancing model pre-empts all others in the language of the Policy Implementers. The third is the overriding importance of economics and, to a lesser extent environment, to the Policy Influencers. The fourth is the evident scepticism from the Policy Advisers about the value of the SD concept. No group espoused the social model, perhaps because social issues were seen as being beyond the scope of the ERDP. There was no discussion about different forms of governance except by those who supported a regional approach to sustainability. There was a hint of the pragmatic in many of the responses, most recognising the aspirational element of sustainability claims in policies and the need to find a way of implementing them.

Against this background of diversity in translation the GAs have developed ‘Quality of Life Capital’ as a response to requests for advice (PolicyMaker9, pers.com). This, however, is primarily focused on environmental capital. Data analysed for this chapter suggest that the model incorporated into the ERDP was influenced by policy makers who used the language of balancing to justify a model that ultimately did not rely on balancing at all. It is being implemented by a group who talk about balancing elements which they find it impossible to carry out in practice, while being influenced by a group that espouses mainly economic and environmental approaches. The observers and advisers note that the policy largely accommodates these approaches while having little to do with SD, or indeed, IRD.



## **Chapter 9   The Interpretation of Rural Development as ‘Goal’: Discretion**

### **9.1   Introduction**

The aim of the next two chapters is to examine how discretion and integration are delivered by the implementing structure of the ERDP, and to illustrate how interpretation of these issues has consequences for outcomes by reference to elements of the project-based scheme assessment framework. Chapters 3 and 7 identified discretion and integration as important elements of any definition of sustainability. Chapter 7 showed that these elements were lacking in the design process and the policy document itself. Chapter 4 explained that the implementation structure of a policy, according to Schneider and Ingram (1997) (S&I), is the relationship between the networks of bodies set up to deliver the policy objectives. Guided by the ‘translation dynamics’ element of the policy design model, this chapter examines the allocation of discretion in four of the bodies set up over the life of the policy to oversee and deliver the ERDP in the South West of England: the National Strategy Group (NSG), the South West Region Regional Programming Group (RPG), the South West Region Regional Consultation Group (RCG), and the National Policy Advice Group (NPAG). Implementing bodies, or agents, according to the policy design model, add value to design in order to facilitate delivery, the amount of value added depending on the allocation of discretion within the structure. The amount of value added by lower orders of bodies gives an indication of the pattern of discretion applicable to a particular programme: *strong, Wilsonian, grassroots, or capacity-building* (see Chapter 4).

Observation data provides the analysis of logistics over time in terms of the administration of these groups (the mix of membership, frequency of meetings), the conduct of the meetings (whether it is ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’), and the participation of members. Interview data provide a commentary from group members regarding their roles, and their perceptions of the discretion allocated through the policy design. The chapter is structured round these four criteria which are used to evaluate the discretion allocated through the four

bodies identified above. It then goes on to illustrate, by reference to *facilitation* as a policy issue, how discretion was allocated throughout the implementation structure in this instance, the results of this analysis being compared with the four patterns of discretion.

## **9.2 Criteria for evaluating discretion**

The first three criteria chosen to evaluate the discretion allocated through the implementing structures of the ERDP are concerned with the logistics of group administration and the relationship between Defra and the group members within those groups. The fourth criterion involves the expectations and perceptions of group members in relation to their experience with implementation. Thus the first part of the chapter is structured under four headings: *group administration*; *conduct of meetings*; *participation*; and *perceptions of discretion*.

### **9.2.1 Group administration**

In the case of all four of the groups being examined, meetings were organised and chaired by Defra, even where meetings were being hosted by other organisations (for example, RPG meetings were occasionally held in the offices of one of the GAs). The NSG was always held in London, while the RPG and RCG meetings were held in various Defra regional offices and also those of host organisations. During the period of observation, the meetings of the RPG and the RCG were held at fairly regular three-monthly intervals, but the NSG, after the first three meetings in 2000 and 2001, petered out, with only one more being held in 2002. The NPAG met only twice, in October 2002 and January 2003 (see Appendix 14 - Calendar of Meetings). Minutes and notes for the meetings were in each case disseminated by e-mail in advance of the meeting, this being accomplished fairly successfully in the cases of the RPG and RCG. The NSG organisation, however, was particularly bad in this respect, papers sometimes reaching members only the day before meetings, or even being handed out on the day. This made it difficult for members to comment effectively on the issues raised.



At the beginning of the observation period there was some confusion amongst RCG members as to the constitution and purpose of the group. Created broadly from the previous Agri-Environment Consultation Group (see Chapter 4), it was the only implementation forum except the National Rural Development Forum (NRDF) to admit NGOs, academics and business interests, and should have fed into the NRDF. Subsequently it has been variously linked to the Regional Rural Affairs Forum (RRAF), the Rural Development Service (RDS), the RPG and the NSG. Its terms of reference have raised concern amongst members, its original purpose of advising and making recommendations to the RPG<sup>77</sup> appearing to have been subsumed in a simple ‘rubber stamping/delivery’ role. Defra staffs admit that the group may have been created to satisfy the requirement to involve stakeholders in the RDR implementation process. The membership of the core group was controversially reduced by the RDS after the first meeting in October 2001 because its size, according to them, more closely resembled a conference than a working group, and there is still no definitive list of participants, new members sometimes being recruited by Defra, according to senior staff, on their individual ability to contribute to proceedings (see Chapter 4).

### **9.2.2 Conduct of the meetings**

The conduct of the meetings varied enormously from group to group. That of the NSG was essentially ‘top-down’ in character, with Rural Development Division (RDD) staff presenting papers and the members commenting on these. The ratio of Defra staff to partners averaged 1:1.5, becoming nearly even after a change in chairperson. After the intensive work required from the group during drafting of the programme, the implementation phase produced fewer demands as the focus shifted from strategy to delivery. Thus, most of the presentations concerned updates on progress rather than issues for the attention of partners, for example, reporting on publicity and training, ERDP updates, FMD impact and programme management. Where members were required to

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<sup>77</sup> According to a working paper produced by the CPRE in May, 2002 (CPRE 2002), the original purpose of the groups was to ... “ ‘advise and make recommendations to the Regional Programming Groups on the implementation of the ERDP in relation to their region’ and to ‘consider changes to regional strategy, review regional targeting and consider regional chapter modification’ ”.

provide input, for example, in relation to the production of the Annual Report for 2000-2001, parameters for that input were meticulously timetabled and prescribed. The majority of ‘action points’ resulting from meetings were for RDD (see Appendix 15 – NSG 8/3/01 Action points). This shift from a strategic to a delivery role was the cause of some resentment amongst partners, many of whom voiced objections to the top-down nature of proceedings:

[The Chair] didn’t invite comments really, and I certainly got the impression that if you said something she didn’t agree with you were seen as a trouble-maker, almost, because there wasn’t time to have a proper discussion and having a proper discussion wasn’t what they wanted. They wanted us to rubber stamp decisions they had already made, and the biggest example of that was when they did the regional funding allocations, where the criteria had always been set in advance (PolicyInfluencer28, pers.com).

Members were never given a forum for networking before or after meetings because refreshments other than coffee during meetings was not provided in spite of the long distances many travelled to attend.

The conduct of the RPG meetings, like the NSG, was largely ‘top-down’. There was, however, a difference in terms of the general ambience of the meetings. Proceedings were less formal than at the London events, mainly because it was a smaller group, with many of the members knowing each other quite well. The membership seemed quite stable during the period of observation, the same people turning up to meetings, with fewer substitutions. The ratio of Defra/GO/RDS staff to members averaged about 1:1 over the observed meetings. There was a great deal less time spent in talking *at* members, and more time spent on whole group discussion of issues. There was also a sense that Defra/RDS members were *part* of the group, rather than adopting the ‘them and us’ approach of the centre. This was partly due to the fact that the regional Defra team themselves encountered difficulties with what one called ... “the brick wall of the centre” (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com) when putting forward what they considered to be good ideas. Thus, the group acted more like a partnership, input from members to the group sometimes resulting in action points for individual stakeholders to pursue; for example, FftF objected to the technical assessment framework and scoring system for project-based (PB) schemes, and proposed a new



Appraisal Tool to facilitate applications that was presented to the group and trialled by the RDS (see below – Facilitation). Members were also called upon to comment in writing on issues arising from the meetings; for example, on the SW Chapter revision in April 2002. The obvious tension between the region and the centre emanated largely from the greater degree of discretion potentially allowed to the regions since the restructuring of MAFF and the formation of Defra, a situation that should result in benefits for the region according to regional farming groups:

One of the good things that's come out of the restructuring and the creation of Defra is that the MAFF/Defra officials now working in the Government Offices do have a limited degree of freedom to take up a regional position on issues. They're pretty nervous about doing it in practice, but I have always said that the MAFF regional director of Defra should be a champion for farming and rural industry in his region. [He's] a fairly unlikely chap. He pushes his head up above the parapet rather nervously, but his heart's in the right place (PolicyInfluencer8, pers.com).

RCG meetings were held in a variety of different venues including hotels, the NFU offices in Taunton and the RDS offices in Exeter. The conduct of the meetings was informal, with a buffet lunch being served either before or after the meetings. This gave ample opportunity for members to exchange views with Defra officers and colleagues, and discuss the proceedings of the meeting. There was a much greater feeling of partnership working between Defra and the members, especially in the later meetings where sub-groups were formed to consider issues of project linkages and facilitation, although some still felt that the emphasis of Defra's presentations could have been focused more usefully on different issues:

What I would love is that the group shouldn't dish out presentations about budgets, but actually look at some cross-cutting themes that are coming out from the plan, and our attempts to deliver that plan, and that might be environmental education, or it might be about some specific initiatives. *So it should be a forum for ideas to be passed up, hopefully?* A while ago I thought about doing a presentation on that<sup>78</sup>, but it kept getting bunged off the agenda because the focus was on the budget. They could post that on the website. There's a real opportunity for some clever thinking and some really healthy dialogue in that group (PolicyInfluencer17, pers.com).

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<sup>78</sup> Best Farming Practices : *Profiting from a good environment* (Environment Agency 2001).

The key purpose of the NPAG, created in the vacuum left by the demise of the NSG, was to pull together all the policy and delivery threads of the ERDP to ensure that the Programme met its objectives. Its function was to realign the Programme with new government objectives and to ensure that splitting the ministerial portfolios associated with the ERDP led to integration rather than fragmentation. The approach to the conduct of the meetings was very ‘top-down’, with more Defra staff present than members. Six working papers were presented to the group at the first meeting, while five information papers and two working papers were presented at the second. Eleven action points were agreed at the first meeting, all for Defra staff, while of the eight action points at the second meeting, six were for Defra, one for the FC and the last for the whole group to comment. It was made quite clear at the meeting observed that the main function of the group was to advise ministers and ensure that they engaged more thoroughly with the issues. It was also made clear that ministerial interest would wane as issues were addressed, signalling a short life for the group.

### **9.2.3 Participation**

The participation of members in discussions at meetings also varied widely from group to group, with a far greater degree occurring at the regional meetings than at the national ones. At NSG meetings most of the comments offered came from a handful of stakeholders. Particularly active in this respect were the Defra GO directors from the regions, who were able to provide operational evidence in what essentially purported to be a strategic partnership. Other members contributed two or three comments each, while some remained silent throughout the proceedings. This lack of participation on the part of members was one of the reasons given by Defra for abandoning the forum:

I’ve found that [the members] are not terribly good at coming forward and discussing issues. They are more content to take what we give them, possibly even give it just a cursory look ... maybe I’m being a bit unkind ... but not to actually get to grips with it. Personally I’ve found that disappointing (PolicyMaker6, pers.com).



From the members' perspective, their silence was a measure of the value attributed by them to the discretion that their membership bestowed. One member compared the NSG with the partnership working achieved during the consultation on the England Forestry Strategy:

It was a much more engaging process. The FC or Defra could accept or reject the papers as they were produced, but at least it was engaging the partners in a positive approach. That never happened with the NSG. It was just a kind of reporting forum. People lost interest. There were too many other things to do rather than sit there and be lectured to by Defra about what they were and weren't doing (PolicyInfluencer23, pers.com).

In spite of the more positive atmosphere of RPG meetings, there was a general feeling amongst stakeholders that the group was there for the dissemination of information from Defra, and that partners had no real power to influence proceedings. Uppermost amongst the criticisms was the fact that they had no input through that forum into the technical assessment process, which was steered and managed from Defra central, and delivered by the RDS in the regions. The following comment was indicative of the resignation engendered in stakeholders by their apparent powerlessness:

I'm not doing much because most of it is predetermined. The applications are scrutinised by RDS. At the end of the day the applications have been scrutinised, and the ability of anyone to turn up to those meetings to wade through and determine if that scrutiny was wrong is non-existent (PolicyInfluencer18, pers.com).

One or two members felt that the regional forum was irrelevant to their organisations, and went along to meetings with no agenda other than to ensure that the ERDP was helping to support their agencies interests. Some regarded it as an opportunity for networking, while others felt they had no time for that.

The RCG meetings were held in an atmosphere of working informality, one that was reinforced by the provision of a buffet lunch on each occasion to promote the exchange of views and networking. At the first two meetings observed, the responses from members were moderate in number and fairly evenly distributed amongst the group, although some had more to say while others said nothing. The lack of any truly constructive response in

these early meetings was mentioned by a frustrated Defra officer, but this implied criticism was countered by a member:

Of course there are other real issues about the capacity of interest groups to respond to these agendas, to have enough capacity to gain a bit of knowledge about the processes and the systems to get into the intelligence systems to be able to offer a good view. I certainly don't remember at those RCG meetings any real attempt to build the intelligence within that group. There was no real effort to inform that group in a significant way (PolicyInfluencer26, pers.com).

Another member, reflecting both his own wildlife interests and the previous function of the group, only asked questions about the CSS at each of the four meetings. The third meeting, however, produced animated and prolonged responses from three members during discussions ranging through issues of sustainability, facilitation and the targeting statement. A change in the chairmanship of the meeting appeared to coincide with an outpouring of frustration on the part of the members as they sought to make sense of their role. Interviewed after that meeting, one of those three members struggled to define the change:

The tone is changing, yes. *People were finding their voices and, well, suddenly the whole thing came to life really.* It did, and that is a sign of Defra changing I think. You know, I think there is a different culture emerging, but even so, I think it is a long way.... I think it is very different, a group which is created, enabled to work hard, add value, to one where you have just an occasional meeting and a set of papers – that doesn't equal a strongly constructed, supported and enabled group (PolicyInfluencer26, pers.com).

Participation at the observed meeting of the NPAG was better than at the NSG meetings, with most partners taking some part in the discussions. The latter were, however, limited by the time available between presentations, while the responses were dominated by one of the environmental GA members, particularly on the topics of integration and discretion for the proposed new regional consultation group. In between the presentations and discussions, the chairperson summed up the points that she thought were important for the group to understand.



#### 9.2.4 Perceptions of discretion

##### *The NSG*

The original role of the NSG, as set out in the ERDP (Annex VI), specifically includes the consideration of national strategy in the light of the results of monitoring and evaluation. When questioned about the extent to which the group played a strategic role in the implementation of the ERDP, partners felt the reality fell well short of the policy rhetoric. Most thought the group existed simply to disseminate information to partners. One member, however, was under no illusion as to the real drivers for strategic thinking:

The Strategy Group is not the driver. To imagine that the NSG, which is a bunch of middle-ranking officials, could actually drive the high-level shift in land use policy is just pie in the sky. It just doesn't work that way. It's about implementation; it's not really strategy (PolicyInfluencer21, pers.com).

There were a number of other criticisms of the group. One member noted the lack of cohesion and purpose that characterised it, with no sense of innovation or initiative within the grouping, while another felt that overall the group did not have much value:

The NSG hasn't always felt as though its members can really influence something that's pretty well cast in stone. It feels like tinkering at the edges. Nothing much has changed because of it. What I try to do is put it in the wider context – provide practical experience (PolicyImplementer1, pers.com).

The possible fate of the group provoked concern among some of the members (the interviews having been carried out before the eventual demise of the NSG) who felt that Defra were simply not trying hard enough to make the group work (PolicyInfluencer28, pers.com).

##### *The RPG*

Feedback from the RPG members revealed four main criticisms of the group. The first was that, like the NSG, partners felt the group only existed for Defra to provide information to them about progress with implementation of the ERDP. This was linked to concerns that

they were excluded from participation in the technical assessment process for project-based applications. A third concern, voiced by Defra members, related to the predominance of environmental interests on the group. This, in turn, was linked to the general constituency of the group, seen latterly by senior regional Defra members as suffering from a democratic deficit in terms of interest groups excluded because they were not statutory partners<sup>79</sup>. However, the centre expressed clear reservations about involving other interests in the RPG as this comment demonstrates:

There are some areas where, if we only had a group that had very wide representation, going beyond the government ‘family’ if you like, there are probably some policy issues that we would not feel comfortable about raising, which we can raise with the RPG. A lot of new departures take a long time to gestate, and it’s useful to have input from the wider family and to be able to discuss that before it becomes suitable to put it out to the non-governmental audience (PolicyMaker6, pers.com).

This statement raised three further concerns. The first was that, as part of the ‘extended family’ of Defra, the statutory partners had lost some of their independence, and secondly, policy was designed largely within that family with scant reference to other interests in the process. The final concern was that the centre acted as a ‘brick wall’ to the region’s capacity to influence policy, leading to partners lobbying outside the group. According to Defra in the regions, ‘old MAFF’ lived on in the policy divisions of the centre, as opposed to the centre’s view of the regions as lacking capacity.

### *The RCG*

The perceptions of RCG members mirrored much of what the RPG partners felt about their group. They had four main concerns. The first revolved around the feeling that the group was not being used properly; that it had not been enabled by Defra to fulfil its potential; that it was about rubber-stamping decisions already made by Defra and that it was certainly not advisory. This was how one member summed it up:

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<sup>79</sup> Defra’s statutory partners include the CA, EH, EA, EN, the RDAs and the LGA



The meetings we've had have not been as fruitful or productive as some of the meetings of the AE consultation group<sup>80</sup> in terms of the way the debate has been led, the structure of the agenda and background papers that have been provided ... I think there's been a bit of a dead hand on that SW group. It's not been made as effective as it might be (PolicyInfluencer10, prs.com).

The second, linked to the first, was that there was too much emphasis placed on the regional budget at meetings and not enough on what some considered were more important issues. The third was that members had no direct input into project selection through the technical assessment process, a situation that had caused considerable frustration for those members who had been striving for an integrated approach to SRD:

I'm laughing because this is the question I asked [the RDS]. I asked what our role was in project selection. Basically the answer is nothing. So what is the point? To feed in views to the other group. So I said, when does that other group make changes? Oh, maybe October. So I said, what's the point? (PolicyInfluencer4, pers.com).

Finally, many respondents voiced concerns about the feedback loops associated with the meetings, concerns that probably were well founded at the time of the interviews. A senior RDD administrator blamed time constraints for the lack of engagement with the groups:

I think there is probably more that they could contribute. I'm not saying that because I think they are deficient. I think it's partly because we haven't had as much time and resource here to be able to go and talk to them and give them the sort of steer we would like to give them, or to have the sort of discussion we would like to have with them, to see how we can take things forward in a more proactive way. We get the reports from RPGs and RCGs, and frankly we haven't had the time available to go through those reports in the analytical way we would like to do to pull up the sort of things that we think we could use to develop policy (PolicyMaker6, pers.com).

### *The NPAG*

The NPAG meetings were held after the interview stage of the fieldwork had been completed; therefore there were no comments available for this chapter.

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<sup>80</sup> According to respondents, the AE Consultation Group used to operate as a working group, tackling specific problems concerned with the AE schemes and with much more emphasis on a two-way dissemination of ideas and problems.

### 9.3 Facilitation

The issue of facilitation in the SW region is used here as an example of the way in which an opportunity for the allocation of discretion was lost owing to the failure of communication and partnership working between the centre (Defra – London) and the region (Defra/RDS - Bristol). The need for facilitation of project-based applications was recognised at both regional and national levels in view of the problems being experienced with poor quality applications. Both reacted to the problem by producing solutions. The region perceived the national facilitation paper, produced by an independent consultant for Defra, as being mainly supportive of farmers, and, questioning aspects of the application methodology, determined to produce a solution specifically designed for the SW. In the meantime, the centre had introduced targeting statements as a requirement for all the regions, and refused to recognise the new appraisal tool developed by the SW region. The production of the SW region's targeting statement was a protracted affair, with the final version, while conforming to national requirements, still not addressing the specific interests of the region. This statement by one of the RDS officers involved in its production gives an indication of the tensions experienced in the exercise:

It's not been an easy exercise. Strictly speaking the Targeting Statement should have been drawn up with all the players in terms of both the RCG and the RPG plus all the information that came off the ground. We've done the best that we could, or we thought we had. Having produced something that we feel meets or met the format that our policy colleagues wanted, we locally have decided that it's not what we particularly want. So it's already back in the melting pot. Locally we will massage it and doctor it again, because it doesn't provide for things like the renovation of villages measure which is dealing with village halls and that sort of thing. We have not dealt with that in terms of focusing the interest that is out there in the region (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

An up to date commentary from the RDS confirms that the Targeting Statement, after undergoing further revision for its 2003 version, has now, in its third edition, become a useful tool for facilitating the application process in the SW. There have been some disagreements within the region, now resolved, regarding the style of the document, and there are some fears that the centre may still demand changes to the content. The RDS,



however, say that the content is not negotiable, reflecting as it now does the specific needs of the region in the spirit of the Regional Chapters.

The example of facilitation as a policy issue described briefly above demonstrates the ‘Wilsonian’ pattern of allocating discretion, as identified by S&I and described in Chapter 4. Professional administrators within RDD, given the authority by ministers to implement the ERDP based on the general objectives and goals of the government’s rural policy, had used their skills, and that of the independent consultant, to decide how to achieve an objective in terms of facilitating project applications. Rather than enabling lower level agents to produce their own solutions to the problems that they have to deal with regionally, RDD produced a national framework within which each region had to submit their particular statement for approval. The requirement to produce targeting statements appeared not to be properly understood by the region, following so soon after the production of the Regional Chapter, and being so close to the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the Programme. It was also imposed, rather than being agreed with regional groups in advance, resulting in resentment and resistance to the proposal by the region. As the targeting statement could not be implemented prior to its approval by RDD, and the Appraisal Tool favoured by the SW RPG was not supported by the centre, the region was effectively denied access to improved project application procedures for over a year.

## **9.4 Conclusion**

Seven main conclusions can be drawn from the data and analysis presented above, most of which refer to the relationships within and between groups. The first two relate to the discretion allocated *within* the groups, and thus to the relationship between Defra and its partners in the context of implementing the ERDP. The next four conclusions derive from the relationship *between* the groups and thus to the discretion allocated from a national to a regional level, while the last is a general point about stakeholder perceptions of discretion.

Beginning with the relationship *within* groups, the first conclusion is that all the groups operated in an essentially top-down manner, with Defra providing the agenda and disseminating information to partners. This was particularly apparent at national level where the numbers of Defra members often equalled those of partners and discussions were limited to approval of papers written and presented by Defra. It was also clear that leadership of the groups had a marked effect on the tenor of the meetings. The second, linked conclusion is that, with the exception of the Integration Workshop (see next chapter) the groups were not enabled and supported in adding value creatively to the implementation process. Rather, Defra made decisions without reference to its partner organisations, calling for comments either very late or after the event. Again, this was particularly so at national level.

The first point to make about the relationship *between* the groups is that there was no discernable link between them, the timing of the meetings not being planned to enable the bottom-up transfer of knowledge and information (see Calendar of Meetings – Appendix 14). Feedback loops between the groups were poorly developed, with few resources being allocated by the centre to analysis of data from the regions. The second point is that relations between the centre and the region could be strained, regional elites resisting the top-down approach adopted by the centre. Linked to this there was evidence that the centre underrated the capacity of regional resources. Thirdly the RCG appeared to be quite isolated in terms of its relationship with both other groups, being undervalued by the NSG, and perceived as a duplication of effort in the region by the RDS. The fourth point is that the creation of the NPAG seemed to suggest power being retained by the centre rather than passing down to the regions. A general conclusion drawn from the perceptions of partners and stakeholders is that there was scepticism at all levels about the value of the groups in their current form, most wanting more input into strategy and decision making.



## **Chapter 10      The Interpretation of Rural Development as ‘Goal’: Integration**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The introduction to the last chapter explained how the interpretation of integration and discretion has consequences for policy outcomes and the importance of these concepts as elements of sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU). In this chapter integration is examined from a number of different perspectives to evaluate the effectiveness of attempts to achieve it. It was identified in the research questions (see Chapter 1) as an element of value added to design in relation to implementation. It is important to the successful implementation of the RDR because the novel form of the policy is premised on the integration of Guarantee and Guidance elements. It is equally important to the implementation of the ERDP, Rural Development Division (RDD) having flagged up the potential synergy between measures as an outcome of policy implementation. Furthermore, it lies at the heart of integrated rural development (IRD) which has been identified in Chapter 3 as contributing strongly to SiRLU. The chapter begins with a short assessment of the way that integration was addressed in the first instance by Defra as a *policy issue*. It then goes on to examine the concept in three different areas of implementation: *the integration of measures; the integration of working practices; and the integration of goals at project level*.

### **10.2 Integration as a policy issue**

As explained above and in Chapter 3, integration can be regarded as a critical element of SiRLU. It also became an important issue for policy makers with the introduction of the RDR that, by brigading together a disparate collection of regulations into a single legal entity, demanded a more integrated approach to delivery. This came at a time when the government was already moving towards more coordinated ways of working. Evidence of this includes the regional reorganisation of MAFF, ‘integration’ themes from the RWP and the Strategy for Agriculture, and, latterly, the formation of Defra to improve the integration

of farming with the wider rural economy. The ERDP, then, became a focus for integration as a policy objective which was pursued by RDD as it became clear that the issue demanded definition and justification.

In the first instance the NSG was used as a sounding board for ideas presented in a working paper prepared by an independent consultant. This identified the need for integration in four areas: the integration of goals at strategic level; the integration of goals at project level; integrated ways of working; and integrated local delivery (Dwyer 2001). While being welcomed by members, RDD cautioned against attempting to achieve integration at all levels and at all times on the grounds that the RDR was ‘counter-integration’. Further consultation was carried out through a workshop chaired by Defra involving NSG members, RDS Regional Managers, and the rural GO Directors together with various other interested parties. The purpose of the workshop was to create an opportunity for stakeholders to come together to discuss their experience of the programme, explore the obstacles to greater integration, and agree about action to begin to tackle these. In spite of a rather curious hiatus between the presentations/visits and the discussion workshops, the event produced a series of short, medium and long-term actions to take the integration project forward. The following table gives an indication of how the different groups thought they could contribute to integration:

**Table 10.1    Integration Workshop Actions**

Working Group	Short-term actions	Medium to long-term actions
RDS RMs	Appropriate assessment for small projects 2-tier application process	Feedback from RCGs into new RTSs with greater local engagement – action plans Identify project officers and other sources of advice
GODs	Explore pilot facilitation service and communicating best practice Review RAP competences Clarify priorities	Promote ERDP as a business opportunity, not last resort Contribute to RTS Address cash problem for brokering, consultancy and facilitation Collect feedback from RAPs Produce an outline application process Links with management planning in the countryside Promote lessons from Bodmin and



		<b>Bowland</b>
<b>NSG</b>	Promote pilot facilitation schemes eg NW initiative 2-tier application process Promote integrated delivery through local partnerships Awareness-raising v. expectation management Promote better synergy between regional and national schemes	Strategic vision Redefinition of agriculture and broader thinking about sustainability and linkages
<b>RDD</b>	Produce magazine article and report to ministers Create ERDP development group	Clarification of roles and responsibilities in regions Cash for further local engagement Create action plan to maintain momentum Greater local engagement for RTS

The NSG did not meet again until five months after this workshop, when partners were presented with a report outlining the action that had been taken to date on the issues raised at the event. In the short-term RDD had reported to ministers and placed an article in the Department's in-house magazine. Detailed technical training had been organised for those responsible for preparing the assessments for the Regional Appraisal Panels (RAPs) and better integration was claimed between technical staff and administration to speed up the process. RDD had not, however, created an ERDP development group and the RDS proposals for a 2-stage project assessment formula were dropped because they involved more bureaucracy. In the medium to longer term, a practitioner workshop was created in January 2002 to facilitate working practices between the centre and the regions, some regional targeting statements had been completed and there had been a successful bid for more cash for the regions (although resources would not be increased as a result). However, there was no action plan envisaged by RDD.

At the same meeting RDD introduced its 'Blueprint Exercise' on new procedures for delivery of the ERDP over the ensuing years. Focusing on the AE schemes, RDD were looking for procedural 'quick wins' that, it was hoped, together with the new IT system and support from policy division and regional deliverers, would deliver real benefits. When asked to comment on these issues, the meeting remained silent, and the issue of integration was left with no further action planned.

Integration was taken up for the last time as a policy issue at the second meeting of the ERDP Policy Advice Group in January '03. A paper prepared by the independent consultant responsible for the original work on the subject was presented to the meeting for discussion. The paper examined integration between individual schemes, and also the integration of the ERDP as a whole with other rural funding programmes and partner organisations. It confirmed that whilst resource constraints and the complex nature of the ERDP did not make integration easy, significant progress had been made. It concluded that there was scope for more work on integration in areas such as delegated grant schemes, integrated targeting statements, simplification of scheme processes and increased working with partner organisations (Dwyer 2003).

The discussion that followed the introduction of the paper is inadequately represented in the official minutes of the meeting. These suggest that the stakeholders overwhelmingly felt the paper and the Integration Workshop were rather 'yesterday's agenda', and that current priorities demanded a more forward looking approach. Great emphasis was placed on progress by Defra with the new IT system, and measures to harmonise ERDP delivery processes, with a cooling of the previous emphasis on economic targets, and more importance being attached to the environmental aspects of integration. Observation suggests, however, that stakeholders were concerned that plans to integrate goals at a regional level had stalled because of the allocation to the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) of the government's productivity targets, and the subsequent determination of the RDAs to deliver these independently, effectively leaving Defra with little power to organise a RD group. Stakeholders at the meeting felt that Defra should be taking integration forward as a partnership with them in a long-term investment for the future, rather than isolating the ERDP in terms of the pooling of rural resources. However, the logical conclusion, according to Defra, was for integration objectives to be captured in relation to ERDP regional groups, ministers being prepared to give greater flexibility regionally in exchange for clear statements of outcomes and accountability. There were, apparently, no plans for any further action on the Integration Paper.



### 10.3 The integration of measures

As explained in Chapter 7 (para.7.3.3), the administration of the LBSs had been separated from that of the PBSs for a number of reasons. This had resulted in a physical separation in terms of delivery arrangements, with the existing LBS teams operating alongside, but separate from, the new PBS teams. Senior RDS staff in the SW, in conjunction with GO/Defra administrators, had attempted to bridge this gap, in part by the simple expedient of seating team members next to each other, and also by organising some combined farm visits by both teams. The NE region RDS manager had gone a step further by making a commitment to combine the two sets of targeting statements over time. However, the fact that ultimately the teams had different purposes, different operational functions and criteria, and different hierarchies of administration, all militated against any significant integration of measures. Most respondents felt that Defra had failed to achieve anything by the integration it had promised as a result of the programme.

A couple suggested that an advantage of the arrangement may have been to provide a single entity to either criticise or praise. Other comments fell into four categories. A cross section of respondents from all populations could see no significant linking of measures in spite of the rhetoric of a ‘joined-up’ ERDP:

It is not integrated, to the extent that it is a set of schemes, and there is little evidence that there would be much difference if we just had a suite of schemes with no umbrella heading at all. I don’t consider integration is happening in this sense (PolicyMaker1, pers.com)

Others regarded the RDR as fundamentally flawed in terms of delivering IRD, fearing that, as a series of separate schemes, the Programme would not progress towards the stated goals because it did not support an integrated approach. The influence of history is acknowledged by Defra as playing a part in this situation, together with the pragmatism of resurrecting old and existing schemes to expedite the process:

I think we’ve gone as far as trying to make it possible for things to be coordinated together, but it’s true, at the moment they are a collection of independent schemes. Most of them, all of them, pre-dated the ERDP, and there is always a history to these things (PolicyMaker7, pers.com).

Still others pointed out that there were too many schemes for which separate applications were required, rendering the concept of a unified ERDP irrelevant. This was in contrast to the French CTE<sup>81</sup> experiment:

[The CTE] is a package, a whole farm scheme that links investment and annual payments together, and the whole philosophy is exactly that, to lead the farmer from the sort of territorial designate, one field etcetera, to thinking logically in terms of a business enterprise, and that's the joy of it (PolicyMaker8, pers.com).

Lastly, several respondents thought that integration of the schemes at project level was ineffectual, the small activities generated by the policy not contributing anything much to a SRD agenda. One felt the synergies resided in the whole of the rural economy, rather than in one sub-sector:

I think there is an element that they are really a series of quite distinct units that happen to have been lumped together for administrative ease, or however you want to describe it. I think it's a misnomer of a project to call it the ERDP because it is really very explicitly targeted at the agriculture/food centres, which is not what rural development is all about. I think in a sense that the title is a bit grandiose. It is one component part focused on one sub-sector of the rural economy. Yes, bring it all together. There are a lot of synergies between all the bits (PolicyImplementer5, pers.com).

## **10.4 The integration of working practices**

Respondents were asked to comment on the integration of functions within and between organisations involved either directly or indirectly with the implementation of the ERDP. These comments focused on a single main issue; that organisations, by their nature, function as *silos*. Ward (2000, p22), makes reference to 'policy silos' when discussing IRD in relation to the agricultural policy community:

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<sup>81</sup> Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation or land management contracts.



A further tension is between the traditional institutional sectoralism of the agricultural policy community, and the imperative of a more territorial and integrated approach to agriculture's role in wider rural development. Government intervention in rural areas and land management remains highly skewed towards the agricultural sector through a classic 'functional chimney' or 'policy silo' – *i.e.* a dedicated Ministry.

The term is used here to describe the vertical containment of the interests of organisations to the exclusion of broader interests. As such, integration is compromised to the extent that the organisation is prepared to subsume its purpose in the interests of the greater good. Within this issue, comments ranged across two broad aspects: 1) characteristics and examples of silos; and 2) the integration of silos.

#### **10.4.1 Characteristics and examples of silos**

Organisations may be termed silos when they exhibit one or more of the following characteristics identified by respondents: single-issue stakeholders; defend their identity; seek influence; seek money for their own purposes. These characteristics tend to discourage integration. The Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) is now charged with helping to ensure that new bodies set up by government avoid the silo characterisation, as explained by a member of staff:

There is a commitment in government that when new public bodies are set up, the sponsoring department should look very closely and put in place a SD remit. And that's one level at which we can start to temper the sort of silo objectives of bodies, but that's not enough because even then we have to get past the paying lip service to certain remits (PolicyMaker9, pers.com).

The difficulty faced by many organisations is that their reason for existing is contained within their specific remits. Some of the GAs are now threatened by their very close relationship with Defra, to the extent that they are likely to become subsumed by their sponsoring department. A Policy Implementer makes this point by reference to the CA:

At local level the CA folk and our folk get on terribly well and relationships with FWAG etcetera at county level – it all works and managers are able to go and make sure there is plenty of oil poured on those waters if there is ever trouble. The higher up you go the more difficult it becomes ... Anyway, the regional level I believe is the highest level at which you would be able to get individuals to subsume their identity for a common aim. Beyond that, not a chance, not a chance, because their justification for their being is dependent upon having a separate identity (PolicyImplementer8, pers.com).

Another difficulty facing organisations is the silo mentality of some individuals within organisations, as this example from a GA interview shows quite clearly when the respondent was questioned about the AE schemes:

I mean, it's nothing to do with us. *Nothing to do with you?* Well, we don't administer them. *No, obviously not, but it directly involves the countryside – it takes place on land.* Yes, what's that got to do with us? *Well...* Sorry, I've gone too wicked. *Well, you tell me what it's got to do with you then.* Not a huge amount. *But you must have views on the way it's administered?* Yes. *And whether it's beneficial to what you see as the general sustainability of the countryside?* Well, yes, I mean, as you say, at this stage it is a relatively modest scheme. Even if it was expanded it would still be relatively modest (PolicyInfluencer2, pers.com).

The agency concerned was not alone in its focus on its own remit, and the respondent quoted above was not typical of that agency in spite of speaking on its behalf. The words were doubtless ironic, spoken from a position that allowed little time for anything except fulfilling an overcrowded agenda in which the ERDP was an unwelcome intrusion. A Policy Implementer from another region admitted to being frustrated by ... “the constant organisational striving to be top of the heap”, where ... “everyone is moving on because they've got the latest bright idea” and it is all constrained by ... “finding the organisational time and capacity to put stuff into real joined-up working” (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

MAFF and Defra were the objects of much criticism from respondents for operating within what many referred to as a ‘black box’<sup>82</sup>. A recent reorganisation<sup>83</sup>, however, had, according to PolicyMaker4 (pers.com), evened up some of the historical battlegrounds and provided the basis for a more integrated approach ... “It doesn't make the issues easier, but it makes the likelihood that we'll get the right answer slightly better”. The perception from

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<sup>82</sup> A ‘black box’ can be understood in policy making terms as a situation where relationships between political, organisational and behavioural aspects of the policy process are ignored (Palumbo and Calista 1990)

<sup>83</sup> Defra now has three main Directorate-Generals concerned with strategy and policy making: Environmental Protection (resource protection and regulation); Food, Farming and Forestry (commodities); and Land Use and Rural Affairs (including the ERDP). A separate Directorate-General, Operations and Service Delivery, oversees the delivery of the ERDP through the RDS. In an organisation the size of Defra, this kind of division is logistically essential, and is seen as a great improvement on the situation that existed before the creation of Defra when environment, countryside issues and agriculture were handled from separate departments.



other organisations, however, was that Defra still had a long way to go in learning to communicate:

One of the things that still strikes me is that people don't talk, and that's partly because they're very busy, and so anyone coming from outside saying, we've got an interest in what's going on here, is a nuisance, it's just more work. It seems so obvious that if you've got some piece of policy that is affected by a lot of people then you talk to them about it. But it didn't happen and MAFF were the worst at that in the sense that they operated in their own little boxes and they found it difficult to learn to talk to people, and they're still learning (PolicyInfluencer21, pers.com).

#### **10.4.2 The integration of silos**

Overall, most respondents believed that a strong regional focus was essential for some sort of integration of working practices and thus a strategy for sustainable rural futures. This would require the breaking down of barriers between organisations. The main barrier, and one mentioned by many respondents, was the fact that the ERDP/Defra had no links with other funding streams/organisations. Thus, while it provided opportunities to apply for grants, and for organisations to meet and talk through issues, this was not integrated into any sort of overall strategy for areas, whether on a local, county or regional basis.

According to RDD, the ERDP was one part of the picture for SiRLU in the regions, but respondents could see contradictions in the ERDP operating alongside Objective 2 Single Programming Documents (SPDs) and strategic partnerships operated by the local authorities which monitor applications according to locally agreed criteria. Furthermore, there was no single body pulling all the strands together into a cohesive whole at regional level. Many respondents, including some Policy Implementers and Influencers, thought that the ERDP should be integrated with the RDA's Regional Economic Strategy and other funding streams into a single strategy for the regions, while farming groups wanted to see this together with regional control over a single pot budget. One respondent accused Defra of having no strategic direction in the regions, ignoring regional needs in favour of hitting the right buttons for individual applications.

From a different perspective, a Policy Adviser made an observation regarding the possible benefits of a separation between strategy and delivery, stressing the fact that integration was not necessary at all levels:

All the RDAs, as far as I am aware, are trying to set up and work with sub-regional partnerships and that is the route to go. There is an important distinction to draw between strategic choices and actually implementation and I think too often we get the two mixed up. I think it would be a case, and I think a number of the RDAs are moving in this direction, for them to be strategic bodies. They won't deliver anything, and I think within that strategic body there would be sub-regional components who would ensure that there are sub-regional strategies that acknowledge rural dimensions and a mix between the two and all the rest of it. I think that probably is the right way to go, but the delivery goes into silos, and I'm not sure necessarily that you have to cascade from the very highest strategic level down to the very, you know, individual project making sure everyone is working together all the bloody time (PolicyAdviser6, pers.com).

A broader vision was offered by another Policy Adviser:

I think at the regional level, you could make sensible decisions about agriculture and agricultural change and then broad strategies that make sense; that are quite responsive to the broader public interest really. And I think it's a question of building up the power and resources of that strategy, integrating that level as much as you can into other sorts of regional decisions and structures, and gradually opening them up to discussion. And to a certain extent I think with a thing like this, you have to make a judgment about not only where you're at, but where the thing is going (PolicyAdviser5, pers.com).

## **10.5 The integration of goals at project level**

An examination of the integration of goals at project level is a crucial part of the analysis involved in exploring the potential for SiRLU in the ERDP. It is only through the PBSs that a regional influence on SiRLU can be evaluated. LBSs, while apparently having a greater effect on environmental sustainability through local targeting, are controlled centrally, and are largely operated separately in the regions. There is no requirement on project officers through the AE schemes to balance the elements of sustainability; rather the prescriptions are indisputably aimed at achieving environmental benefits. The PBSs, on the other hand, represent the novel part of the ERDP that should make a difference regionally in terms of a broader approach to SiRLU, focusing as they do on non-agricultural as well as agricultural projects, and thus offering new scope for research. This section of the chapter, therefore,



examines how the normative prescriptions of policy makers are put into practice by regional implementers in the case of the PBSs, and how decisions are made as to what actually constitutes sustainability for them. In the case of the ERDP, project applications are assessed and approved by regional RDS/GO teams, and this section of the chapter analyses the process in the SW in some detail.

### **10.5.1 The Teams**

The technical assessment process in the SW was carried out by three teams coordinated from the Bristol offices of the RDS. The PB and LB teams operated separately, but at the time of the field work there were plans to integrate them, largely because of Treasury cuts in the RDS budget. The PB teams consisted mainly of graduates recruited under a plan that favoured those with rural backgrounds. While the RDS provided training for these recruits, including the development of knowledge and awareness of their 'patch', there were concerns expressed about the ability of these recruits to make satisfactory judgments about applications:

One of the great issues for me was trying to ensure that the people who were doing it were actually technically competent. And I'm not sure that, bearing in mind the challenges facing the RDS with such a young team of people, I'm not sure that all of them have been exposed to sufficient breadth of activity at a commercial level (PolicyAdviser11, pers.com).

There were also concerns, some expressed by team members themselves, about the competency of staff to deal with technical financial problems in the absence of a business adviser.

### **10.5.2 The Technical Assessment Process**

The technical assessment process is guided by a Technical Assessment Framework, drawn up by RDD in consultation with partners<sup>84</sup>, and reflecting the practical experience gained

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<sup>84</sup> For example, the CA made two contributions to the consultation in 2000, providing comments on specialist advice to regional assessors, the use of the scoring system to assess project applications, the use of qualitative summaries in addition to numerical scoring, and the role and membership of the RAPs.(Simpson 2000b, a).

from the operation of the Objective 5b arrangements. The aim of the document is that it should form an effective working tool for technical assessors, one that will generate reproducible results if used by different assessors on the same project application. The framework is divided into two parts: *Part A – Project Quality*; and *Part B – Regional Fit*. Part A scores the project under eight major headings: *Project Summary*; *Need for the Project*; *Project Objectives*; *Performance Indicators and Milestones*; *Sustainability of the Project*; *Key Policy Themes and Priorities*; *Financial Viability*; *Additionality and Displacement : the Need for Public Funds*; *Project Management and Delivery*; *Risk Assessment and Sensitivity Analysis*. Part B, which is excluded from the scoring summary following Part A, deals with the assessment of ‘regional fit’ using the regional goals set in the Regional Chapter. This reflects regional issues and priorities whilst recognising and taking into account sub-regional and local differences. This is graphically illustrated in Table 10.2 below, while an example from an actual assessment is included at Appendix 16 to illustrate the regional fit section.

The Technical Assessment Framework sets out the way in which SD should be considered and assessed. Guidance for the technical assessor (TA), provided as part of the framework, states that:

...it is important to stress that the complete assessment process should be underpinned by the principles of sustainable development. This means considering the wider picture and balancing the combined needs of the environment, the economy and society. It is defined as ensuring a better quality of life for everyone – now and for generations to come. While this issue is specifically addressed and scored in section 4 of the document, it is an important thread which should run through the entire process (Defra 2000).

The TA thus has a broad responsibility to make essentially subjective judgments about the extent to which a project is likely to improve the quality of life for everyone. In order to do this, he/she will refer initially to the RDR measure/s under which the grant is being sought, and then to the key themes and policy priorities, latterly to the Targeting Statement, and to the lists of sustainability criteria provided in the framework guidance (see Appendix 17 – TA Sustainability Criteria). The key themes, according to the TA’s group interview (PolicyImplementer13, pers.com) have ... “sort of evolved from the 5b requirements – collaboration, cooperation, innovation etcetera. Knowing what they are comes from



experience and from the technical assessment guidelines”. The national guidance for TAs is contained within an internal Defra intranet system that is constantly updated by policy questions and answers to and from policy divisions. Parts of the guidance are also reproduced in scheme literature available to potential applicants on the internet or in application packs. Regional guidance now relies on the Targeting Statement as a tool to manage the expectations of applicants, engaging with them early on in the process to avoid wasting resources on inappropriate applications.

**10.5.3 The Scoring Process**

The technical assessment process was described by one Policy Influencer as having ... “a crackpot evaluation mechanism and a crazy method of trying to encourage the right sort of project” (PolicyInfluencer3, pers.com). The RDS countered by responding that there was an evolving technical assessment process which was weak to start with, and was getting stronger. The process revolves round a scoring mechanism, which requires each section to be scored from 1 to 5, where 1 is good and 5 is bad. A total of between 8 and 16 puts a project into the ‘high’ (**H**) category, 17 to 24 into the ‘medium’ (**M**) category, and from 24 to 40, into the ‘low’ (**L**) category. Assessment of the ‘regional fit’, scored from 1 (high) to 5 (low), then gives a final numerical score, for example **H2**, **M3**, or **L2**. An example of how this looks on the RAP Selection Record is shown here:

**Table 10.2      Example of Technical Assessment Scoring Mechanism**

Project Need	Objectives, PIs & Milestones	Sustain ability	Key Policy Themes	Financial Viability	Addition ality	Project Manag’t	RA	Total	Reg’l Fit	Final Score
1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	9	2	<b>H2</b>

In arriving at a judgment on any of the criteria, the TA had access to Defra statistics on a national basis, and the regional goals on a regional basis. There were, however, no formal data available on a sub-regional basis to assist the process, and individual TAs had to find out for themselves about the local conditions that would be likely to affect the application. This had always been an expectation of RDD:

They are also asked to mark regional fit. That is seen within the regional context, but I would say that then local factors, or sub-regional factors, should also be taken into account. But that's been a bit of a challenge for them to some extent up to now (PolicyMaker7, pers.com).

There was no specific procedure laid down for obtaining this information, and TAs were expected to use their own initiative. Group interview respondents said they often referred to colleagues informally when dealing with a difficult application, and the whole process was checked by their supervisor. These were some comments from the group about their experiences:

When I did an application in Wiltshire, I had to get on the Web to find out about the locality – it is a local priority area – it's part of the job, an enjoyable part.

Sometimes we ask the economic development officer

And we speak to local agents

(PolicyImplementer13, pers.com)

In spite of the essentially subjective nature of processing an application, the TA must ensure that his/her personal feelings remain neutral as far as possible, as a senior RDD officer explained:

And we have tried in the training to get over to TAs that they must guard against what we call the 'halo' effect. If they like a project, it's trying to deal with human nature to a certain extent, but we warn them against imbuing technical assessments with their good feelings about the project and to keep it impartial and fair and unbiased. You can have negative halos as well if the applicant has been a bit difficult or if for some reason they don't like the project. All the technical assessments should be quality assured by a senior advisor and they should also be looking out for that type of thing, but it is hard to prevent it filtering through (PolicyMaker7, pers.com).

The TAs agreed, however, that sustainability was very hard to assess. Often, a great deal of effort went into producing detail regarding different trade-offs, for example between the provision of amenity and the inherent adverse environmental impact of that provision. There was also some doubt about whether the scoring system accurately reflected the



situation on the ground. One TA felt that using pluses and minuses might enable a more fine-grained assessment of sustainability, a suggestion put forward by the CA in the original consultation (see below). Currently, each of the ‘strands of sustainability’ are assessed and scored separately using the scale as described above and the criteria as contained in Appendix 17. These assessments are then drawn together to produce a ‘balanced’ overall assessment of the project’s sustainability. The ‘balancing’ concept, however, does not reflect the government’s aspirations for the project-based schemes, or the practical reality of the scoring system overall. A senior RDD officer, deeply involved with the RES, explained what government was seeking from the scheme:

RES is primarily an economic scheme. That is what it’s there for. And there are other people who want to pursue their own different agendas and want it to deliver other things. And it can deliver other things, but it is primarily economic. So we are looking for economic projects that will be successful in economic terms, but not at the cost of an unacceptably adverse impact on other angles whether they are social or environmental. The three elements of sustainability all score separately and then there is an overall score. It’s in the overall score where the most significant ... I mean, we’re asking people to make a judgment obviously, and obviously it’s not a purely mathematical thing (PolicyMaker7, pers.com).

On a practical level, the sustainability score *per se* was not considered to be a significant issue by senior regional administrators:

The scoring process we have on the project-based activity is almost an iterative process, and every time something is moving slightly or we’re refining the boundaries ... In the project-based activities there are nine categories to be scored against, of which one contains sustainability. It doesn’t even stand on its own. So it’s only a very small part, like a half of one section. *So sustainability isn’t really a major consideration then?* No. I think although we do our best to ensure that staff have a broad view of what sustainability is, I think it’s only a small element, most probably in the past not a big enough element, of the whole scoring process. And I think that people don’t see a big enough picture when they’re actually doing this activity. *Can an individual project be expected to deliver all the elements of sustainability?* Well, they don’t and they can’t, and sometimes they will only hit certain buttons and if you have the 3-legged stool, very often you can only expect to really major on one of those legs (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

For stakeholders, however, excluded from the project assessment process, this aspect of implementing the ERDP is fundamental to the protection of the environment. The CA made detailed responses to the original draft proposals for technical assessment, highlighting in their December 2000 paper the dangers of ‘balancing’ the elements to arrive at an overall

score, and the need to clearly define the meaning of the scores 1-5. The interpretation of the scoring, they believed, should reflect the objectives of the different groups of measures. They recommended the inclusion in the assessment report of a qualitative summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project proposals as well as details of the components of the numerical scoring, the total and overall priority. They concluded:

Whilst the scores will be a helpful tool in identifying priority projects, we do not consider the scoring system to be sufficiently robust to be used as the principal basis for assessing such a potentially wide variety of project applications (Simpson 2000b).

#### **10.5.4 The RAP**

Originally proposed to meet on a quarterly basis, the RAP in the SW convened approximately every six weeks at the time of the fieldwork to consider all eligible project-based scheme applications. Its role was multi-stranded, but essentially its function was to ensure that all applications received fair and equitable consideration, and to take the final decisions on the approval or rejection of these applications. Guidance for the panel was contained within detailed notes produced by RDD. The panel consisted of three members, chaired by the RDS Regional Manager, and included an RDS Team Leader and a GO representative (not the Defra Regional Director who chaired the RPG). These panel members were expected to remain consistent as far as possible to maintain continuity. This membership was a source of great concern to stakeholders who were excluded from project appraisal, including both the RDA and the CA:

There's only three people on the board. The RDAs have said to Anna Walker, if this is supposed to fit in with the regional moods and if you need to have that link, particularly if they are economic projects, then why not have someone else on the RAP, someone from the RDA? With respect to my colleagues at Defra, they don't know everything about rural areas. They have a limited range of vision, and that's quite worrying (PolicyInfluencer5, pers.com).

We remain deeply concerned about the limited membership proposed for the Appraisal Panels. Given the importance of having a transparent process, such an apparently narrowly focussed selection process risks lacking credibility with the outside world ... We believe strongly that the Appraisal Panels should have a wider rural development expertise. We suggest that the Countryside Agency is an appropriate body and we are keen to undertake this role (Simpson 2000b).



RDD, however, were quite clear that opening up the panel to other stakeholders would be likely to be counter-productive in terms of impartial, objective decision-making, as they would all be ... “clamouring for their own particular interests to be at the top of the list ... the more players you have, the more baggage they bring with them, the harder it is to achieve that consensus” (PolicyMaker7, pers.com).

The main point to emerge from observation of a RAP in operation (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 18) concerned the issue of sustainability which was not raised in relation to the majority of the applications, none of which were subjected to any sort of sustainability template. Furthermore, there was very little discussion about the particular needs of localities when considering an application. In contrast, evidence from the NE region suggested a more focused approach there, utilising Countryside Character Areas as sub-regional foci, and making data available to TAs to help familiarise them with those areas to assist in the assessment process. There, then, the sustainability scores became less important than the overall effect of the project on the region:

I have to tell you I don't look at the scores too much. I value the assessment. I read it very thoroughly, and you take account of the factual analysis which they've produced. I hope they've pulled out issues under the three headings, so I read those, but not look at the score as such, but then sort of stand back and say, overall how does this fit our sort of needs and our aims and objectives in this region? And unless there's something fundamentally wrong with the business planning and viability of the project, the question of how it will contribute to our region is more the overriding factor that will push it through (PolicyImplementer9, pers.com).

## **10.6 Conclusion**

The issue of integration brings into sharp focus the normative/empirical dichotomy; that the rhetoric and apparent intentions of policy-makers in policy statements are often difficult to realise in practice, the means for achieving these aims being beyond the capacity of implementing structures to deliver. In the case of the ERDP, integration became an issue for a variety of reasons, not least because of the novel form of the policy. Against the

background of the beginnings of a shift towards more ‘joined-up’ government, the issue of integration was pursued by Defra at the strategic level, endorsed by the majority of stakeholders. In a changing policy environment, the drive towards integration at this level slackened with the investment in the RDAs of important policy targets, interpreted by Defra as foreshadowing a reduction rather than an increase in cooperative working arrangements. At the same time it became clear that the logistics of pursuing integration at the different levels proposed by consultants were likely to constrain the ‘quick-wins’ required by government in the delivery of the Programme. Meanwhile, partner organisations, although endorsing the idea of integration enthusiastically, showed little progress towards achieving it in practical terms, particularly at national level, maintaining their silo structures in defence of their stated remits.

At the delivery level, there was no evidence that integration of PB and LB schemes in one programme had had a positive effect on the integration of delivery mechanisms. Defra had taken steps to locate teams regionally in the same physical space, but schemes were still dealt with separately on a day-to-day basis. The basic design fault in the RDR, of brigading together measures with different purposes, different knowledges, and different ways of operation, has fundamentally flawed the programme, making it difficult to achieve the synergy necessary for the integrated delivery of SiRLU. Defra itself, in spite of a continuous effort to integrate its internal working practices, still suffered from a deep division between the strategic policy-making directorates-general and the delivery arm, a problem that, according to a Policy Implementer, affected the organisation from top to bottom. Furthermore, the working practices of partner organisations, while cooperative at the regional level were influenced vertically by the ‘silo’ characteristics of their national bodies, presenting a serious challenge to the ideal of SIRD, and the possibility of strong regional networks.

At project level, the choice of individual applicants as the focus for the assessment of sustainability made it difficult for assessors to ‘balance’ the social, economic and environmental elements in a meaningful way and called into question the very basis upon which the system was premised. This left the RAP, as a democratically deficient, but



authorised body, to make a final judgment in terms of balancing the stated aims of the Programme with the underlying objectives, the changing policy prescriptions from the centre, and the aspirations and needs of regional stakeholders and target groups. The frustration felt by regional partners in relation to this process was summed up by the experience of a local government officer:

At the beginning it brought a new approach, and I still think the people at a regional level think it's good. My experience is that it's dealt with in too much of a black box. In the SW region I think that projects are dealt with on an individual basis. The programming approach developed under 5b has gone. The fact that there could be some degree of local brokerage within the Programme has gone. Now, I sit on the Objective 2 group. I don't have a clue what's happening with ERDP until after projects have been assessed. How they contribute to the local development of the most marginal area in the SW outside of Objective 1 is a mystery to me; the fact that there is no way in which we can say, these are the needs of the area, we can do something here. The fact that I can't say to someone that I've got an allocation of money and decide which projects we need to pull together, and do it. What has to happen is that everyone in the area has to do a very high quality project application, individually submitted, then wait a long time to see what comes out, and there's no guarantee that the projects that fit together get approved, and there's no guarantee that that fits in with the timetable of any other funding streams (PolicyInfluencer4, pers.com).

This chapter has demonstrated, by focusing on the 'value added' elements of implementation contained within the policy design framework, that integration, as a tenet of SiRLU, was not achieved through implementation of the ERDP in any of the three different areas identified at 10.1 above. The potential synergy of the measures, and the benefits of that, was flagged up in the ERDP as an outcome of policy, with implementers attempting to operationalise integration as a policy objective. This happened in spite of early recognition that it may be an impossible target, the disparate measures and the vertical separation of organisations compounding the failure to provide mechanisms through which it could be achieved.

## **PART IV THE POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN RURAL LAND USE**

### **Chapter 11 Analysis – towards Sustainability in Rural Land Use?**

#### **11.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to pull together the findings of the research described and analysed in the previous chapters to address the research questions, then to compare these with stakeholder perceptions of the importance of the ERDP, the Mid-term Evaluation of the ERDP and the EC proposals for the future RDR to assess the extent to which there has been progress towards sustainability in rural land use (SiRLU). The first part of the chapter begins with a recapitulation of the tenets of (SiRLU) developed for this study followed by an analysis of the main research findings within the framework of the policy design model. This analysis focuses on the two research questions posed in Chapter 1. It then goes on to present an analysis of stakeholder perceptions of the impact and importance of the ERDP. This is important because stakeholder views feed back into the climate of ideas and have some power to affect future policy direction. The second part of the chapter analyses the Mid-Term Evaluation of the ERDP and the proposals from the EC for the new RDR. This analysis focuses on elements of these documents that address the issues raised by the analysis of research presented in the first half of the chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion regarding the implications of these findings for SiRLU. The theoretical implications of the findings are discussed in Chapter 12.

#### **11.2 The Tenets of SiRLU**

Chapter 3 described and analysed various constructions of sustainable development (SD) and rural development (RD) to arrive at some tenets of SiRLU that could be regarded as the basis for comparison in this thesis. It was proposed in that chapter that SiRLU needed to be



defined in this way because there was no such specific concept to be found in rural policy literature. Having analysed these constructions it became clear that two elements dominated nearly all of them: *integration* and *discretion* (see Table 3.1). The former was referred to variously in the prescriptions of IRD studied as the integration or interdependence of objectives/projects/sectors/groups/measures/perspectives/government. The latter was denoted by the use of concepts such as partnership, involvement, bottom-up or participatory approach. The policy design model has helped to evaluate the extent to which integration and discretion, as potential elements of value added to design, have been included in the prescription of RD implemented through the ERDP, and thus the potential contribution of the policy towards the promotion of SiRLU. The remainder of the first half of this chapter analyses the research findings to make that evaluation through the policy design framework.

## **11.3 Analysis of Research Findings through Policy Design**

### **11.3.1 The Framing Dynamics**

Chapters 5 and 6 dealt with the ‘framing’ of the RD discourse leading up to the Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP and the introduction of the RDR/ERDP. The policy design framework requires the interpretation of events, groups, knowledge and societal conditions as a precursor to analysing the way that discourses are framed. Focusing on these issues in the European policy arena, Chapter 5 showed how the discourses of SD and RD were brought together in the concept of sustainable integrated rural development (SIRD); a concept that became considerably diluted within the final policy statement. Neither SD nor RD was stated as a rationale for the RDR, and neither was specifically mentioned in the policy as a goal. The policy design model identified a number of different categories of goals used by policy makers (see 2.5.2). In the case of the RDR, the goals that could be discerned were *obscure*, hidden by rationales and objectives in a format that made interpretation difficult. In accompanying literature, the EC maintained that the goal of the policy was SIRD, a position underpinned by the form of the policy which stitched together a raft of disparate measures under that banner. However, with the majority of measures under the policy still being focused on agriculture, it was not unreasonable to draw the

conclusion that the title of the policy and the references to SIRD were being used to promote the *idea* of SIRD as the multifunctionality of agriculture while a broader interpretation of RD remained unfulfilled.

Chapter 6 used the framing dynamics again to show how the discourses of agricultural economics and environmental sustainability in the UK found some common ground and greater legitimacy in the new discourse of RD. Research indicated the importance of certain policy entrepreneurs within the national policy community in promoting the agenda of RD, while MAFF played a reactive role in the process, adopting the language of RD when change seemed inevitable. Interview data indicated a lack of cohesion in the SW region in terms of a RD discourse, the regional policy community, with the exception of MAFF, tending to cluster round the regional SD framework. One or two policy entrepreneurs were found to be working towards a broader concept of RD. Nationally, events including BSE and the farm incomes crisis added strength to the discourses of RD which were taken up by some of the government agencies and environmental NGOs. Much of the knowledge driving the RD debate in the UK emanated from experience with the Objective 5b programme, and interview data records that it was regarded by some as the potential basis for a new model of RD. The introduction of the RDR gave government the *tool* it needed to tackle the farm incomes crisis and the growing calls for radical reform of the CAP, while others within the policy communities formed their own perceptions and agendas for RD.

### **11.3.2 The Designing Dynamics**

Chapter 7 moved on to the designing dynamics of the policy design model, showing how issues were reframed to suit the UK government's RD agenda. The detail of the implementation process revealed a strong and capable leadership within MAFF but indicated a lack of communication between the centre and the region that had left regional policy makers with a sense of disownership regarding the regional chapter, and had undermined the discretion they thought was theirs. The process of drafting the Regional Chapter appeared to reflect the policy situation at the time with no attempt having been made to integrate social, economic and environmental elements at any stage.



Environmental interests dominated the process but the drafting team were encouraged to set goals and objectives for all three elements of sustainability in spite of the lack of a social priority in the National Plan. Data suggest that regional teams were expected to recognise the limitations of the policy, while at the same time Rural Division maintained a top-down approach to the drafting process because of a perceived lack of regional capacity. The ex-ante evaluation of the ERDP suggested that the programme was constrained by its contextual history and its contextual future, but that regional capacity-building was a major contribution to future sustainability. It concluded that the process of implementing the RDR through the ERDP was lacking in terms of the coherence between national and regional objectives, the integration of objectives within the plan and the logic chain between objectives and outcomes. Rural Division blamed EC constraints for difficulties with implementing the RDR, suggesting that it had failed to capture the essence of SRD.

### 11.3.3 The Policy Design

The latter half of Chapter 7 involved an analysis of the ERDP using the policy design framework to guide the methodology. Focusing on four empirical elements - the rationales, form, goals/objectives and implementing structures of the policy – the research revealed four assumptions made by policy makers during the implementation process and presented the main conclusions with regard to the first research question. The twin policy rationales focused largely on the short-term economic imperative to support farmers in their choice of continuing or diversifying in the industry, but failed to adequately address the broader implications of SiRLU. Policy rhetoric emphasised increased environmental benefits for the countryside and structural assistance for all rural areas, presenting the policy as a new initiative, whereas much of the programme content involved a recycling of the *status quo*. There was no commitment to an integrated approach in relation either to sustainable agriculture or RD, but the policy stated that most measures would contribute either directly or indirectly to more than one priority; the first assumption of policy makers.

The form of the policy was the most novel aspect of the ERDP. Appearing to support the tenets of SiRLU, it amalgamated both land-based and project-based measures in one policy,

and included regional chapters with regional goals and objectives. The second assumption was that as such, synergy between the previously disparate measures would occur. Furthermore, policy makers assumed that the discretion allocated through regional fora would provide the bottom-up impetus necessary to contribute to SRD, the indirect goal of the policy. The form of the policy included the widening of eligibility for grant aid to cover the whole country in the case of project-based schemes, giving the impression that a broader interpretation of RD was being promoted. A fourth assumption, one made by regional elites in the SW of England, was that this package could be used to realise their vision of IRD, the activities and goals of the regional chapter being drawn up to reflect this position.

However, while the regional drafting teams espoused IRD in theory, in practice the chapter revolved round the concept of balancing the elements of SD and was strongly influenced by environmental interests. The policy goals reflected this separation of interests, as opposed to the activities (see Chapter 7, Table 7.2) which reflected the new discourses of integration and discretion, including equal numbers of social, environmental and economic elements in spite of the lack of a social priority in the national plan. The policy design model differentiates between the ways that goals are set by policy makers, the RDR goals being described above as *obscure*. The ERDP national plan, according to this analysis, relies on an *incremental* format incorporating more generalised rural objectives while the regional chapter is *objective* in its selection of goals, objectives and activities. The goals of the regional chapter are the ones used in making project-based scheme assessments.

The brief analysis of the implementing structures included in Chapter 7 indicated that, while appearing to support the discretion element of SiRLU, they were limited in their ability to do so by the top-down nature of their provenance. Heavily prescribed by MAFF and unable to contribute to the Regional Appraisal Panels, the groups set up with strategic, programming and consultative responsibilities to contribute to the implementation of the ERDP were actually given only limited discretion in these roles.



The major conclusion drawn from these findings, and one that addresses the first research question, is that there are three different constructions of RD implicated in the framing and design of the RDR in SW England:

- With obscure goals and no rationale for SIRD, the RDR introduces the *idea* of RD into CAP policy making, RD in this case appearing to involve the multifunctionality of agriculture and the provision through that of economic, environmental and social benefits to the community.
- The ERDP National Plan selects an incremental format for setting goals, making assessment difficult and providing scope for broad interpretation. This format contains no explicit reference to RD and only one implicit reference to SD. In this sense, then, as a RD programme, the policy can be seen as a *tool* to be used by government to progress its agenda for change.
- The SW Regional Chapter has objective goals and a clearly stated vision of IRD. The latter is regarded as a *goal* for the SW, but it is constrained by the other two constructions of RD in its ability to achieve this.

#### **11.3.4 The Translation Dynamics**

The translation dynamics element of the policy design model was used in this thesis to examine the way that the ERDP was interpreted by policy implementers, and the extent to which they were able to ‘add value’ to the policy through their actions. Chapter 8 identified five constructions of sustainability from interview data and concluded, through analysis using NVivo that different populations of interviewees (see Chapter 4) tended to vary in their interpretations; for example:

- The policy makers rarely used the language of IRD, usually referring to the balancing model in conversation.

- The policy implementers almost invariably used the balancing model in their interpretations while influencers were mainly concerned with economic and environmental conceptualisations.
- The advisers were generally sceptical about the value of SD as a concept. Most respondents recognised the normative/empirical problem with implementing sustainability, but governance as an alternative concept was hardly mentioned.
- There was general agreement that the ERDP had little to do with SD or IRD.

Thus, in spite of the fact that the policy was a RD programme, the broader implications of this for policy makers and implementers remained obscured by a reliance on simplified conceptualisations that perpetuated the construction of the ‘elements of sustainability’ as separate. Influencers, while acknowledging a common RD agenda as a useful policy aim, remained largely loyal to one or other of the ‘elements’ and advisers, being free to formulate their own interpretations of the concept, recognised its flaws in terms of delivering outcomes.

Chapters 9 and 10 examined in detail the way that discretion and integration were interpreted through the implementing structures of the ERDP. According to the policy design model, policy implementation can be measured by the difference between the design received and the one produced by a particular actor in the process. Research revealed a ‘Wilsonian’ pattern of discretion (see Chapter 4) within the implementing structures of the ERDP which, while allowing discretion to implementers, effectively gave them few opportunities to alter policy intentions. Implementing groups were top-down in character, ranging from very much so in the case of the national groups, to less so at regional level, and were strongly influenced by their leadership. The groups were not valued highly by their membership, little attempt being made to enable members to add value creatively in the implementation process. Policy learning was underdeveloped with inadequate feedback loops and poor relations between the centre and the region. Attempts by the region to devise their own solutions to problems arising were rejected by the centre. The problem of integration was approached by policy makers as a policy issue, and then dropped when interest in the concept waned. Research indicated that implementation of the programme



had not resulted in the integration of its measures or the integration of working practices. The technical assessment process was ostensibly attempting to balance the elements of sustainability rather than integrate objectives with results often being subsequently ignored by members of the Regional Appraisal Panel. The lack of any sub-regional forum for the selection of projects within a local strategic framework was perceived by many outside Defra as the biggest problem for the future sustainability of the programme.

Based on these findings, and addressing the second research question, it appears that in terms of the policy design framework, the allocation of discretion in the implementation of the ERDP was largely cosmetic, included in the policy design to comply with Commission requirements but adding little value to it because of the top-down nature of the programme. In terms of SiRLU, discretion representing partnership, bottom-up participation or involvement was not a feature of implementing the ERDP. Furthermore, there was little evidence that integration had occurred in any of the areas examined, particularly in relation to goals at the individual project level. It appears unlikely therefore that the synergy necessary for the integrated delivery of SiRLU can be achieved through the programme as it stands.

#### **11.4 The importance of the ERDP – stakeholder perceptions**

The next part of this chapter uses interview data to analyse the perceptions of stakeholders regarding their experience with the ERDP and its importance in a changing policy environment. The analysis uses policy levels as the basis for comparison as opposed to populations, the data providing a more meaningful result when approached in this manner. The way that a policy is received by targets groups and implementers is important, according to the policy design model, because ... “[p]olicies are lessons in democracy” (Schneider and Ingram 1997, p79). They can encourage an atmosphere of discursive dialogue by establishing the means for enabling that, or they can make people feel impotent in the face of hidden agendas. The meanings and interpretations of the policy shape the participation patterns in the case of target groups and change the discourses amongst policy

implementers and influencers. This in turn affects the ‘success’ of a policy in terms of compliance or resistance, and will have consequences for future designs.

At the time of the interviews a widespread reassessment of the place of agriculture in the rural economy was underway in the wake of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and the Curry Report<sup>85</sup>, and the ERDP had made a slow start as a result of the crisis. Respondents had not had a great deal of experience with the programme, and further changes as a result of these events seemed inevitable. Data show that respondents drawn from the national policy level were much more positive about the importance of the Programme than their colleagues at regional level while the latter were more critical, articulating a number of concerns. It is possible that this resulted from respondents at national level being more involved in debate about the long-term strategic importance of the policy while their counterparts in the regions were engaging with the delivery of the programme and its immediate outcomes. So, for example, some national level respondents across the populations saw the programme as the lynchpin of the future CAP; that it was fundamental for the protection of the countryside; that it was important for farmers; and that it was politically important in terms of legitimising support for rural areas both domestically and with the WTO. Others pointed out that it may be the only remaining structural fund as the focus shifts with the enlargement of the EU. Yet another felt its importance lay in the fact that it created a framework within which the mood of European thinking could be reflected ... “The RDR when I came into it didn’t seem hugely important in itself, but it has a whole lot of underlying messages, and it is causing people to think in a different way about the countryside (PolicyInfluencer21, pers.com).

Regional respondents tended to be more critical of the Programme, demonstrating a greater degree of disillusionment in response to its limited impact and identifying four major

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<sup>85</sup> Headed by Sir Don Curry, the Policy Commission on the future of Food and Farming was directed by government in August 2001 to investigate the food chain and its future in England and report on its findings by December 2001. The outbreak of FMD had a profound affect on the way that agriculture was perceived by both government and the public, emphasising the important links between agriculture and the rest of the rural economy. It also had important implications for the ERDP, delaying the first stages of implementation and diverting attention from the opportunities for farmers contained within the Programme.



problems in relation to SiRLU: *funding, multifunctionality, farmer attitudes, and impact*. The lack of funding was seen as the biggest constraint on its effectiveness, and there was widespread belief that the Programme would not deliver SRD, it being seen as impossible to measure trends from a policy with such limited impact. This was corroborated by a Policy Maker:

It would be extremely difficult to assess the success or failure of the ERDP because the RDR is actually an amalgam of a range of different measures, covering issues as diverse as organic farming and food processing. The ERDP is also difficult to cope with simply because the measures are voluntary. They are choices that farmers make. Logic says there will be some farmers who would make that choice anyway and some who would only go that way because of grant, and distinguishing the additionality or added value of the grant is very difficult. That makes people in government generally quite sceptical that measures like the RDP can't clearly disentangle the specific benefits. It's an issue with the Spending Review (PolicyMaker4, pers.com).

Customer-facing policy implementers, having to deal simultaneously with their own vision, customer expectations and policy limitations, blamed funding levels for their difficulties with the policy:

You probably think I'm just another civil servant who's got a job to do in terms of delivering the money. I mean, I have a passion that says I really do believe we can make a difference – it just won't be as big as we'd like. The scale of funding just isn't big enough (PolicyImplementer7, pers.com).

Other stakeholders agreed that there was not enough money in the Programme, and what there was had not been spent quickly enough on the right sorts of projects. Without providing a substantial incentive in the form of either threat or grant, it was impossible, according to one respondent, to motivate farmers. There was also concern that the lack of resources in the Programme reduced its impact in terms of potential or failure, and would ensure that, without substantial increases in modulation or other funding, it would remain just a small part of the larger rural policy picture. Furthermore some respondents felt that few people would actually notice if it did fail.

The second problem identified by respondents was the fact that multifunctionality, identified by the Programme as a potentially positive outcome, had failed to materialise. One noted a pattern emerging instead of a polarisation between ranching operations and small niche holdings in the far SW, indicating that agriculture itself was changing to reflect market conditions, but that diversification was not driving this change. Others expressed similar doubts about the tension between diversification and market forces, while another claimed that farmers would be forced out of business anyway by the effects that globalisation was having on the industry. This was linked with the third problem; that farmer attitudes towards the production of public goods were perceived by respondents to have changed little (see also research on the farming ‘culture’ (Morris and Potter 1995; Young, C. *et al.* 1995)), a fact that did not augur well for a multifunctional agriculture in the future. All of these were linked to the last problem, one that was articulated by a wide cross-section of respondents particularly at the regional level; that the policy was not driving change, although it might well be the catalyst for change in the next generation of RD programming. One policy adviser with specific expertise in rural policy issues, speculated on the question of whether the ERDP had any sort of holistic policy impact at all, rather than as an amalgam of disparate measures. He referred to a recent conference in the UK, where several contributors were attempting to evaluate Labour policy with regard to rural policy. Not one mentioned the ERDP:

Not only did none of them mention the ERDP, but when asked later about the ERDP and how they saw that, they didn’t know, so clearly the ERDP does not have a profile as a rural policy document. I think that’s obvious for anyone who knows it because those who have read it and who know it see it simply as a programming document for a whole series of measures that already existed, that are essentially about paying money to farms. Most people don’t know about it, and that in itself is revealing of the RDP’s lack of profile in the policy community. And that leads one to think, is it a policy document after all? Does it make any policy statement? (PolicyAdviser8, pers.com).

This lack of profile may signal the crucial difference between a European-driven, seven-year, ongoing policy, which is less able to gain or retain political and stakeholder attention than the short-term policy documents linked to short-term funding streams which are produced by government in reaction to events, for example, FMD and the Curry Commission.



Overall, most respondents thought the programme had had a limited impact in its current form, with the problems of integration, centre/delivery distance and the lack of regional leadership all being cited as detracting from its importance in addition to the problems described above. There was concern that it did not address the wider rurality; that it duplicated other rural funding streams, for example, the Objective 3 regional development programme; and that it could only address horizontal problems in a limited way, while agriculture was suffering from a vertical decline. There was also concern about the extent to which it had enabled implementing groups to add value through participation:

It hasn't built connections into the relevant communities. It hasn't built intelligence into the processes. It hasn't built sensitive decision-making which people can trust and believe in. It's got a long way to go (PolicyInfluencer26, pers.com).

While some acknowledged that the programme had some potential, the majority of respondents thought it was of little importance, as illustrated by these interview extracts:

It's only important as a base level plan. Things have moved on and it fundamentally wants reviewing (PolicyInfluencer9, pers.com).

For this county at this time there will be very little benefit. It's minutely important. It's not about rural development, which is sad (PolicyInfluencer7, pers.com).

What would have happened to the RDP if Curry hadn't come along? (PolicyInfluencer14, pers.com).

I don't think it's very important, quite honestly. I think it is a small component, even if you doubled or trebled it. It's a drop in the ocean (PolicyInfluencer26, pers.com).

Most respondents thought that the programme was unlikely to deliver their particular visions of SRD, but a Policy Adviser pointed out that it would probably deliver Defra's vision:

It might well fail to 'save rural England' and farmers because of the paltry budget; it might fail to deliver IRD because it isn't actually integrated. But it won't fail in its own terms of scheme delivery. It depends on your criteria. What is failure? The evaluation and monitoring by Defra will be in very narrowly constrained terms to do with delivery of those

schemes. They will not be classed in terms of grandiose versions of SRD. It will all be in terms of what the RES has delivered on the ground etcetera (PolicyAdviser1, pers.com).

The same respondent, who has wide experience at both policy levels summed up the debates:

It is important for several reasons. It exists as a potential repository of a lot of money from CAP reform, and there is no alternative mechanism for spending that money. But it is not the only important thing going on in the countryside. People tend to focus, not surprisingly, on the policy. There is a growth industry in understanding the RDP and talking about the RDP, as though that were the only thing that drove the countryside and rural development, and it clearly isn't. Purely as part of the CAP it is very important and likely to become more important, but as part of the whole policy context it becomes less so. As far as the whole driving context of countryside change is concerned it becomes less important again. When you get down to the local level it becomes of minute importance, which in itself suggests it's not remotely integrated and market opportunities are of far greater importance (PolicyAdviser1, pers.com).

## 11.5 Summing up so far

In summing up the first half of this chapter the conclusion reached from the analysis of data presented so far is that the RD currently being delivered through the ERDP is not that advocated as a baseline for this study; that is, it does not integrate objectives, measures or working practices and discretion is constrained by top-down pressures from both EC and national government regulations. The analysis of stakeholder perceptions reveals that the programme is considered to have greater strategic than practical importance, largely due to problems with funding and its position as a policy driver. Most respondents thought it had had limited impact and was unlikely to deliver their particular visions of SRD.

What it is likely to deliver, however, is Defra's own implied definition of RD – structural adjustment for agriculture and the production of public goods. The changes that take place in the process will have an impact on SiRLU, but sustainability in Defra's terms will almost certainly imply 'economic' as this quotation from Defra's rural economy R&D programme demonstrates... "One of the key mechanisms for encouraging development of the rural economy is the ERDP where £1.6bn is to be spent over the seven years of the Programme" (Thorp 2002). An agenda item at the NPAG meeting observed serves to underline Defra's



evident satisfaction with the model of RD implemented through the ERDP, stating that as far as the SDU was concerned ... “the ERDP is already largely sustainable and is making a significant contribution to Defra’s sustainable development objectives”.

## **11.6 The Mid-Term Evaluation of the ERDP**

The first half of this chapter has been concerned with an analysis of the research findings and an assessment of stakeholder perceptions regarding the importance of the ERDP. The second half turns to the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the ERDP and the EC proposals for the next version of the RDR to analyse current discourses of RD in light of experience with the programme and events since the regulation’s inception.

The MTE of the ERDP (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003) was carried out as part of the planned evaluation of the RDR programming cycle of which the *ex-ante* was the first stage. The process will end with the *ex-post* evaluation, which will be carried out after the next programming period has begun in 2007. The MTE was completed by the same economic and management consultants who had carried out the *ex-ante* evaluation and who were thus well acquainted with the policy environment. The evaluation included an overall assessment of the context of the programme and the progress to date in achieving objectives, the views of stakeholders regarding their experience with the programme, and an analysis of the responses to the evaluative questions that were the key drivers of the process. The Executive Summary clarified the position of the programme in relation to SiRLU:

The overall assessment of the evaluators is that at the mid term of the ERDP a good start has been made in many areas of the Programme despite the disruption caused by foot and mouth disease at the beginning of the programming period.... It is intended that the recommendations arising from the MTE will help to develop the full potential of the Programme in bringing about sustainable rural development (ibid, pi).

The methodology with which the evaluators addressed questions concerning the implementation arrangements and the cross-cutting questions posed by the EC included three regional consultations: the South West, the East Midlands and Yorkshire and

Humberside. Some conclusions from the SW consultation are analysed here before turning to the main conclusions of the evaluation as a whole.

### **11.6.1 The SW Regional Consultation**

The rationale for the regional consultations was threefold: to explore the extent of strategic synthesis between the ERDP and other programmes in the region; the degree and nature of partnerships and dialogue; and to consider the impact of the ERDP on other strategies. The SW report started by noting the lack of ownership of the original plan by regional partners. On the first point it concluded that the programme was largely consistent with other regional strategies. On the second it found that formal and informal groupings of stakeholders in the region<sup>86</sup> were currently working well and that partners thought they were working towards a strategic synthesis through this integration. There were, however, some examples given by respondents where strategy and dialogue were not mutually reinforcing or consistent. These included the inability to use any other form of public funds to match fund the ERDP, thereby constraining the potential of the programme to deliver IRD after the structural funds model. Further examples included the lack of a strategic view or sub-regional context for targeting project-based schemes; the complexity of regional bureaucracies; the lack of coordination between ERDP regional fora and the associated failure to bring value to the process; and the lack of regional discretion in setting budgets designed to address regional priorities.

In terms of the integration of schemes within the programme, evaluators found that there was little contact between those schemes administered outside of the RDS (Forestry, Energy Crop, Hill Farming Allowance and Organic Farming Scheme) and those administered by the RDS (the CSS, ESA and project-based schemes). This effectively prevented the linking of applications. Evaluators commented that RDS staff needed to be regarded as facilitators rather than as policemen, citing the example of the RES facilitation scheme in the Objective 2 area. Umbrella organisations should apply for funding and there

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<sup>86</sup> Formal groups included the RPG, RCG, GO/Defra/RDS, RDS/FC. Inter-agency groups included informal meetings of the government agencies; Defra/CA/SWERDA and partners re. AONBs/NPs/land management etc.; Defra/EA/EN/NFU and partners re. soil management, SSSIs etc..



was the potential for sub-regional organisations to develop sub-regional issue-based strategies. In terms of inter-agency integration in delivery, the consultation suggested that the best examples of this were through joint promotional activity, for example, the workshops facilitated by the RDS for partners and client groups. The report cites a number of successful IRD projects in the region, but suggests that partners would welcome ‘one-stop shops’ to provide better integration at customer level. There was a need for greater exploration of opportunities for integration. Evaluators concluded that there was a need for an issue-based strategy at sub-regional level, developed and owned by a consortium of partners in the style of the Objective 2 Integrated Plan Approach. They also concluded that the ERDP had not influenced other strategies and programmes to any extent, and partners needed to engage more with the issues.

As far as programme outputs and outcomes were concerned, evaluators found that the separate administration of schemes was not creating synergy and that adjustments would need to be made in the implementing arrangements. There was an emphasis on diversification rather than agricultural businesses with the ERDP appearing risk-averse and less innovative than the Objective 1 and 2 areas. Again the issue of sub-regional partnerships was raised, this time to reduce costs and the administrative burden for the RDS. In conclusion, evaluators reported that the programme had not made much impact in terms of outcomes and there was a need for Defra to work more closely with other organisations involved in RD.

The SW Consultation Report concluded with some proposals from stakeholders to address the problems of integration pursued in the survey. Those that are directly relevant to the issues raised in this thesis are listed below, beginning with those aimed at achieving strategic synthesis and complementarities:

- The development of issue-based strategies at sub-regional level to help with targeting of funding;

- Greater integration between Defra in the region and other regional structures such as the RDA and the Regional Assembly who have responsibility for the regional Sustainable Development Framework;
- Delegated grant schemes for project-based schemes in the style of Objective 5b;
- Greater regional discretion to set budgets and transfer funds;

To achieve effective integration in delivery the following proposals were amongst those mooted:

- A system to encourage applicants and project officers to think more strategically in terms of links between projects (facilitation);
- Funded facilitation to link up with other objectives/programmes (*e.g.* AONBs, catchment areas);
- Sub-regional partnerships should be able to apply for funding to which individuals could then apply;
- Local or sub-regional level ‘one stop shop’ approach for project applicants

### **11.6.2 The Main Report**

The main report pulled together the data from six postal and telephone surveys, the three regional consultations, eight sub-regional case studies and ten ERDP schemes case study reports to reach a number of conclusions from which recommendations were made. The following bulleted list outlines the main points from the report. A detailed analysis is included at Appendix 19:

- The programme was more effective in addressing Priority A than Priority B (see Chapter 7, section 7.4.3);
- The achievement of scheme objectives was variable from high (AES and forestry) to low (ECS, VTS);
- The rationale for market failure needs revisiting;



- The ERDP schemes were neutral in terms of coherence, causing no conflict, but producing no synergy;
- More simplification of bureaucracy is needed;
- More transparency in project selection is needed;
- The ERDP fits well with some of the principles of SD (see Appendix 20), but there are concerns about low CSS levels and its catalytic effect on other programmes. It has a very limited social role;
- Strategic synthesis is constrained by the numbers of other groupings in regions, but this may not be a major problem provided groups can work together when required;
- The ERDP is also constrained by funding restrictions, rules and top-down management and
- Recommendations for a future RDR include a reassessment of the market failure rationale, work towards changing attitudes to SD and more flexibility in cross-chapter working.

Source: (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003)

## 11.7 Proposals for the new RDR

The proposal for a successor to the current regulation was presented by the EC in Brussels in July 2004 (CEC 2004) and relates to Community support for RD from January 2007. It states the need for a continued sectoral component in EU RD policy, based on the fact that it is part of the ongoing CAP reform and taking into account the high share of agriculture in employment in many of the new Member States. It sets out three major objectives for RD policy following the Lisbon and Göteborg European Councils in 2000 and 2001<sup>87</sup> respectively and the Salzburg Conference in 2003. These objectives emphasise the economic, environmental and social elements of sustainability:

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<sup>87</sup> The Lisbon conclusions set the target of making the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economic area by 2010, while the Göteborg conclusions added a new emphasis on protecting the environment and achieving a more sustainable pattern of development (CEC 2004).

- increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector through support for restructuring;
- enhancing the environment and countryside through support for land management (including RD actions related to Natura 2000 sites); and
- enhancing the quality of life in rural areas and promoting diversification of economic activities through measures targeting the farm sector and other rural actors

The proposals suggest greater emphasis on strategy at both the EU and Member State level through the production by the EC of a European Union Strategy (EUS) for rural development. The EUS will set clear objectives in the light of EU priorities along three policy axes corresponding to the three main policy objectives stated above: *competitiveness; land management* and *wider rural development*. In addition there will be a Leader axis. Member States would each produce new national RD strategies showing how they intend to reflect the EU policy priorities in their programmes and plans.

There appears to be an intention to place more emphasis on monitoring and evaluation and less on rules and eligibility, although it is not clear from the proposals that this would happen in practice. The latter make very little reference to SRD principles or requirements. Furthermore, there is also almost no reference to integration, except in relation to the ‘mainstreaming’ of the more bottom-up Leader approach where integration using local development strategies is proposed ...“to ensure the structured dialogue underlying good governance” (CEC 2004, p4), including stakeholder consultation in the design, implementation and evaluation of national strategies and programmes. One article appears to explicitly prevent integration of measures from within different axes. However, the proposals would make it easier to integrate measures within each axis (e.g. agri-environment and LFA). Funding would be provided by a new fund created specifically for this purpose: the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) which, together with a new fund for Pillar 1 replaces the EAGGF. The minimum funding proposed would be 25% for land management (Axis 2), 15% each for Axes 1 and 3 and 7% for Leader.



National RD Strategies, drawn up at either national or regional levels, would translate EU priorities to the national situation after consultation, set core result indicators and promote cohesion. They would include strategies for each of the three axes plus Leader and there would be a range of measures under each axis. For axis 3 (wider RD), the preferred implementation method would be through local development strategies drawn up by Local Action Groups (LAGs) targeting so-called 'sub-regional entities'. These would be developed either in collaboration between national, regional and local authorities or through the bottom-up Leader approach. Support for LAGs would be available through a National Rural Network which would produce an Action Plan identifying good transferable practices with information about them together with information about network management, the exchange of experience and know-how, the preparation of training programmes for LAGs and technical assistance for inter-territorial and transnational cooperation. The National Rural Networks in turn would be supported by a European Network for RD, set up specifically for the networking of national networks, organisations and administrations active in the field of RD at Community level. In addition it would disseminate good RD practice, provide information, organise meetings and seminars, and preside over the exchange of expertise (CEC 2004). It is important to note, however, that despite the intention to simplify the regulation, the number of measures would increase. For example, the proposals contain new measures relating to training for other rural actors, support for rural micro-businesses, agro-forestry, managing Natura 2000 sites and new member states.

## **11.8 Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to pull together the findings of the research described in earlier chapters, and then compare these with analyses of stakeholder perceptions, the MTE of the ERDP and the future RDR proposals from the EC, to assess the extent to which there has been progress towards SiRLU. Tracing the social construction of RD through the processes of policy making and implementation revealed that at the time of the Agenda 2000 CAP reform negotiations RD was a discourse, or idea in good currency, that was used

in different ways at different policy levels to achieve different goals. The idea was useful for European policy makers because, although it had failed to provide the radical changes envisaged by CAP reformists, it maintained to a certain extent the impetus that had been lost through the creation of the RDR. RD was socially constructed as the multifunctionality of agriculture, but the RDR remained a sectoral policy, refraining from identifying clear goals for a wider RD. In the UK, the traditionally separated discourses of agriculture, countryside and RD were brought together, particularly at national level, in the new discourse of IRD, which proved to be a useful tool for the government in addressing the farm incomes crisis and the demands of environmental interests. Although a RD policy in name, the ERDP also failed to provide explicit RD goals, relying instead on the broad national countryside goals of the Rural White Paper. In the SW region, however, RD was socially constructed specifically as IRD, with a range of objectives and activities designed to achieve it.

The legacy of poor communication between policy makers and the implementers, influencers and advisers, is apparent in the design of ERDP programme documents, as is the absence of any coherence between national and regional objectives, integration of objectives within the programme or links between objectives and outcomes. Policy makers' assumptions are revealed through an analysis of these documents, specifically in terms of synergy and discretion. Finally, in recording people's experience with the programme, research revealed that populations interpreted sustainability differently depending on their perspective; that the allocation of discretion was largely cosmetic, adding little value to the implementation process; that there was no real partnership involved and no integration of measures, working practices or objectives and there were no means provided for bottom-up participation. Stakeholders differed in their opinions about the importance of the ERDP, with national level respondents understanding the underlying messages of the programme while at the regional level it was regarded as being of little value.

It was useful in terms of the objectives of this thesis that the SW region was chosen as one of the regional consultations for the MTE, because this enabled some comparison and corroboration of findings. The terms of reference for the evaluation was particularly



apposite to this research, the consultations focusing on synthesis, integration, dialogue and discretion. Many parallels with this research were revealed, including the lack of a sub-regional context for targeting PB schemes; the complexity of regional bureaucracies and the difficulty of dialogue; the lack of coordination between regional ERDP fora and the lack of regional discretion over budgets. The main report showed that the ERDP was constrained by its funding arrangements, its rules and its top-down management; it needed greater simplification in operation, transparency in project assessment, and integration between schemes. A feature of the evaluation was the requirement from the EC to produce future sustainability issues as three separate elements, appearing to be at odds with the discourses of integration that marked the development of the ERDP. On this issue the evaluation appeared to contradict itself, integration at one point being upheld as important for achieving a truly sustainable integrated rural development, while at another point evaluators suggested that strategic synthesis and integration should not be a priority at regional level.

Funds for the new RDR will come from one funding and programming instrument, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) plus the proceeds of compulsory modulation under the Common rules of the CAP 2003 reforms (PolicyInfluencer28, pers.com). Proposals for the new programme appear to have taken account of the many criticisms of the current programme, although references to increased funding have been met with scepticism by government agencies and advisers. Hopes that the UK budget will increase from its historically low position have to be balanced against the government's desire, along with some other Member States, to reduce its overall budget contribution to 1%. Voluntary modulation is currently essential to funding the RDR, a situation that could cause significant problems with the advent of compulsory EU-wide modulation because of the lower redistribution level. This may mean the curtailment of new programmes in the future. Furthermore, the RDR and Structural funds are likely to be the losers if EU funds as a whole are put under pressure by the agreed 'ceiling' on Pillar 1 spending at the same time as enlargement and planned reforms to dairy and sugar regimes are making increased demands on that budget (PolicyAdviser7).

In many ways the new regulation is much more focused than the old, specifically stating its aims and objectives as a RD policy. However, it has weak links to EU sustainable development policies, the integration of environmental concerns is low except within the land management axis and any attempt to integrate the three elements of sustainable development at the strategic level has been abandoned by separating them within the policy along the three axes. The aim of the EU Strategic Document as the basis for the National RD Strategies is to ensure a structured dialogue and good governance. However, the difficulty for Defra in implementing this, and the ongoing problem for SiRLU, will be in ensuring that this dialogue occurs horizontally across the three axes rather than simply vertically within each policy area. The Leader element within each programme for the implementation of local development strategies of LAGs is likely to apply mainly to the implementation of axis 3 as this is the favoured method within that policy area.



## **Chapter 12 Discussion and Conclusion**

### **12.1 Opening remarks**

This chapter has a number of purposes. The first is to provide a brief summary of the main points covered in the thesis followed by an analysis of the main conclusions to emerge from the research in relation to the theoretical framework. This is followed by a reflexive assessment of the research process and some comments regarding the usefulness and appropriateness of the policy design framework for the study. The chapter concludes with a suggestion for further research.

### **12.2 Summary**

The first concern of this thesis was to explore the extent to which implementation of the RDR in SW England reflected a genuine move towards greater integration and discretion, and thus a more sustainable approach to rural land use in the regions. The second concern focused on the implementing structures and mechanisms of the ERDP and their capacity to deliver SiRLU. These two concerns highlighted the normative/empirical dilemma of policy formulation and implementation, where the rhetoric of policy is rarely mirrored in practice. In the case of implementing the RDR, exploration revealed a multiple normative/empirical problem in that the three main policy documents concerned (the RDR, the ERDP National Plan and the ERDP SW Regional Chapter) each had different and sometimes conflicting goals for RD and inadequate means for ensuring commensurable outcomes. The exploration also revealed that assumptions made by policy makers adversely affected policy outcomes.

The thesis was situated in the context of the evolving European RD agenda, where factions were competing over different definitions of RD, and sustainability as a policy issue had receded. Identification of the research problem drew out the differences between the

Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP and previous CAP reforms, highlighting the opportunities potentially offered by the RDR for sustainable rural futures, and the risks involved with the interpretation of the Regulation in England by a largely agriculturally-based department in a strongly market-based economy. The research problem consisted of two linked issues: one of duality in language and interpretation; the other of the normative/empirical dichotomy in policy prescriptions. Discussions regarding the scope and meaning of RD showed that it was, by its nature, a multi-sectoral concept, raising concerns about the institutional capacity required to ensure its successful delivery, and prompting further consideration of the normative/empirical problems of policy implementation in this instance. This last problem was identified as a particular issue for implementation studies, one that traditional explanations had failed to adequately address. A new conceptualisation in the form of policy design was chosen as a framework to guide the theoretical development of the thesis and subsequent fieldwork, based on its perceived ability to overcome the normative/empirical problem and provide understanding of the policy process. The next part of the chapter discusses the research findings in relation to this theoretical framework.

### **12.3 Discussion**

The analysis carried out in Chapter 11 suggests that implementing the RDR in SW England was subject to the classic normative/empirical problems identified by implementation theorists. As explained in Chapter 1, this dichotomy arises from the discrepancy between the value prescriptions of policy rhetoric and the difficulty of actually implementing a policy that accurately reflects these values. The normative/empirical problem is at the root of much of the implementation research, a point that is made by Dryzek (1990) when he writes about policy failure being commonly linked to the variable conditions of policy formulation. Guided by Dryzek's categories of society (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.1), the RDR can be seen as springing from an 'open' society, policy design pursuing uninformed ends, while the ERDP appears to have been created by a 'society of good intent', enabling free discussion about elements of policy but neglecting the empirical dimension and resulting in unanticipated outcomes. In neither case are both the normative and empirical



elements discursive and participative, objectives required, according to Dryzek (ibid) for the successful implementation of policy.

Early implementation studies failed to explain how this problem could be overcome, approaching the issue from a largely top-down perspective. Later theorists, however, showed that implementation was not simply a discrete stage in the policy process involved with programme delivery, but that in reality it begins with the interpretations of the policy culture by policy makers. The trick is, according to Yanow (1990), to understand the intentions of policy makers and the extent to which implementers share these intentions. Critical theorists emphasise the argumentative character of the policy process, drawing attention to the way that issues and ideas are reframed to reflect shifts in context that then help shape the next context (Rein and Schön 1993). This then becomes a process of incremental change characterised by policy learning (Heclo 1974; Majone 1989; Clark *et al.* 1997). Policy design builds on these theories to provide an explanation of the policy process that reveals why the normative/empirical dichotomy is such a problem for policy makers and implementers, and how to design policies that overcome it. The conclusion reached following the analysis undertaken in Chapter 11 is that the design of the policies involved in the implementation of the RDR in SW England exacerbated the normative/empirical dichotomy in four main areas: *policy goals and objectives*; *communication*; *the assumptions of policy makers*; and *interpretation*. This discussion continues by examining each of these issues in turn.

### **12.3.1 Policy Goals and Constructions of RD**

It is important, according to Schneider and Ingram (1997), that goals should relate to current perceptions of problems that are relevant to the target population, but also that they should be structured credibly so that a link can be found between them and policy outcomes. This becomes difficult when goals are not clearly stated, so, for example, Defra's aim of 'sustainable development' meaning a 'better' quality of life for all would be extremely difficult in itself to assess against any outcome because the terms used cannot be measured against any agreed definition. "Goals are consequences of human needs, wants,

and desires arising in particular contexts” according to S&I (p82), revealing much about the relationships within the policy arena. The goals of the three policy documents relating to implementation of the RDR in SW England have been discussed in detail in Chapters 5, 7 and 11, research revealing different goals emerging from the different contexts of each document. The goals of the RDR were difficult to identify from the regulation itself, being contained within 53 paragraphs of preamble. The five that were identified did not all link specifically with the four rationales. Chapter 5 concluded that the regulation mirrored the divisions and the different constructions of RD in the supra-national policy arena, introducing the idea of RD into CAP policy making, but making little specific commitment to it over and above what had already been happening.

No goals were stated in the ERDP National Plan, rather a couple of ‘priorities’ were selected by reference to the government’s rural and countryside policy. Assessment of the impact of the programme as a whole was expected to be difficult, masked by a plethora of other funding streams and external factors, and the twin rationales of structural adjustment and market failure formed the credible link with outcomes in spite of their dichotomous nature. Nowhere in the Plan was RD stated as the aim of the policy, the text clearly setting out the limitations imposed by the RDR and the lack of funding. The priorities selected reflected the context of the farm incomes crisis and an ongoing commitment to environmental protection, the ERDP being a useful tool for achieving progress in these areas. The only explicitly stated goals in the three policy documents were contained within the SW Regional Chapter of the ERDP, which identified twelve goals equally divided between the three elements of sustainability, forty themed objectives concerned with achieving the goals, and twelve activities that would achieve the objectives. The stated aim of the policy was IRD, reflecting the power of the discourse to inspire those involved with the problems of programme delivery in a fragmented policy environment. These regional goals are the yardstick by which project-based schemes are assessed and thus make an important contribution to the potential of the programme to deliver SiRLU.

The policy design framework, by demanding the examination of the goals selected by policy makers, reveals the social constructions underlying those goals. In the case of the



RDR, RD was constructed as an *idea*, leaving Member States to translate this idea into their own particular constructions of RD. In the case of the ERDP National plan, RD was used as a *tool* to achieve structural adjustment in the agricultural industry and environmental protection. The SW region, however, chose IRD as a policy *goal*; one that could not be achieved because of the limitations imposed by the goals of the other two. The normative/empirical problem has thus been exacerbated by the design of the ERDP in this case, each policy level having different ambitions for the programme.

### 12.3.2 Communication

The critical approach to policy making was discussed in some detail in Chapter 2. Within the genre, the ‘argumentative’ group are concerned with the importance of language in shaping the world. The argumentative process demonstrates the many ways that problems can be constructed. Rein (1993) shows how critical theorists seek to expose these different perspectives involved in policy controversies to find the hidden assumptions and normative conclusions. Critical theorists are particularly keen to advocate greater openness in the decision-making process, with these assumptions being made subject to criticism from a wider audience. Dryzek’s (1990) approach to this is through communicative rationality which traces its roots through the concept of *practical reason* to Aristotle’s *phronesis*<sup>88</sup> (Schneider and Ingram 1997). Essentially this means that, through discursive practices it is possible to conceptualise a public interest that should be served by public policy rather than by self interest or cost and benefits.

The failure of communication was a feature of the ERDP design process. It was manifest in the first instance in the hiatus between policy makers and policy implementers during the drafting of the SW Regional Chapter, when the drafting team was encouraged to expand their vision to encompass more than the policy could possibly deliver. Dryzek (1990) maintains that ambition in policy can be condoned provided that communicative rationality has been a part of the policy designing process, the crucial quality required being the

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<sup>88</sup> The capability for self-consciously and self-reflectively finding the best course of action within the given situation, taking into account values and cultural understandings that cannot readily be separated from the ‘facts’ (Schneider and Ingram 1997).

openness of discourse about policy. The top-down style of policy makers at that time, together with the short timescale for completing the task, militated against openness, a feature that had a marked effect on the ownership of the policy by regional implementers and resulted in a lack of coherence between national and regional plans. The second failure of communication occurred between policy implementers and policy influencers during consultations that formed part of the drafting process, leaving the latter confused and uncertain about the value of their input into the process. A discursive democracy, according to S&I (p59) ... “rests on a discourse that is oriented toward reciprocal understanding, trust, and an undistorted consensus about what should be done”. In the case of the ERDP, the legacy of the design process is one of cosmetic consultation, misunderstanding and distrust.

A further failure involved the inadequate communication between government and its partners regarding the strategic delivery of the programme through the implementing structures, resulting in a top-down and one-way dissemination of information that lacked the benefits of any compensating feedback loop. Instead of engaging with partners in a process of mutually beneficial policy learning, policy makers in this instance appeared to be adopting a position of social learning as defined by Hall (1993) whereby the image of learning has three central features: one of the principal factors affecting policy at time 1 is policy at time 0; the key agents in advancing the learning process are the experts in a given field of policy; and the state acts autonomously from societal pressures. Communicative rationality, according to Dryzek (1990, p14) is ... “a property of intersubjective discourse, not individual maximization, and it can pertain to the generation of normative judgments and action principles rather than just to the selection of means to ends”. While the critical basis of this mode of communication is admittedly somewhat idealistic, the point is that the full potential of groups can only be realised by empowering and enabling them to contribute in a constructive way rather than relegating members to the status of audience through the exercise of power.

Failures in communication have a profound effect on the normative/empirical problem in policy making. In the case of implementing the RDR in SW England the failures described and analysed in this thesis resulted in the production of a policy that was fragmented at



every level. The RDR consisted of an amalgam of opposing discourses in its form and content; the ERDP contained only a tenuous logic chain between the rationales for the programme as a whole and the stated aim of the regional chapter. Policy design demands an assessment of the desired outcomes of policy and then consensus on the means for achieving those. It should be catalytic rather than authoritative according to Bobrow and Dryzek (1987), making reference to all those involved in the policy process. Only in this way is it possible to convert normative prescriptions into valuable empirical outcomes.

### **12.3.3 Assumptions**

Chapter 11 showed how a number of assumptions were revealed through analysis of the ERDP policy process using the policy design framework. These were linked to the failures in communication described above and were, perhaps, implicated more in exacerbating the normative/empirical problem than anything else. Assumptions, according to S&I are those elements of policy that are unstated and that contain much information about the institutional culture and its power relationships. They often underpin the less transparent elements of policy decision making and they need to be revealed to avoid ambiguity and deception in policy design. Rein (1993) notes the importance of enabling a better grasp of the relationships between hidden premises and normative conclusions. Those assumptions identified in Chapter 11 are only some of a potentially large number that could be found through policy analysis using the policy design framework.

In terms of integration and discretion, upon which much attention has been focused in this thesis, policy makers made two assumptions. The first, regarding integration, was that synergy would automatically occur as a result of combining disparate measures in one policy. From this flowed the whole integration debate as it became clear that not only measures, but working practices and objectives would also need to be integrated to achieve programme objectives. Using structured methods of integration is likely, according to Dryzek (1990, p67) to end in failure ... “one suspects that such integration will fall short as long as it is tied to a decision structure in which a privileged group manipulates, or advises the manipulators of, a system ‘out there’”. Dryzek’s thesis, yet again, is that there should be

communicative rationalization in the decision process, a useful discipline for competing interests in the policy arena ... “Free, public and reflective subscription to common ends coupled with commitment to coordinated action in their pursuit inhibits subsequent subversion by narrow self-interest” (ibid, p71). In terms of the integration of objectives, the problem starts with the dichotomy of SD, where the concepts of growth and the limitations of growth sit uneasily together in a term that has become ubiquitous in policy making. Its interpretation remains as intractable now as it was two decades ago, and its inclusion in policy prescriptions is problematic for those charged with its delivery.

The second assumption, regarding discretion, was that policy implementers and influencers would be satisfied with the roles allocated to them through the implementing arrangements for the ERDP. Ostensibly democratic, and carried out with due regard to the principles of subsidiarity and SD, these arrangements failed to account for the need to make policies bottom-up in practice as well as in theory in order to achieve sustainable outcomes resulting in the ‘Wilsonian’ pattern of discretion identified in Chapter 9. This was linked directly to the lack of communication discussed above; for example, policy makers made crucial decisions regarding national priorities prior to consultations with partners and used the latter to provide the data necessary for drafting the Plan without allowing the opportunity for innovation or learning in the process. While such criticisms are deflected now by Defra as justified by extreme time pressure on the process, later opportunities for more constructive partnership working were missed as policy makers followed traditional top-down prescriptions for implementing public policies. The message given and received in this process is that policy makers will do what they do without taking other interests properly into account, resulting to a greater or lesser degree in apathy, resignation and disownership of the policy by implementers and influencers. Similar outcomes in terms of reactions to top-down policy prescriptions were observed by implementation studies that espoused bottom-up approaches permitting greater flexibility, local innovation, learning and local ownership (eg (Bardach 1977; Berman 1978; Hjern *et al.* 1978; Elmore, R. 1987; Yanow 1990; Younis and Davidson 1990). The negative reaction of regional level respondents when questioned about the value of the ERDP may have been a reflection of this ‘top-down effect’.



#### **12.3.4 Interpretation**

In the policy design model the translation dynamics connects the characteristics of policy designs as independent variables to societal conditions and to subsequent constructions of the issue ... “Policy designs have actual consequences, but the meanings and interpretations of the policy shape the resulting participation patterns” (S&I, p79). An example of this in relation to the normative/empirical problems of delivering the ERDP is in the use by different populations of different models of sustainability. Thus, while the national plan demanded only implicit regard for the principles of SD in its format, most of those involved in the implementation of the programme talked about and operationalised a model that attempted to balance the elements of sustainability. The aim of the regional chapter was to deliver IRD. However, in order to achieve IRD it is necessary to organise top-down and bottom-up elements within the policy process to achieve a better working relationship, according to Fitzpatrick and Smith (2002), requiring a fundamental change in the culture of government departments to accommodate this.

It is difficult to know exactly what the programme was trying to achieve in terms of outcomes, other than striving to reach its targets in relation to individual scheme goals. There was no serious attempt made to achieve integration across the programme, possibly because this was not demanded by its priorities or its rationales, and because implementers translated IRD in terms that required no integration. It may have been because integration cannot be achieved in the way it is currently conceptualised. It is quite likely that it was trying to achieve structural adjustment for agriculture and environmental protection, because this is all it could do given the constraints of EC and national priorities. Critics of the programme had greater expectations in relation to outcomes based on their own constructions of RD. It is interesting to conjecture, taking into account interview data and the analysis of constructions of sustainability in Chapter 8 how many would necessarily welcome the governance structures that could supply an alternative conceptualisation of integration and that are implied by a truly IRD.

## **12.4 Implications for SiRLU**

In Chapter 1 (1.4.1), the scope and meaning of SiRLU was explained in the context of this thesis. Chapter 3 described and analysed various constructions of SD and RD to arrive at two tenets of SiRLU that could be regarded as the basis for comparison in this thesis – integration and discretion. These tenets of SiRLU were repeated at 11.2 above. This research has indicated that neither integration nor discretion has been substantively implicated in the implementation of the RDR in SW England. As they are both found in most of the variations of RD, the indications are that neither SiRLU nor indeed any other sort of RD is being delivered by the ERDP. Chapter 1 identified two problems associated with the implementation of the RDR: the duality of the underlying language; and the normative/empirical dichotomy of policy prescriptions. Research has shown how the former renders SiRLU a relative concept, contingent on perspective, while the latter makes it difficult to deliver. So what are the implications for SiRLU?

Chapter 11 analysed the MTE of the ERDP. This identified the same sort of problems as those revealed by research in terms of communication, integration, discretion and funding. The report concluded that strategic synthesis was not a priority to be pursued at regional level, provided that key agencies could find a way of working together in a transparent manner when required. They did suggest, however, that there was a need for an issue-based strategy at sub-regional level in the style of the structural funds. This also confirms research findings in terms of the popularity of the Objective 5b scheme. Integration resulting in economies of scale was proposed as a further rationale for the programme, relying on synergies between different parts of the programme being achieved. However, in spite of the emphasis on the integration of the objectives of sustainability in the evaluation, that was not an issue at EC level apparently, the terms of reference for the MTE requiring future indications of sustainability to be considered in environmental, social and economic terms.

Chapter 11 also briefly appraised the proposals for the new RDR. The drivers for the new form of the regulation come from the WTO and from a stronger emphasis on competitiveness, emanating from the Lisbon Council in 2000, together with cohesion between the existing and new member states. In contrast to the MTE, the proposals for the



new RDR issued by the EC in July 2004 appear to abandon the concept of integration at the programming level. This is currently a cause of great concern for policy influencers in the UK, the new arrangement appearing to effectively remove environmental safeguards from the ‘investment’ axes (1 and 3) and deliberately prevent integration between axes 1, 2 and 3<sup>89</sup>. The guiding principles of RD set out by the EC in 1988 were *integration*, *subsidiarity* and *partnership*, the main aims of the current RDR being coherence with Pillar 1 and the participation of local actors in the promotion of RD (CEC 1988; European Commission 1999a). As far as the latter aim is concerned, the new proposals go further in addressing this than the current regulation through the setting up of Local Action Groups and National Rural Networks supported by the Leader axis. This new form of governance is welcomed in principle by the Land Use Planning Group (LUPG) of the government agencies insofar as it is the only instrument under the new proposals that allows the combination of objectives stemming from each of the three different axes (IEEP 2004). However, LUPG is concerned about the absence of any overarching principles for SD, the lack of environmental integration across the axes and the poor potential for the integration of measures between axes (PolicyInfluencer28, pers.com).

It might be significant that the objective of the original regulation was ... “to introduce a sustainable and integrated rural development policy” (European Commission 1999d, p1) while Commission rhetoric now describes the new regulation in terms of *efficiency*, *coherence* and *visibility* with no mention in the Explanatory Memorandum or the press release of *integration*. The policy, it is suggested ... “follows the overall orientations for a sustainable development in line with the conclusions of the Lisbon (March 2000) and Göteborg (June 2001) European Councils for Sustainable Development” (European Commission 2004, p2). The implications of this for SiRLU are that competition (Lisbon) and environmental protection (Göteborg) will proceed in parallel together with quality of life and diversification measures, but that integration and discretion, elements identified as

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<sup>89</sup> Article 71 of the proposed regulation states: An operation may qualify for a Fund contribution only under one rural development programme at a time. It may be financed under only one priority axis of the rural development programme (CEC 2004, p43).

being tenets of the concept, will not play a central role in delivering the RD referred to in the proposals.

In terms of policy design, the new regulation does, however, bring a much greater degree of structure to the policy. The rationale for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar is clearly stated as supporting agriculture as a provider of public goods in its environmental and rural functions and rural areas in their development (based presumably on the market failure concept) (CEC 2004). The production of a strategy document will clarify the priorities of the EU and form the basis for the proposed national strategies of member states which in turn will provide the framework for the new RDPs. This should provide a much stronger logic chain between policy intentions and outcomes and thus more potential for the delivery of those intentions, unlike the current RDR which has constructed RD in three different ways with three different purposes.

## **12.5 Some reflections on the research process**

In applying for this CASE studentship I had two conscious aims. The first was to pursue an interest in the concept of sustainable development fostered initially through the environmental management element of my undergraduate degree. The second was to engage in an academic activity that was fruitful in terms of making a contribution to a ‘real’ situation, rather than indulging in abstract theorising for which my career to date had not, in any event, prepared me. Happily the research process has allowed me to achieve both of these aims, although the scale of the project on occasions threatened to engulf me. Two problems became apparent almost from the beginning. The first was the potential, as just implied, for the project to become totally bogged down in the detail that informs the massive literature covering the topics implicated by the title of the thesis. The second was the dynamism of the policy arena into which I had stepped as a researcher, and that was moving on as I tried to capture elements for inquiry. This short reflection on the research process explains how these problems were approached and surmounted.



The original title of the CASE studentship focused on an exploration of the potential for *environmental* sustainability as an outcome of implementing the RDR. Unhappy with the use of the term in isolation from the other so-called elements of sustainability, and not wishing to write the thesis from the particular standpoint of environmental protection, I refocused on sustainability in rural land use, which implicitly invoked all three aspects. The new title of the thesis implicated six main areas of research: the history of CAP reform; UK agricultural policy; sustainable development; rural development; policy analysis; and implementation. These were represented by large and complex literatures, and I spent a full year immersed in the task of acquainting myself with the context and theory of rural development. I emerged after this time with four very large pieces of written work and one theoretical framework. At this stage I now know that, in an ideal world, I should have delayed the fieldwork and spent more time analysing this work, which had been written in a largely descriptive manner. This would have been helpful in the development of the research methodology. I felt, however, at the time, that it was important to use the unique opportunity presented by the dynamics of actual policy development (and the active links with senior policy makers that the CASE studentship provided), to capture the lessons these would provide. However, this naturally resulted in many more possibilities in terms of directions for research. The conceptual framework chosen could also have caused some problems at this stage in terms of the scope it offered as an overarching concept, with the possibility of providing too broad an analysis of the situation. I was convinced however, that implementation was not simply a 'stage' in the policy process, but the whole process from policy formulation to delivery, and a framework that provided a compelling explanation of this was necessary to understanding that process.

At this stage I did not have a definition of RD; indeed my efforts were focused on sustainability and sustainable agriculture. The problem with this was that the RDR was about neither sustainability nor sustainable agriculture, which is interesting in itself but unhelpful when attempting to relate one thing to the other. It became increasingly clear that it was necessary to link the concept of SiRLU with the current interpretations of RD, which is what the RDR was ostensibly about. It was only when this connection was made that the common theme of RD could be compared at different policy levels, a process simplified by

the conceptual framework, and that provided the key to the argument. In the meantime, the second interview question had been formulated with sustainable agriculture in mind, which, with hindsight, would be altered to reflect the subsequent focus on SRD. In the event this hardly mattered as respondents tended to answer that question by reference to their understanding of SD, very few being able to provide any other coherent definition. Overall, the interview questions provoked some interesting responses in spite of the short time since the launch of the Programme. Again, with hindsight, the high level of criticism levied at the ERDP may well have been prompted by the ‘newness’ of the policy, change often attracting adverse comments. It is likely that asking the same questions now would produce some different answers.

## **12.6 Reflections on the conceptual framework**

As mentioned above, the conceptual framework used in this study was invaluable for imposing order and providing clarity in what was a very complex policy situation. Having moved on from implementation studies, the policy design model appeared to provide a much more convincing explanation of the policy process. It was readily adapted to accommodate the three policy levels involved in implementing the RDR, and the dynamics provided a selective analysis that precluded other, less important detail. The centring of the policy in the analysis provided a focal point in a still-moving sequence of events. It also enabled the normative and empirical elements of policy implementation to be explained more clearly than would otherwise have been the case.

There were several ways in which policy design as a concept helped me as a researcher. Initially it provided a credible explanation of the policy process and helped locate the starting point for the research. Implementation studies tended to focus on implementation as one part of an individual policy process starting with policy formulation, or as network conceptualisations which have little power to connect policy formulation with outcomes. With three policy documents to consider in this instance, none of these were very helpful. From the beginning of the research process I had rejected the idea of focusing research solely on the ‘delivery’, or ‘implementation’ mechanisms, feeling that strategic decisions



were likely to be more important to outcomes in the long run. Policy design confirmed these thoughts, showing how the whole policy context including social constructions, interpretations and experiences is implicated in the design of policies. This set me a large task in terms of analysis, but finally provided a much more nuanced result. Revealing the social constructions of RD at the three different policy levels was crucial to understanding why implementation might be problematic, and provided some clues regarding the potential of the programme to contribute to SiRLU. The critical orientation of the framework also helped me to understand the value of dialogue and openness in communication to policy design.

Taking this a stage further, the policy design framework used in this thesis also provides policy makers and influencers with a number of useful lessons. The first is that the rationale for a policy should be clearly stated and linked to the goals, thus providing a credible logic chain throughout the implementation process. The second is that assumptions should be made known at the outset by policy makers to avoid unnecessarily exacerbating the normative/empirical problem. The third is that policy mechanisms implemented through appropriate structures should be chosen to achieve desired outcomes, as opposed to making aspirations fit within the confines of policy. This is clearly difficult when implementing European policy at national level, but it emphasises the necessity of openness and dialogue at all levels of consultation and leads on to the fourth lesson. This is that the formation of genuine partnerships, the real allocation of discretion to partners and stakeholders, the ownership of policies by stakeholders and the integration of aims and objectives are vital to achieving outcomes that reflect policy aims, which is the ultimate goal of implementation.

The policy design model used for this thesis was part of a much larger treatise on public policy making and its effects on democracy. Written with an American audience in mind, the book focuses on the way that policy can become corrupted by and, in turn, corrupt the policy context. The social constructions of target populations and knowledge used as examples in the book were not appropriate for the purposes of this thesis and so the basic concept was adapted to the CAP reform situation. The work has not been cited in other academic publications and this may be the first time it has been employed as the conceptual

framework for a doctoral thesis. My experience with it has been a positive one and I believe it is much more widely applicable in interpreting the policy process than implementation prescriptions.

## **12.7 Opportunities for further research**

The focus of this thesis has been on SiRLU and the potential offered for that through implementation of the RDR in SW England. A critical approach to the research was consciously adopted, the emphasis being on working through the policy process to reveal the constructions and assumptions that shape policy and influence outcomes. The results of this research have contributed to the consultations for the MTE of the ERDP and, indirectly, to the proposals for the new RDR. The latter differs in form and content from the current regulation, reflecting the changed policy context, and posing more questions about the potential through the legislation for SiRLU. A major puzzle for this study was to try to pin down what was meant by SiRLU in a policy arena where there were multiple definitions of RD, and it is far from clear exactly what kind of RD is currently being delivered through the programme. RD has been identified as a key area for research, based on its perceived significance as the new orthodoxy (Buller 2004), and the revision of the RDR to reflect the accession of the new member states presents exciting opportunities for similar research to continue.

Within this broad agenda, an exploration of the new local governance structures proposed for the RDR in relation to their potential for SRD would be a worthwhile project. In a policy briefing for the LUPG, the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) had this to say about the Leader element of the policy:

Although use of Leader presents some challenges, it also provides an opportunity for creating local action groups focused on land use/management, and encourages the significant involvement of various stakeholders. Another promising feature of using the Leader axis is that this is the only instrument under the Regulation that allows the combination of objectives stemming from each of the three different axes, and it therefore provides an opportunity for real integration (IEEP 2004, p8).



Many respondents in this study expressed an interest in a partnership-led agenda based on a single regional strategy, but equally, many said this would not work. Stoker (1996, quoted in Goodwin 1998, p8) claims that the governance perspective works ... “if it helps us identify important questions”, and acknowledges the messiness and scope of the complexity involved in that model. Governance is not a new concept in the rural policy arena, much experience having been gained in designated areas through the structural funds and in the agricultural community through Objective 5b. There has been growing interest in the subject, reflected in the ESRC’s Local Governance programme and other academic initiatives that explored the interdependence of governmental and non-governmental forces in meeting economic and social challenges (Marsden and Murdoch 1998). It is important that development and culture be linked, according to Marsden and Murdoch (ibid) in their editorial paper, but culture grows out of local social interactions and experiences and cannot simply be imposed. Empowerment<sup>90</sup> and participatory democracy, both elements of a critical research agenda, should be the outcome of such interaction and it would be interesting to explore this new implementing structure of the RDR with that model in mind.

## **12.8 Closing remarks**

The introduction of the RDR as part of the Agenda 2000 reform of the CAP was a major departure in the history of CAP reform. While reform of the commodity regimes were regarded as a ... “reform of the reform” (Grant 1997, p227), alluding to the failure of the MacSharry reform to control productivity, the RDR represented a new approach to the problems facing the EU, giving hope to non-agricultural lobbies that real change in the productivist practices of the post-war years was finally about to materialise. Whether it has succeeded or failed in this enterprise is largely a matter of perspective. From the Commission’s perspective an idea was launched; a compromise that would succeed because it allowed widely different interpretations throughout Member States, while also addressing broader global trade concerns. From the UK government perspective it became a useful tool with which to manage its agenda for change in the agricultural sector and

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<sup>90</sup> Empowerment may have different meanings in different contexts. Here it is ... “the ability to choose among alternatives, to act, to intervene and to change. It involves an appropriate use and sharing, and not the abnegation, of power” (Garcia, 1997, quoted in Thesen and Kuzel 1999).

further its ambitions for radical CAP reform. From the perspective of the SW region the vision of IRD attached to the policy at its inception remains unfulfilled, the programme being regarded by many as having limited potential to achieve this goal. Policy design has shown that SiRLU exists in a variety of subjective dimensions, depending on perspective, while policy makers are bound by objective criteria in their capacity for intervention. The policy process has been described in Chapter 2 as resembling a ‘moving, but forever incomplete process of ‘becoming’’, driven by constructions that shape the agenda and change the context. Within that process, SiRLU is not identifiable in terms of objective judgements and measurements; only through the shifting discourses of elements with the power to effect change.



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## Appendix 1      The History of the CAP

Source: [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)

### The history of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

- 1958: The principles of the CAP were set out at the Stresa Conference. Sicco Mansholt was the first Member of the Commission responsible for Agriculture.
- 1960: Adoption of the CAP mechanisms by the Six (the founder Member States that signed the EEC Treaty).
- 1962: Birth of 'Green Europe'. The CAP came into force. The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and the first common organisations of agricultural markets ("market organisations") were created.
- 1966: Agreement on financing the CAP.
- 1968: Memorandum on the reform of the CAP (Mansholt Plan).
- 1971: Introduction of socio-structural policies.
- 1972: Creation of the European currency snake. The agri-monetary system of 'green rates' was decoupled from the US dollar.
- 1973: Accession of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark.
- 1975: First plan to assist mountain and hill farming areas and less-favoured areas.
- 1981: Accession of Greece.
- 1984: Introduction of the milk quota scheme. Introduction of the guideline, a spending limit on the agricultural budget.
- 1985: Publication of the Green Paper on 'Perspectives for the common agricultural policy'.
- 1986: Accession of Spain and Portugal.
- 1987: Andriessen reform (voluntary set-aside). Reform of the Structural Funds and application of agricultural stabilisers.
- 1992: Reform of the CAP under Commissioner Mac Sharry.
- 1994: GATT agreements signed in Marrakesh.
- 1995: Accession of Finland, Sweden and Austria.
- 1999: Reform of the CAP (Agenda 2000).

## Appendix 2 RDR Measures and their Origins

Source: Dwyer *et al* (2002, p11)

Measure	Name	Origins
Chap. I, Art. 4-7	Investment in Agricultural Holdings	1993 Structural Funds Regulation, Objective 5a
Chap. II, Art. 8	Setting up of Young Farmers	Ditto
Chap. III, Art. 9	Training	1993 Structural Funds Regulation, Objective 5b
Chap. IV, Art. 10-12	Early Retirement	1992 CAP reform, Accompanying Measures – Regulation 2079
Chap. V, Art. 13-21	Less Favoured Areas	1993 Structural Funds Regulation, Objective 5a
Chap. V, Art. 16	Areas with Environmental Restrictions	NEW
Chap. VI, Art. 22-24	Agri-environment	1992 CAP Reform, Accompanying Measures – Regulation 2078
Chap. VII, Art. 25-28	Improving Processing and Marketing of Agricultural Products	1993 Structural Funds Regulation, Objective 5a
Chap. VIII, Art. 29, 30, & 32	Forestry	Article 32 is NEW; others were offered under 1993 Structural Funds, Objective 5b
Chap. VII, Art. 31	Afforestation of Agricultural Land	1992 CAP reform, Accompanying Measures – Regulation 2080
Chap. IX, Art. 33	Promoting the Adaptation and Development of Rural Areas	1993 Structural Funds Regulation, Objective 5b
- (i)	Land improvement	Ditto
- (ii)	Reparcelling	Ditto
- (iii)	Farm relief and management services	Ditto
- (iv)	Marketing of quality agricultural products	Ditto
- (v)	Basic services for the rural economy and population	Ditto
- (vi)	Renovation and development of villages and protection of rural heritage	Ditto
- (vii)	Diversification of agricultural activities	Ditto
- (viii)	Agricultural water resources management	Ditto
- (ix)	Development and improvement of infrastructure connected with the development of agriculture	Ditto
- (x)	Encouragement for tourism and craft activities	Ditto
-(xi)	Protection of the environment in connection with agriculture, forestry and landscape conservation as well as with the	Ditto



	improvement of animal welfare	
- (xii)	Restoring agricultural production potential damaged by natural disasters	Ditto
- (xiii)	Financial engineering	Ditto

# Appendix 3 Sustainability Calendar

DATE	EVENT/PUBLICATION	DESCRIPTION	COMMENTS
1972	Stockholm Conference	The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment	Key event in the emergence of global environmental concern – motivation came from the developed world re. Concerns with environmental problems of industrialisation. Creation of UNEP.
1980	The Brandt Report	North-South	Abolition of poverty to end population growth; economic interdependence; Keynesian reformism
1980	World Conservation Strategy	International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Utilized the term ‘sustainable development’ in this report, but it is not defined; conservation and development are ‘mutually dependent’; need to incorporate conservation in development plans; conservation or disaster
1983	The Brandt Report	Common Crisis	
1984	G7 Economic Summit		Environment ministers support WCS and stress the importance of sustainable development; environmental policies should be integrated into other policies
1987	Our Common Future	World Commission on Environment and Development	Established by the United Nations General Assembly; multilateralism and interdependence of nations; defined by social and economic objectives rather than environment; growth tackles poverty and achieves environmental ends; cornucopian rather than catastrophic; sustainable development defined (‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’); based on basic needs (development action for the poor) and environmental limits.
1987	Single European Act		Article 100A par3 – defined the establishment of a high level of environmental protection in all fields as a new Community objective; Article 130R par1 – <i>urged</i> member states to take environmental impact into consideration in all sectoral policies
1988	The Future of Rural Society	Council of the European Communities	Locality and bottom-up development and reform of the Structural Funds; 1 <sup>st</sup> round of Objective 5b (Dyfed-Gwyness-Powys in Wales, the Scottish Highlands and Islands, Dumfries and Galloway, and parts of Devon and Cornwall
1989	G7 Conference – Brussels	Environmental Ethics : man’s relationship with nature, interactions with science	Code of Environmental Practice – The Brussels Code (stewardship of the living and non-living systems of the earth to maintain their sustainability for present and



			future, allowing development with equity).
1989	Blueprint for a green economy	Pearce <i>et al</i>	Commissioned by the Thatcher government; helped establish a strong tendency to play down the social aspects of sustainability in British policy
1990	<b>This Common Inheritance</b>	Department of the Environment – White Paper	‘Weak’ sustainability; set out Britain’s environmental strategy to 2000 in preparation for ‘Rio’; focused on environmental protection rather than sustainable development; failed to integrate environmental considerations into other policy areas, but established a significant institutional structure for the implementation of sustainable development in the future.
1991	Caring for the Earth	IUCN/WWF/UNEP	‘A Strategy for Survival’; conservation or disaster
1991	<b>English Nature</b>	English Nature (EN) formed	
1992	Earth Summit	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Rio de Janeiro	Work programme for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century agreed by 179 nations in Declaration on Environment and Development; need to eradicate global poverty via ecologically benign economic development; Agenda 21
1992	EU Regulation 2078/92	MacSharry Reform of the CAP	Introduction of 3 ‘accompanying measures’ to the main reform of the production regimes; agri-environment programme, forestry measures and early retirement; member states obliged to implement AE plans; co-financed by Guarantee section of the EAGGF
1992	Towards Sustainability	EU 5 <sup>th</sup> Action Plan for the Environment	Sustainable development as its guiding principle; focus on policy integration (economic, social, environmental objectives) in 5 key areas: agriculture, energy, industry, tourism, transport; subsidiarity and shared stakeholder responsibility stressed but social aspects of sustainable development not; key vehicle for delivery on Rio commitments; not legally binding for either member states or the EC
1993	Maastricht Treaty	EU	Article 130r of SEA amended to <i>require</i> member states to incorporate environmental considerations into all aspects of policy
1994	<b>Sustainable Development : The UK Strategy</b>	London HMSO	Supported by 16 government departments; sets out government strategy to 2012; strongly influenced by governments neo-liberal ideology; very weakly sustainable; emphasis on trade-offs between environment and economic development; reluctance to set targets; no extra finance for LA 21 responsibilities; voluntary environmental ‘good practice’ over

			regulation; but established new landfill tax; set up British Government Panel on Sustainable Development, the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development and 'Going Green'
1994	New Economics Foundation	Sustainability Indicators	Pilot set of mainly existing indicators
1995	Rural England : A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside	Department of the Environment – White Paper	Integrated approach to rural policy and sustainable development discourse; only 2 targets (rural land under forestry and using 'brown field' sites for building); indicative of emerging attitude towards countryside as a rural rather than exclusively agricultural space; government through community-led initiatives; central government as 'enabler' and 'partner' in a social sphere; no substantial new money; no identification of mechanisms for delivering policy aims; 'Balkanisation' of agendas for England, Scotland, Wales and N.Ireland
1996	Rural Europe – Future Perspectives	The Cork Declaration – A Living Countryside The European Conference on Rural Development	10-point rural development programme to promote rural development which sustains the quality and amenity of Europe's rural landscapes (natural resources, biodiversity and cultural identity; local actions, global responsibilities; championed by Fischler as the way forward for European agriculture; based on strategy paper presented at Madrid Summit and revised by the Buckwell Group; promotion of an integrated framework encompassing agriculture, economic diversification, management of natural resources, environmental enhancement and promotion of tourism, culture and recreation; emphasising the principle of subsidiarity and partnership between all levels from European to local; polarised protectionists and economic liberalisers
1996	Sustainable Development Indicators	DoE	Production of preliminary set of 120 indicators; mainly dealing with economic and environmental aspects of sustainability, downplaying the social elements
1996	Environment Agency	Formed	Formed from National Rivers Authority (NRA), HM Inspectorate of Pollution (HMIP), Waste Regulatory Authorities, plus some small units from the DoE
1996	Amsterdam Treaty	EU	Article 2 – sustainable development becomes an explicit objective of the EU; Article 3d – environment must be integrated into all other EU policy sectors
1997	Farming and Rural Conservation Agency	Formed	Created as a specific agency with a remit to deliver public good advice; responsibility to administer the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS – previously administered by



			the Countryside Commission (CC); strengthened MAFF's role in delivery of AE initiatives
1997	DETR	Formed	
1997	<b>The Countryside : Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development</b>	DoE - PPG7	
1998	European Council	Cardiff	Environmental impact assessments of EC policy proposals. Agriculture Council to establish its own strategies for effecting environmental integration and sustainable development
1998	<b>Rural Development and Land Use Policy Report</b>	Rural Development Commission	Sustainable development - integration or balance?
1998	<b>Sustainable Development Indicators</b>	DETR	13 'quality of life' indicators; included in the Sustainable Development Strategy
1999	<b>Rural Economies</b>	Cabinet Office White Paper	Emphasised the need for a new policy framework to modernise the approach to rural issues and encourage and support the creation of productive, sustainable and inclusive rural economies; set the scene for the Rural White Paper (2000); 5 themes: living countryside, working countryside, interdependence of town and country, protection of the rural environment, accessibility of countryside
1999	<b>A Better Quality of Life : A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK</b>	DETR	4 objectives: social progress which recognises the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth
1999	<b>Regional Development Agency</b>	Formed – DETR	Disbanding of the RDC whose responsibilities were divided between the RDA's and the newly formed Countryside Agency; given responsibility to deliver 'sustainable development' at the regional level; charged with producing an economic strategy and a statement of their approach to the integration of economic, social and environmental objectives
1999	<b>Countryside Agency</b>	Formed - MAFF	Produced a strategy for a countryside of: diverse character and outstanding beauty; prosperous and inclusive communities; economic opportunity and enterprise; sustainable agriculture; transport that serves people without destroying the environment; recreational access for local people and visitors. Works towards influencing government towards their vision and inspiring others to follow. Worked on definition for Integrated Rural Development
1999	<b>Devolution</b>	Scotland and Wales	
1999	<b>A New Direction for</b>	MAFF	Outlines the government's vision for

	<b>Agriculture</b>		implementing options available to realise its own vision for agriculture and the wider economy: competitive, diverse and flexible agriculture, responsive to consumers wishes, and environmentally responsible, and which formed part of the wider rural community. Response to crisis in agriculture
1999	Agenda 2000 – CAP Reform	EC – Berlin	Introduction of the RDR (EC Regulation 1257/99) on support for rural development and implementing regulation 1750/99. Measures aimed to: improve agricultural holdings; guarantee the safety and quality of foodstuffs; ensure fair and stable incomes for farmers; ensure that environmental issues are taken into account; develop complementary and alternative activities that generate employment, with a view to slowing the depopulation of the countryside and strengthening the economic and social fabric of rural areas; improve living and working conditions and equal opportunities [European Commission, 1999 #90, p1]
2000	<b>Delivering Sustainable Development in the English Regions</b>	UK Round Table on Sustainable Development – Sustainable Development Commission	
2000	<b>Countryside and Rights of Way Bill</b>		
2000	<b>Our Countryside : The Future A Fair Deal for Rural England</b>	Rural White Paper – DETR/MAFF	Strong emphasis on sustainable development based on the integration of economic, social and environmental aspects and embraces a vision of a living and working countryside
2001	EU Sustainable Development Strategy	Gothenburg European Council	Produced the first European sustainable development strategy
2001	<b>Sustainable Development Commission</b>	Established	Subsumes UK Round Table on Sustainable Development and the British Government Panel on Sustainable Development
2001	<b>Foot and Mouth Disease</b>	Outbreak started in February 2001	
2002	<b>Foot and Mouth Disease</b>	International FMD free status January 2002	
2002	<b>Farming and Food : A sustainable Future</b>	Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food – Sir Don Curry	Main theme of ‘reconnection’: reconnecting farmers with their market and the rest of the food chain; the food chain with a healthy and attractive countryside; and consumers with what they eat and where it has come from. 100 recommendations for shaping change in the farming and food sector



# Appendix 4 Interviewees by population, organisation and position

(Defra includes MAFF; RDS includes FRCA)

Population	Organisation	Position
Policy Makers	Defra – Rural Division	Retired Head of Division
	ditto	ERDP Implementation Team Europe & UK policy on RDR Finance, monitoring & evaluation
	ditto	ERDP Implementation Team Programme management & development
	Defra – Policy & Corporate Strategy Unit	On secondment from EN
	Defra – Rural Development Division	Head of Division
	ditto	ERDP Implementation Team Programme management & development
	ditto	Rural Enterprise Scheme
	ditto	Policy & evaluation team - RDR On secondment from Cabinet Office
	Defra – Sustainable Development Unit	Team Leader
	Government Office – South West Bristol	Defra Rural Policy Team Dorset Manager
Policy Implementers	RDS – Bristol	Technical Assessment Manager
	RDS – Taunton	ERDP Regional Chapter Drafting Team Technical Assessment Team Leader
	RDS – Exeter	Technical Assessor
	Defra in the Government Office	Defra Regional Director
	ditto	Defra Team Leader – Food, Farming & RD ERDP Drafting Team Leader
	RDS – Bristol	Assistant Regional Manager
	ditto	Regional Manager
	RDS – NE Region	Regional Manager
	Government Office – South West Plymouth	Director
	ditto	Objective 1 Programme Team Leader
	RDS – Exeter	Technical Assessor Group Interview
	Government Office South West	ERDP Regional Chapter Drafting Team
	Countryside Agency	Group Interview
	ditto	Regional Manager
Policy Influencers	South West of England RDA	Rural Affairs Policy Officer
	English Nature	Head of Agriculture
	ditto	Wiltshire Team Manager
	Forestry Commission	Head of Implementation (EFS)
	Forestry Commission	Regional Conservator
	Environment Agency	Agriculture Policy Manager
	ditto	Regional Strategic Planning Manager
	ditto	Regional Environment Protection Manager

	English Heritage	Head of Rural Affairs Strategy Group
	ditto	Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments
	Forum for the Future	Policy Development Manager
	Devon County Council	European Officer in Economy & Regeneration
	Gloucestershire County Council	Community Strategy (Sustainability) Officer
	West Dorset District Council	Rural Development Policy Officer
	Regional Assembly	Head of Scrutiny
	FWAG	Somerset Team Leader
	NFU South West	Regional Director
	ditto	Regional Technical Adviser
	Country Landowners Association	Regional Practice Surveyor - Wessex
	Somerset Wildlife Trust	Director
	National Trust	Estate Manager
	National Parks Authority Dartmoor National Park	Internal Resources Project Officer
	RSPB	Regional Director
	ditto	Rural Development Policy Officer National
	ditto	Rural Development Policy Officer Regional
<b>Policy Advisers</b>	Andersons Farm Business Advisors	Partner
	Business Link	Agricultural Adviser
	University of Leeds	Professor
	University of Gloucestershire	Professor
	ditto	Professor
	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	Professor
	Segal Quince Wicksteed Ltd	Director
	IEEP	Consultant
	ECOS	Economic Development Consultant
	ADAS	Head of Regional Development Business Group
	Rural Solutions – Rural Development Consultancy	Principal



# Appendix 5 Interview Questions

## POLICY MAKERS

### 1. What was the main driver for CAP reform?

*(Support for rural areas, farmer income support, structural adjustment of agriculture, WTO, accession, competitiveness, environmental sustainability, CAP bankrupt, UK presidency of the EU)*

- Why such a short timescale?
- British government's negotiating position? Changed since last reform?
- Macro shift from state assisted to market-led thought in agricultural policy making?
- Who guides agricultural and rural policy making in Britain?

### 2. 'Sustainability' is used extensively throughout policy documents, but it is not explicitly defined or qualified. It means different things to different people and there are many interpretations. We know the official definition (Brundtland), but:

**What do you believe sustainability really means in practice? Is there a crucial element? How would you apply this to sustainability in agriculture and land management?**

- Have ideas about sustainability changed over time?
- Is environmental management the most critical issue addressed by the ERDP?
- If not, what is the most critical issue? *(the rural economy; alternative farming income; 'green box' payments)*

### 3. The ERDP has been criticised for failing to provide an integrated approach to sustainable rural development in spite of combining environmental and rural economy measures in a single policy

**Do you think the ERDP brings new focus to the problems of agriculture and rural areas, or is it, as some critics have implied, simply old wine in new bottles?**

- Does it match the aspirations of rural areas
- On what basis were the measures selected? (short-term support for an industry in crisis or long-term planning for a socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally sustainable agriculture)
- What long-term plans does the government have for funding AE measures?

4. The RDR set out to be a BU policy, allowing considerable discretion to Member States in implementing it.

**To what extent has this discretion enabled government to deliver its objectives for rural development?**

- Is the RDR a TD or BU policy?
  - Is it an enabling or constraining policy?
  - Is the same true of the ERDP?
  - Is the ERDP a 'learning' policy? (policy feedback from NSG, RPG, RCG?)
5. The policy context has moved on since the inception of the ERDP, with FMD exacerbating the difficulties already being experienced by the agricultural sector. Policy Commissions have been set up to make recommendations for the future of farming and rural areas.

**How important is the ERDP in the context of a rapidly changing rural environment and further CAP reform?**

- Can it deliver the government's agenda for revitalising agriculture and rural areas?
- The ERDP talks about the 'potential synergy' (section 7 para 7.1.3) arising from the integrated management of a suite of measures, over and above each measures own significant impact. Do you think this potential has been realised in the implementation of the ERDP?
- Will the ERDP contribute to the 'reconnection' agenda proposed by the Curry policy commission?



## POLICY IMPLEMENTERS

1. The EC had many pressures and constraints to consider when driving forward its agenda for CAP reform

**From a regional perspective, what were the arguments for change?**

- Did you support the selection of national priorities for the ERDP? (*ec recovery and env'tl protection*)
2. The focus of my research is sustainable rural land use, but there is no definitive explanation of what this means.

In the SWR Chapter, Integrated Rural Development (IRD) is defined as ..  
“development which is sustainable and seeks to strike a balance between economic, environmental and social concerns” (p140). This seems to be saying that IRD is sustainable development.

**What sort of agriculture would you equate with the concept of sustainable development?**

- What is the most crucial element of sustainability?
  - To what extent do you think your conception of sustainability coincides with those of target groups, the wider public, and other levels of government?
  - Have ideas about sustainability changed over time?
  - Is environmental management the most critical issue addressed by the ERDP?
  - If not, what is the most critical issue? (*the rural economy; alternative farming income; 'green box' payments*)
3. The ERDP has been criticised for failing to provide an integrated approach to sustainable rural development in spite of combining environmental and rural economy measures in a single policy

**Do you think the ERDP brings new focus to the problems of agriculture and rural areas, or is it, as some critics have implied, simply old wine in new bottles?**

- Does it match the aspirations of rural areas
- On what basis were the measures selected? (short-term support for an industry in crisis or long-term planning for a socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally sustainable agriculture)
- What long-term plans does the government have for funding AE measures?

4. The RDR set out to be a BU policy allowing considerable discretion to member states in implementing it.

**How much discretion did you have in drafting the regional chapter?**

**How much discretion do you have in implementing the policy?**

- Is the ERDP TD or BU?
  - Is it enabling or constraining?
  - Is it a learning policy? (*is feedback from applicants, SWRCG, and yourselves used to inform policy change?*)
  - Will it enable you to deliver your vision of SRD?
5. The policy context has moved on since the inception of the ERDP, with FMD exacerbating the difficulties already being experienced by the agricultural sector. Policy Commissions have been set up to make recommendations for the future of farming and rural areas.
- How important is the ERDP in the context of a rapidly changing rural environment and further CAP reform?
- Is it still relevant to evolving issues in a post-FMD countryside?
  - The ERDP talks about the ‘potential synergy’ (section 7 para 7.1.3) arising from the integrated management of a suite of measures, over and above each measures own significant impact. In what way do you think this potential has been realised in the implementation of the ERDP?
  - Will the ERDP contribute to the ‘reconnection’ agenda proposed by the Curry policy commission?



## **POLICY INFLUENCERS**

1. The EC had many pressures and constraints to consider when driving forward its agenda for CAP reform

**From your perspective, what were the arguments for change?**

- Did you support the selection of national priorities for the ERDP? (*ec recovery and env'tl protection*)
- What were the major influences on the design of the ERDP?

2. Sustainable development is **the** aim of DEFRA, and a given in most policy documents.

**What does your organisation believe that SRLU means in practice?**

- Models of sustainable agriculture (*extensive, organic, 2-track, integrated crop management, ecological modernisation, specialisation, localisation*)
- Biggest threats to the sustainability of agriculture?
- Is the ERDP about sustainable agriculture?
- Are AESs the way forward for sustainable agriculture?

3. **The ERDP has been criticised for failing to provide an integrated approach to sustainable rural development in spite of combining environmental and rural economy measures in a single policy**

**Do you think the ERDP brings new focus to the problems of agriculture and rural areas, or is it, as some critics have implied, simply old wine in new bottles?**

- Does it address the aspirations of national and regional stakeholders for rural development?
- Do the targets set for Priority B fully reflect the environmental concern expressed during the consultation?
- Can the scale and design of AEMs address some of the more fundamental changes taking place in agriculture?

4. The RDR set out to be a BU policy allowing considerable discretion to member states in implementing it.

Do you think that the best use was made of the discretion available in the design and implementation of the ERDP?

- Is the ERDP TD or BU? (*consensus amongst stakeholders or sectoral*)
- Is it enabling or constraining? (*encouraging participation and networking*)
- Is it a learning policy? (*is feedback from applicants, SWRCG, and yourselves used to inform policy change?*)
- Are the implementation structures effective and efficient? (*NRDF, NSG, RPG, RCG, RDD Implementation Team*)

5. The policy context has moved on since the inception of the ERDP, with FMD exacerbating the difficulties already being experienced by the agricultural sector. Policy Commissions have been set up to make recommendations for the future of farming and rural areas.

How important is the ERDP in the context of a rapidly changing rural environment and further CAP reform?

- The ERDP talks about the ‘potential synergy’ (section 7 para 7.1.3) arising from the integrated management of a suite of measures, over and above each measures own significant impact. In what way do you think this potential has been realised in the implementation of the ERDP?
- Will the ERDP contribute to the ‘reconnection’ agenda proposed by the Curry policy commission?
- It has been suggested that the RDR has tremendous potential but a high risk of failure. What could it achieve, and why might it fail?



## POLICY ADVISERS

1. The EC had many pressures and constraints to consider when driving forward its agenda for CAP reform

**What, or who, was the main driver behind the introduction of the RDR?**  
(Objective 1a)

*(farmer income support, support for rural areas, structural adjustment of ag, WTO, accession, environmental sustainability, UK presidency)*

- Did the RDR successfully capture the essence of the changing policy context?
- Is there any sense of dualism in the EU's role as both auditor and facilitator of imaginative and devolved approaches to the RDR? *(Dwyer & Baldock, 2000)*
- What do you think was driving the agenda of UK policy makers when formulating the ERDP?

2. Sustainable development is **the** aim of DEFRA, and a given in most policy documents.

**What sort of definition should we be looking for to enable the delivery of SRLU through the ERDP?** (Objective 1d)

- a. Models of sustainable agriculture *(extensive, organic, 2-track, integrated crop management, ecological modernisation, specialisation, localisation)*
- Biggest threats to the sustainability of agriculture?
  - Is the ERDP about sustainable agriculture?
  - Are AESs the way forward for sustainable agriculture?

3. The ERDP has been criticised for failing to provide an integrated approach to sustainable rural development in spite of combining environmental and rural economy measures in a single policy

**Do you think the ERDP brings new focus to the problems of agriculture and rural areas, or is it, as some critics have implied, simply old wine in new bottles?**

- Does it address the aspirations of different stakeholders at different policy levels?

- Is it consistent with other rural policies or should it be regarded as agricultural policy?
  - Can the scale and design of AE measures address some of the more fundamental changes taking place in agriculture?
4. The RDR set out to be a BU policy allowing considerable discretion to member states in implementing it.

Do you think that the best use was made of the discretion available in the design and implementation of the ERDP?

- Is the ERDP TD or BU?
  - Is it enabling or constraining? (*encouraging participation and networking*)
  - Is it a learning policy? (*is feedback from applicants, SWRCG, and yourselves used to inform policy change?*)
  - Are the implementation structures effective and efficient? (*NRDF, NSG, RPG, RCG, RDD Implementation Team*)
5. The policy context has moved on since the inception of the ERDP, with FMD exacerbating the difficulties already being experienced by the agricultural sector. Policy Commissions have been set up to make recommendations for the future of farming and rural areas.

How important is the ERDP in the context of a rapidly changing rural environment and further CAP reform?

- The ERDP talks about the ‘potential synergy’ (section 7 para 7.1.3) arising from the integrated management of a suite of measures, over and above each measures own significant impact. Do you think this potential has been realised in the implementation of the ERDP?
- Will the ERDP contribute to the ‘reconnection’ agenda proposed by the Curry policy commission?
- It has been suggested that the RDR has tremendous potential but a high risk of failure. What could it achieve, and why might it fail?



## Appendix 6    Diary summary – Interviews

YEAR	MONTH	DATE	INTERVIEW NUMBER	TIME	PLACE
2001	August	31	INT/01	10.00am	Bristol
	September	3	INT/02	3.00pm	London
	November	22	INT/03	11.00am	London
2002	March	5	INT/04	10.00am	Dorchester
		7	INT/05	9.30am	Exeter
			Cancelled – ill	1.00pm	Exeter
		18	INT/06	11.30am	Gloucester
			INT/07	3.30pm	Bristol
		20	INT/08	9.45am	Taunton
		27	INT/09	10.00am	Exeter
		28	INT/10	10.30am	Taunton
	April	8	INT/11	10.00am	Exeter
			INT/12	2.00pm	Exeter
		9	INT/13	2.30pm	Cheltenham
			INT/14	5.00pm	Cheltenham
		11	INT/15	10.00am	Taunton
			INT/16	3.30pm	Exeter
		12	INT/17	10.00am	Bristol
			Cancelled	11.30am	Bristol
			INT/18	3.30pm	Almondsbury
		15	INT/19	4.00pm	Bristol
		16	INT/20	2.30pm	Bristol
		17	INT/21	3.00pm	Taunton
		19	INT/22	11.30am	Cheltenham
		22	INT/23	2.00pm	London
		23	INT/24	10.30am	Warminster
			INT/25	2.00pm	Bristol
	May	1	INT/26	10.00am	Torquay
			INT/27	12.30pm	Newton Abbot
		2	Cancelled	11.30am	Bristol
			INT/28	2.00pm	Bristol
			INT/29	3.30pm	Bristol
		3	INT/30	11.30am	Exeter
			INT/31	1.00pm	Exeter
		10	Cancelled	10.00am	Exeter
		13	INT/32	2.00pm	Bristol
		20	INT/33	1.00pm	Bristol
		27	INT/34	10.30am	Bristol

	June	24	INT/35	11.30am	Taunton
	July	5	INT/36	9.00am	Weston-super-Mare
2002	July	10	INT/37	10.00am	London
			INT/38	11.00am	London
		12	INT/39	10.00am	London
			INT/40	11.30am	London
			INT/41	1.30pm	London
			INT/42	3.00pm	London
		15	GINT/01	11.00am	Exeter
		18	INT/43	1.30pm	Cheltenham
		19	INT/44	2.00pm	Leeds
		22	TINT/01	11.30am	
		25	TINT/02	10.30am	
		26	TINT/03	2.00pm	
		30	GINT/02	12.00am	Cheltenham
	August	2	TINT/04	10.00am	
		6	TINT/05	10.00am	
		9	TINT/06	9.30am	
		12	TINT/07	10.00am	
		30	TINT/08	9.30am	
	September	9	TINT/09	3.45pm	
		25	TINT/10	11.00am	
	October	3	TINT/11	4.00pm	
		8	TINT/12	9.30am	
		9	TINT/13	4.00pm	
		24	TINT/14	10.00am	
		29	TINT/05 Re-run	2.00pm	
	November	18	INT/45	10.00am	Bristol
		21	TINT/15	10.00am	



## **Appendix 6a Interview Phases**

### **Phase 1**

The first interview phase took the form of information collection during the first year of study, taking advantage of the privileged access to Rural Division and CA contacts to conduct meetings with the Rural Division administrator in July 2001 in London, and with a CA staff member who had been part of the regional chapter drafting team in Bristol in August 2001. Two interviews with senior Rural Division staff were also carried out in 2001. The first involved a key informant at Rural Division who was leaving to take up a post in the USA, and the second was an opportunistic interview carried out while visiting Rural Division on a fact finding mission.

### **Phase 2**

The second phase of interviewing was carried out between March 2002 and July 2002. These were all face-to-face interviews carried out largely at the interviewee's place of work or home. Contact numbers for all those who were members of the ERDP implementation groups were obtained from Defra, and interviews were arranged in advance by telephone. While incurring considerable costs, this was the quickest and most effective way of doing this, letter and e-mail being rejected because of the delays anticipated with late or non-replies. The researcher was able to explain the nature of the study during these conversations, and obtain the informed consent of the interviewee to contribute material that would be used 'for the record' (Denscombe 1998) in the context of this particular research. In making these appointments, considerable difficulty was encountered in trying to coordinate meetings with interviewees in the same location. Most had busy schedules and diaries were booked up at least one month to six weeks in advance, particularly in the case of higher grades. Others were engaged in end of year reporting procedures and were unavailable until after the end of March 2002. This accounts for the high number of interviews conducted in April 2002. As far as possible, therefore, multiple interviews were carried out on each research day, but inevitably there were many occasions where this did not happen.

The second phase of interviews was carried out mainly in the SW region, regional respondents representing the majority of the total. There were, however, a considerable number of respondents who were based outside the region. The second week in July 2002 was earmarked early on to conduct the interviews with Rural Division staff in London, and contact was made with Rural Division, as requested by them, to facilitate this. Owing to an administrator leaving these arrangements to the last minute, however, interviews had to be condensed into two days, the researcher carrying out four at four separate locations on one of those days. The longest distance travelled during this research for a single interview was a trip to the North East that should have included three key informants. Unfortunately one rearranged the interview at the last minute, making it impossible to accommodate a second. It was decided to continue with the trip because the remaining interviewee was critical to the research.

### **Phase 3**

The third phase of interviewing coincided with the acquisition of a telephone transcriber from the University of Gloucestershire. Most of the interviews remaining to be arranged were with respondents from the north east, north west, far south west, London, the south and the east of England. The research budget had been challenged by the preceding two phases of interviewing, and it was decided to carry out a pilot telephone interview using the transcriber. The main problem encountered, however, was not with the interviewees, who were very happy to accept this method of interviewing, but with the machine which was supplied with the wrong connector. Several interviews were ruined before another was obtained, causing considerable difficulties when subsequently transcribing the tapes. One of these interviews was considered to be of such importance that the researcher arranged a repeat interview, which the interviewee agreed to do. Altogether 15 interviews were conducted by telephone between July 2002 and November 2002.

During this period, two group interviews were carried out, the first with a government agency in July 2002, and the second with the technical assessment team from Exeter that had attended the RAP meeting in May. Both groups had three members. According to Frey and Fontana (1993), the group interview has a number of advantages and disadvantages. On



the one hand, group dynamics can help produce new and additional data, possibly validating events observed. On the other hand, the group dynamics can result in one member's opinions influencing the others, or one member dominating the proceedings. In the case of the GA group one of the participants did dominate the meeting, tending to stifle responses from another participant. It was, however, useful as an information gathering exercise, and for obtaining a corroborated view of the policy situation from the agency's perspective.

The RDS group interview, carried out in July 2002 at the RDS offices in Exeter did not use the usual interview format. Rather an unstructured approach to the situation was adopted, the purpose of the meeting being to find out exactly how a technical assessment was done, and the roles and responsibilities of the interviewees in that process. The members of the group included two technical assessors and their supervisor, the former unfortunately deciding that they did not wish the proceedings to be recorded. This resulted in the researcher having to take notes during the meeting which was unsatisfactory in that much potentially valuable data was lost in the process.

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The Good Research Guide for small-scale social research projects*. Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Frey, J. H. and Fontana, A. (1993). *The Group Interview in Social Research. Successful Focus Groups : Advancing the State of the Art*. Morgan, D. L. London, Sage Publications.

## Appendix 7    Diary Summary – Observations and Data Collection

YEAR	MONTH	DATE	EVENT	PLACE	OBS/DC
2000	November	15	CA	Cheltenham	DC
	December	6	NSG Meeting	London	OBS
2001	January	11	CA (Structural Funds)	Cheltenham	OBS
	February	6/7	CA (Induction)	Cheltenham	DC
	March	8	NSG Meeting	London	OBS
	April	26	CA (Branch Day)	Cheltenham	OBS
	July	3	Rural Division	London	DC
		27	NSG Meeting	London	OBS
	September	14	RPG Meeting	Bristol	OBS
	October	30	CA (Supervisor)	Cheltenham	DC
	November	20/21	Defra (Integration Workshop)	Malvern	OBS
		29	CA (SQW/LUC IRD Presentation)	Cheltenham	OBS
	December	12	CA (Supervisor)	Weston-super-Mare	DC
		19	RPG Meeting	Bristol	OBS
2002	January	21	RDS/Business Link Workshop	RAC Cirencester	OBS
	February	6	Business Link Farmer Strategy Meeting	Coleford, Gloucester	OBS
		22	'Revitalising British Agriculture' Conference	RAC Cirencester	OBS
	March	1	RCG Meeting	Wellington, Somerset	OBS
		8	CA (Video Conference NORD Project)	London	DC
	April	18	RCG (AE Workshop)	Taunton	OBS
		22	NSG Meeting	London	OBS
	May	29	SWR RAP	Bristol	OBS
	June	11	RCG Meeting	Taunton	OBS
	July	4	RDA Rural Sub-Group Meeting	Exeter	OBS
	September	20	RCG Meeting	Taunton	OBS
	December	5	RCG Meeting	Exeter	OBS
	December	6	RPG Meeting	Exeter	OBS
2003	February	12	RDS Technical Assessment	Bristol	OBS
		18	CA (Supervisor)	Cheltenham	DC



## 1

**ERDP: NATIONAL STRATEGY GROUP – 7<sup>TH</sup> MEETING**

**Thursday 8 March at 10.30am, Conference Room B, MAFF, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London**

# AGENDA

- |     |  |              |
|-----|--|--------------|
| 1.  | Matters arising                                |              |
| 2.  | ERDP update (schemes uptake)                   | (NSG 7/1)    |
| 3.  | Programme management                           |              |
|     | - modification process                         | (NSG 7/2)*   |
|     | - annual management reporting                  |              |
|     | - financial management                         | (NSG 7/6)*   |
|     | - meetings schedule                            | (NSG 7/7)*   |
| 4.  | Draft ERDP Annual Report                       | (NSG 7/3)    |
| 5.  | Cross regional applications                    | (NSG 7/8)*   |
| 6.  | Panel guidance                                 | (NSG 7/9)*   |
| 7.  | Integration<br>[- item to be taken at 11.45am] | (NSG 7/10)** |
| 8.  | Regional reorganisation update (oral report)   |              |
| 9.  | Any other business                             |              |
| 10. | Date of next meeting (beginning of June)       |              |

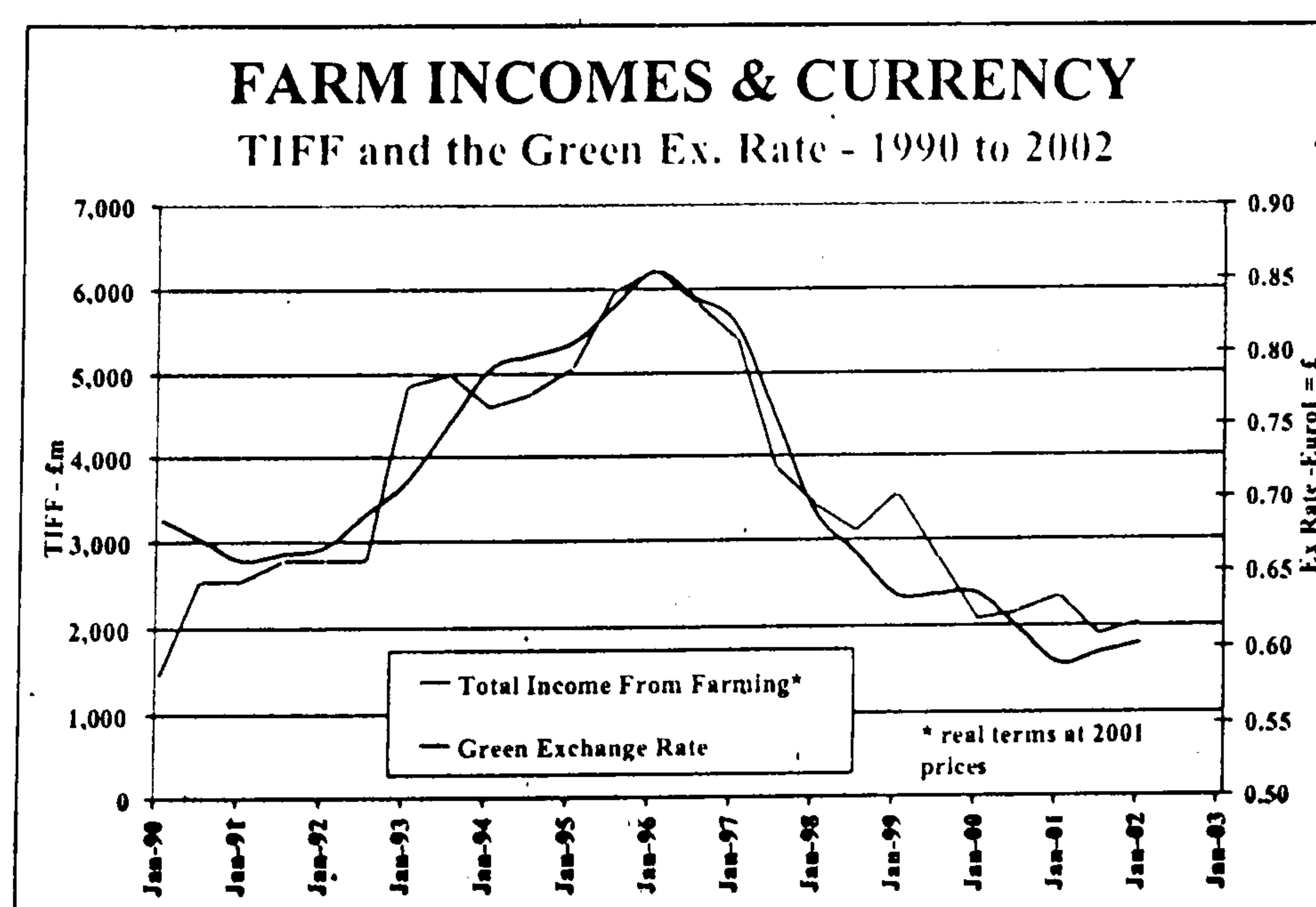
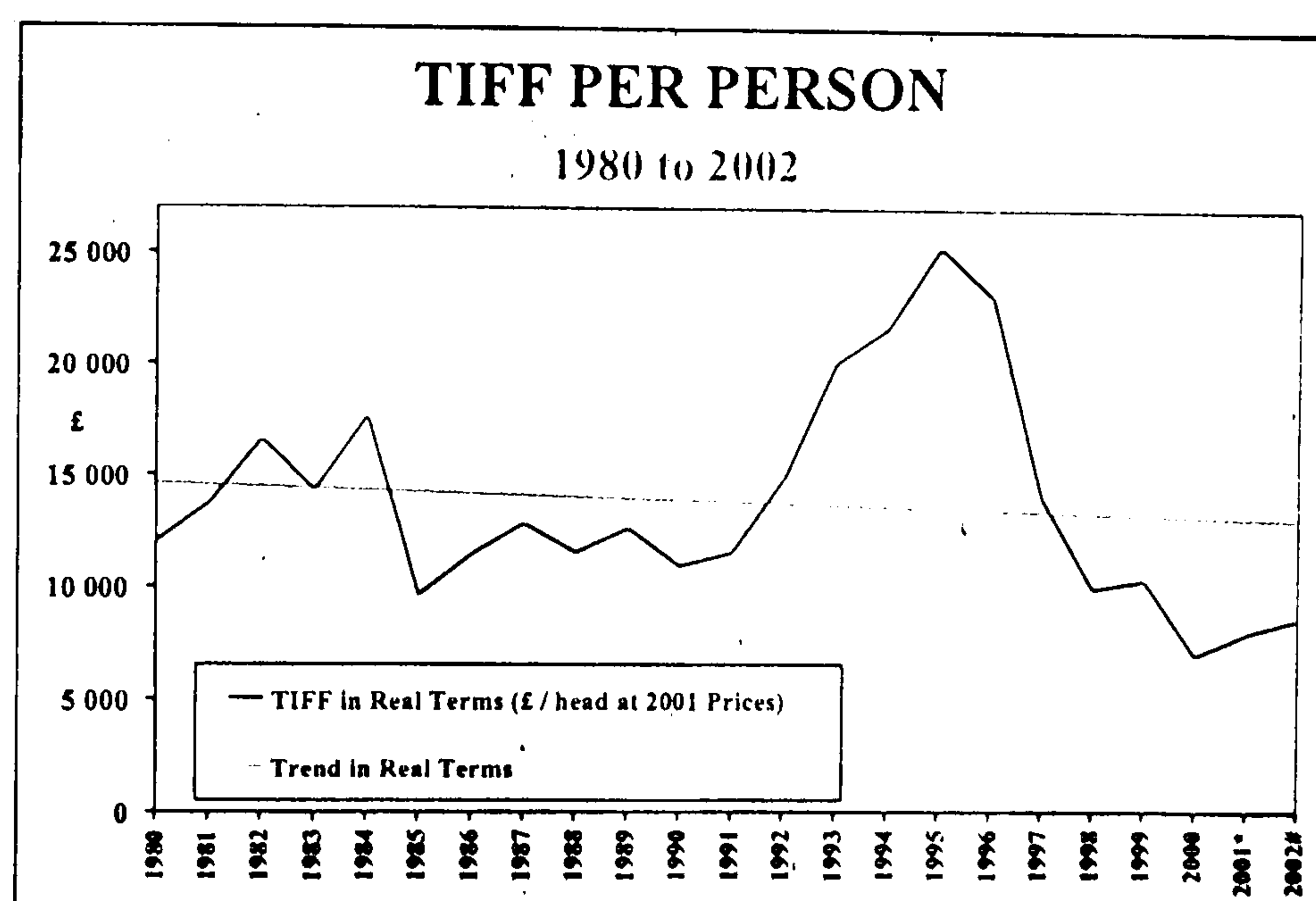
\* Paper attached

**\*\* Paper to follow**

**Rural Division**  
**6 March 2001**

## Appendix 9 TIFF per person and the Green Exchange Rate

Source: Andersons Farm Business Consultants, Melton Mowbray, 2002





# **Appendix 10 ERDP SW Regional Consultation Taunton - 3/11/99 Organisations attending**

Source: ERDP Appendix A9 – South West Regional Chapter, pages 185 - 187

\* Attended meeting

## **Farming Organisations**

Country Landowners Association\*  
Devon Smallholders Association\*  
Family Farming Association\*  
Federation of Family Farms  
National Farmers' Union\*  
Small Family Farmers Alliance  
Small Farms Association  
Tenant Farmers' Association\*  
Women's Farming Union\*  
Women's Food & Farming\*.

## **Forestry Organisations**

Forestry Contracting Association\*  
Institute of Chartered Foresters\*  
National Small Woods Association\*  
Timber Growers Association\*

## **Environmental Groups**

Avon Wildlife Trust  
Devon Wildlife Trust\*  
Dorset Wildlife Trust\*  
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group\*  
Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust\*  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds\*  
Somerset Wildlife Trust  
West Devon Environmental Network  
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

## **Other public Interest Groups**

Committee for Rural Dorset  
Community Action Bristol  
Community Council for Somerset  
Community Council of Devon  
Community First  
Council for the Protection for Rural England\*

Dorset Community Action\*  
Federation of Rural Community Councils.  
Federation of Women's Institutes  
Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs\*  
Gloucestershire Rural Community Council\*  
National Trust\*  
Ramblers Association\*  
Townswomen's Guilds\*

### **Training Organisations and Colleges**

Bicton College of Agriculture  
Cannington College  
Cheltenham and Gloucester College\*  
Cornwall and Devon Careers  
Devon & Cornwall Training and Enterprise Council\*  
Dorset Training and Enterprise Council  
Duchy College\*  
Exeter University  
Further Education Funding Council  
Gloucestershire TEC  
Hartpury College  
Kingston Maurwood College\*  
Lackham College of Agriculture  
LANTRA\*  
Royal Agricultural College  
Seale Hayne Faculty of Agriculture, University of Plymouth\*  
Somerset Careers  
Somerset Training and Enterprise Council  
Wiltshire and Swindon Training and Enterprise Council

### **Tourist Boards**

Southern Tourist Board  
Westcountry Tourist Board.

### **Government Departments/Agencies**

Countryside Agency\*  
Dartmoor National Park Authority\*  
Employment Service  
English Heritage  
English Nature\*  
Environment Agency\*  
Exmoor National Park Authority\*  
Forestry Commission\*  
South West of England Regional Development Agency\*



**Local Government**

Bath & North East Somerset Council\*  
Bournemouth Borough Council  
Bristol City Council  
Cotswold District Council\*  
Devon County Council\*  
Dorset County Council\*  
Forest of Dean District Council  
Gloucestershire County Council\*  
Gloucestershire Unitary Authority  
Mendip District Council  
North Dorset District Council  
North Somerset Council  
North Wiltshire District Council\*  
Plymouth City Council  
Poole Borough Council  
Salisbury District Council  
Somerset County Council  
South Gloucestershire Council\*  
South Hams District Council  
South West Regional Chamber\*  
South West Regional Planning Conference\*  
Swindon Borough Council  
Torbay District Council  
West Dorset District Council  
West Wiltshire District Council\*  
Wiltshire County Council\*

**Other Industry Bodies/interested parties**

Business Links\*  
Carkeek Ltd  
ESF Regional Support Office  
Exmoor LEADER\*  
North Tamar Business Network\*  
P. Lethbridge Esq.\*  
PROSPER  
Soil Association\*  
South Devon and Dartmoor LEADER  
South West Equality Network  
South West Forest\*  
Taste of the West  
Torridge LEADER  
Transport and General Workers Union

## **Appendix 11 Analysis of the Ex-ante Evaluation of the ERDP**

The Ex-Ante Evaluation of the ERDP was carried out as an integral part of the policy drafting process and an analysis of its conclusions are included here because of its influence on the final form of the programme. It was carried out by economic development consultants, Segal Quince Wicksteed Limited (SQW) and ADAS during the process of planning, consultation and drafting described above (SQW Limited 2000). The report, produced in January, 2000, commenced with an appreciation of the process initiated by MAFF, involving a bottom-up, regional approach that worked alongside the development of the national framework in an iterative way. Subscribing to the view expressed by evaluation literature that realistic evaluation must involve three levels of assessment: context, mechanisms and outcomes, the report suggested that the ERDP had been constrained by its contextual history and its contextual future. However, the regional capacity-building achieved through the process was felt to be a major contribution to future sustainability (ibid):

There have been some general advantages accruing from the bottom-up element of the process in the form of more holistic and integrated approaches at the regional level that are more likely to ensure that funding regimes in addition to the RDR pay attention to the needs of rural areas (ibid, p5).

Having found much evidence of MAFF's desire to conduct implementation of the RDR in the spirit of the regulation *i.e.* in a devolved manner, the report found the process lacking in terms of the coherence between national and regional objectives, in the integration of these objectives within the plan, and in the logic chain between objectives and outcomes. The following list briefly analyses the main points:

- National and regional frameworks differed in their objectives, the focus of the former being on agricultural development within rural development, with the latter giving much greater emphasis to broader rural development goals



- The national plan contained an implicit assumption that the performance of the regions was consistent with the national performance of predominant farming types
- The aspirations of the regions were very high, many of the regional objectives lying outside the scope of the programme
- There was no consistent definition of rural development in any regional chapter
- There was a sense that agricultural policy and rural policy remained separate in spite of being brought together in a so-called holistic framework
- There was little evidence of ‘policy learning’ (evaluation) either at national or regional level
- The social, economic and environmental elements of the programme were not well integrated, particularly in the regional chapters
- ‘horizontal’ goals and objectives (*eg* environmental sustainability) did not flow at all obviously from the analysis because of this segmentation ... “there may be a suspicion that the horizontal overtones within the goals and objectives ... are of more rhetorical than substantive significance” (ibid p37)
- Strategic objectives lacked an explicit baseline context for interventions
- The programme addressed indicators, targets and outputs, but not *outcomes*
- Logistically, the timescale allowed for the regional consultation was very limited, and guidelines for plan preparation were constantly changed

(SQW Limited 2000)

The approach adopted by the consultants to the task of delivering the Ex-Ante Report had to recognise what was actually achievable in the time allowed. Thus they verified the processes that were being put in place, helping to ensure that the logic chains, a weak point in many of the regional chapters, were actually there. They also helped communications between RD and the regions.

The Ex-Ante Evaluation concluded that the process of drawing up the regional chapters was the beginning rather than the end of a process. They needed to be seen as ‘live’ strategic documents to be revisited regularly. Integrated measures of rural development needed to be established across social, economic and environmental dimensions, while the state of regional SRD was a subject for investigation in a dynamic manner (SQW Limited 2000).

**SQW Limited (2000). Ex-Ante Evaluation of the England Rural Development Plan : Final Report. London, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food: 1-53.**



# Appendix 12 Indicative Priority Level Impact Indicators and Targets

Source: MAFF, 2000 England Rural Development Programme 2000-2006, pp93-94

<b>PRIORITY A Rural Economy Creation of a productive and sustainable rural economy</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Impact Indicators'</b>	<b>Impact Targets</b>
<p>To assist projects which contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more diverse and competitive agricultural and forestry sectors</li> <li>the creation of new jobs in the countryside</li> <li>the creation of new products and market outlets</li> <li>encouraging collaborative marketing</li> <li>provision of targeted training</li> </ul>	<p>Number of projects, businesses or initiatives assisted</p>	<p>a) To increase farm revenues from diversified sources by 25% on full time farms in England by end 2006.</p>
		<p>b) To assist 6,000 – 7,000 projects under the Rural Enterprise Scheme by 2007.</p>
		<p>c) To assist 370 businesses with Processing and Marketing Grants by 2007.</p>
		<p>d) To assist 200 village initiatives through the Rural Enterprise Scheme by 2007.</p>
	<p>Number of FTE jobs created and sustained</p>	<p>e) To create 4,000 – 6,000 Full Time Equivalent jobs through the Rural Enterprise Scheme.</p>
		<p>f) To create 2,200 Full Time Equivalent jobs through Processing and Marketing Grants by 2007.</p>
	<p>Number of full-cost equivalent training days provided</p>	<p>g) To provide 48,000 full cost equivalent training days for people in farming and forestry by 2007 to support successful delivery of measures under this Programme.</p>
		<p>h) To increase by 21,000 Hectares the area of agricultural land planted with trees by 2007.</p>

<b>PRIORITY B Rural Environment Conservation and enhancement of the rural environment</b>		
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Impact Indicators<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Impact Targets</b>
<p>To increase significantly the area covered by the schemes operated under the agri-environment measure;</p> <p>To maintain the sustainable management of an appropriate area of the Less Favoured Area</p>	Number of Biodiversity Action Plan Targets Achieved	a) To deliver by 2007 the 5-year 2010 Biodiversity Action Plan targets for creation of field margins through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.
	Number of hectares achieved / converted	b) To achieve an additional 525,000 hectares of land under Countryside Stewardship agreements by 2007.
		c) 430,000 hectares of land converted or converting to organic farming by 2007.
	Number of hectares maintained	d) To maintain at least the current areas of land under ESA agreements.
		e) To maintain extensive grazing on 1.4m hectares in the Less Favoured Areas.
	Percentage increase in proportion of land in higher ESA tiers	f) To increase by 10% the proportion of land in higher ESA tiers by 2004.

<sup>1</sup> Outputs have been used where it has not been possible to develop impact indicators



# **Appendix 13 Regional Goals**

Source: MAFF 2000 England Rural Development Programme 2000-2006: Appendix A9 – South West Region, p141

## **Social**

- Rural Communities are enabled to identify mechanisms to address their local needs and empowered to implement solutions.
- Access to essential services is enhanced through flexible and innovative delivery which meets the needs of the South West's rural communities.
- Employment prospects are enhanced through the provision of access to innovative and appropriate education and training to create a flexible and skilled workforce.
- The building of social cohesiveness within rural communities and strengthened linkages between the urban and rural communities in the region.

## **Economic**

- Improvement in the economic contribution of South West produce through the encouragement of activity which adds value and delivers a greater proportion of the product end price to primary producers.
- Opportunities are developed for new rural enterprises, including tourism, both on and off farm.
- Business competitiveness and employment prospects improved through skills development and by placing of innovation, creativity and technology at the heart of the rural economy.
- The marketing and distribution of rural products is supported and developed through collaborative activity and enhanced accessibility to markets.

## **Environmental**

- Protection and enhancement of the character and diversity of the Region's environment and cultural heritage.
- The value of enhancing the environmental quality of the region is appreciated by all.
- Sustainable rural land use and that means to achieve this are promoted.
- Support provided reflects and links the achievement of international, national and regional priorities, with care for the environment at the local, farm and woodland level.

# Appendix 14 Calendar of Meetings

[illegible]



# Appendix 15 Action Points – NSG

Source: National Strategy Group Meeting 8 – 27 July 2001

## Action Points

1. **Chair** to provide a table summarising the different reviews and evaluations which will take place (carried forward from previous list). *List completed and issued*
2. **Rural Division** to consider further the involvement/training of local authorities on ERDP issues.
3. **Rural division** to seek to provide fuller information on scheme uptake (numbers, spend, spread across RES measures, link with regional budgets, some qualitative assessment) **by end April**. *NSG 8/1 provides info. on schemes uptake etc. Beginning to get more definitive data from management/financial reporting exercises. RES section will be passing around a note on RES (NSG 8/5)*
4. **Rural Division** to circulate for information updated Commission working paper on programme modification after next STAR meeting. *No update produced, so nothing circulated.*
5. **Chair** to speak to MAFF Government Office Directors about the need for rationalisation of the various rural regional fora and the link with the new regional Rural Sounding Boards. *Overtaken by wider discussion of rural fora.*
6. **Partners** to provide written comments on the draft annual report **by close on 16 March**, **CA** to provide contribution on rural economy/social issues. *DONE.*
7. **Rural Division** to request Regional Directors to comment/provide contributions on the regional issues section of the draft annual report. **Rural Division** to insert a paragraph on progress with Objective 1. *DONE.*
8. **Rural Division** to take on board comments and circulate draft of the annual report. *DONE*
9. **Rural Division** to ask VTS scheme managers to check that forestry issues are considered and Firestry Commission consulted in technical assessment of projects.
10. **Chair** to pass NSG thanks and congratulations to consultant on her work on integration so far and to commission her to develop a fuller paper on integration and options for achieving it. *DONE. NSG 8/2 on agenda*
11. **Chair** to consider holding a brainstorming session on integration at an out of town location and to suggest a suitable date. *Subject to outcome of discussion on NSG 8/1.*
12. **Chair** to circulate proposals for revised membership of the NSG. *Needs to reflect outcome of wider discussion on rural fora.*

Next meeting: Thursday 14 June at 10.30 a.m. *postponed to 27 July*

**Rural Division**  
**8 March 2001**

## Appendix 16 Technical Assessment – example of ‘Regional Fit’

Source: Regional Appraisal Panel May 2002 – VTS Project

STRATEGIC GOALS	LINK TO THIS PROJECT
<b>Regional Goals - Environmental</b>	..
En 1 <i>Protection and enhancement of the character and diversity of the Region's environment and cultural heritage.</i>	The project helps to secure the management and enhancement of farmland wildlife habitats in the target area through linking their quality to the success of tourism businesses
En2 <i>The value of enhancing the environmental quality of the region is appreciated by all</i>	The project helps to raise awareness of the value of the natural environment as an economic contributor
En4 <i>Support provided reflects and links the achievement of international, national and regional priorities, with care for the environment at the local, farm and woodland level</i>	The project offers support to landowners responsible for the management of wildlife habitats for local, national and international significance
<b>Regional Goals - Economic</b>	
Ec 1 <i>Improvement in the economic contribution of South West produce through the encouragement of activity which adds value and delivers a greater proportion of the produce end price to primary producers</i>	The project enables farmers to use wildlife to add value to rural tourism products
Ec 2 <i>Opportunities are developed for new rural enterprises, including tourism, both on and off farm</i>	The project assists existing rural tourism businesses to develop
Ec 4 <i>The marketing and distribution of rural products is supported and developed through collaborative activity and enhanced accessibility to markets</i>	The project assists the marketing of farm-based tourism through an accreditation scheme
<b>Regional Goals - Social</b>	
S3 <i>Employment prospects are enhanced through the provision of access to innovative and appropriate education and training to create a flexible and skilled workforce</i>	The project provides training for landowners in interpreting the natural environment to their visitors
S4 <i>The building of social cohesiveness within rural communities and strengthened linkages between the urban and rural communities in the region</i>	The project contributes to developing social cohesiveness by encouraging networks between rural tourism service providers



## Appendix 17 Technical Assessment – Sustainability Criteria

Source: MAFF 2000, NSG Paper, ERDP Technical Assessment Framework for Project-based Applications

### 4.4 Economic sustainability

- Does the project have any beneficial, neutral or negative **economic** impacts?  
*In making this assessment you will wish to consider the following factors:*
  - \* Will the proposed project benefit additional agricultural and other rural businesses?
  - \* Will it help to promote local business diversity?
  - \* Will it support local industry and contribute to a vibrant local economy?
  - \* Will it help maintain or improve income levels?
  - \* Will it help reduce dependency on long working hours?
  - \* Will it provide economic opportunities to disadvantaged groups?
  - \* Will it encourage investment in skills, technology and the local community?
  - \* Will it help provide a better trained workforce?
  - \* Will it help the local tourism industry grow in a sustainable way?
- Are there other qualitative economic benefits to the rural economy?  
*Consider also if there are any drawbacks. Is there a lost opportunity for businesses or communities to benefit?*
- How many agricultural and other rural business from the wider community will benefit from the project? *Detail in what way they will benefit and specify if appropriate how this will be measured. If possible give some indication of type and size of businesses involved when judging importance.*
- Are there any wider benefits such as to consumers, urban dwellers, etc.? *In some cases, it may be appropriate to use recognised multipliers (e.g. English Tourism Council multipliers such as £ spend by each visitor).*

## 4.5 Environmental sustainability

- Does the project have a beneficial, neutral or negative **environmental** impact? *In making this assessment you will need to take into account the following factors. This list is not exhaustive, and other relevant issues specific to individual projects (such as animal welfare issues) should also be addressed.*
  - \* Will the proposed project help to maintain or improve air quality?
  - \* Will it help to enhance natural habitats or diversity of species?
  - \* Will it help contribute to the achievement of Biodiversity Action Plans?
  - \* Does it make appropriate use of chemicals, fertilisers and/or pesticides?
  - \* Will it be energy efficient and use renewables appropriately?
  - \* Will it protect archaeological and historic remains, including ancient monuments?
  - \* Is it likely not to cause detriment to historic buildings and conservation areas?
  - \* Will it maintain the vernacular character of local buildings?
  - \* Will the project respect site designations (Natura 2000, SSSI etc.)?
  - \* Will the project use land efficiently?
  - \* Will it maximise the use of brownfield land for development?
  - \* Will it manage land in an environmentally sensitive way?
  - \* Is the project likely to enhance areas of open land?
  - \* Will it help to preserve the character of the existing landscape?
  - \* Will it use materials efficiently and source them locally?
  - \* Is it likely to make use of sustainable construction materials?
  - \* Will the project minimise soil degradation, including erosion?
  - \* Is it likely to encourage a reduction in car use and/or help tackle traffic congestion?
  - \* Will the project lead to a reduction in 'food miles'?
  - \* Will it help to reduce waste pollution and/or increase recycling?
  - \* Will it help to maintain or improve water quality?
  - \* Is it likely to reduce the use of water and/or promote reuse?
  - \* Will it consider the timing of operations in order to minimise noise and disturbance?
  - \* Will it enable woodland or other wildlife habitats to be managed in a sustainable way?
  - \* Will the project be registered with, or adhere to, the principles of an environmental management system such as EMAS or ISO14001?

You should also check whether the applicant has provided any necessary consents (Local Authorities, Environment Agency, English Nature, English Heritage, etc), seeking guidance where necessary from the appropriate statutory authority.



## 4.6 Social sustainability

- Does the project have a beneficial, neutral or negative **social** impact? *In making this assessment you will need to take into account the following factors:*
  - \* Will the proposed project help to build a sense of community by encouraging and supporting all forms of community involvement?
  - \* Will it provide education or training opportunities in the community?
  - \* Is it likely to make a positive contribution to local employment needs?
  - \* Will it help to improve the quality of life within the community or for specific sectors of the community?
  - \* Will it promote the involvement of the community?
  - \* Will it provide a safe and healthy environment for workers?
  - \* Will it help to make walking, cycling or horse riding easier and/or safer?
  - \* Will it encourage local action and decision-making groups?
  - \* Will any of the buildings associated with the project provide local community amenities?
  - \* Will any of the buildings associated with the project provide improved access for people with disabilities or marginalised groups?
  - \* Do any elements of the project encourage and improve social development and capacity building?
  - \* Will the project enhance the quality and provision of green spaces and countryside parks and access to them?
  - \* Will it increase the employment opportunities of local people by advertising vacancies locally and considering local companies when tendering?
  - \* Will local products be purchased wherever possible?

## **Appendix 18 Proceedings of a South West Regional Appraisal Panel - 29 May 2002**

The RAP observed for this study was held at the RDS Regional Offices in Bristol. In addition to the researcher, it was observed by a team of three TAs from Exeter and attended by an RDS administrator, making a total of eight people present. The chairman cautioned the meeting with observance of the Chatham House Rule and the necessity of maintaining fairness in the proceedings. Those involved with any of the projects would not be allowed to comment or vote. The RDS team leader kept a running electronic tally of the budget throughout the meeting, subtracting the allocations as each application was approved. No evidence was produced at any stage to support or reject applications apart from the detailed reports of the TAs and the associated working files. The panel worked entirely from the basis of their own knowledge of the region, with an apparent bias towards one particular county from the GO representative. Altogether twenty one projects were presented for consideration: 8 high, 11 medium, and 2 low. The high scoring projects were considered first, and were all approved. This category included 4 VTS projects, 1 PMG and 4 RES (one VTS and one RES application were for the same project). While various issues arose during deliberations of the various projects, the most important ones for this study were: 1) the fact that two separate applications had to be made under two schemes for the same project; and 2) the fact that the same project was grant-aiding tree planting on grassland that was targeted by the CSS. These two points make the integration of measures within the ERDP appear a distant prospect.

Of the projects in the medium range, 5 were approved, 1 deferred and 5 rejected. Most of those that failed were rejected on the basis of demonstrating no need for public funding, they were already operational, or they were just poor applications. All were RES projects, 8 of which were split between conversions to managed workspace and holiday accommodation, with 1 machinery ring and two entrepreneurial projects. Both of the low scoring projects were rejected.



The proceedings of this panel raise several important issues, both in terms of discretion and integration:

- The personal interests of TAs were apparent in two of the projects appraised, raising the question of the persistence of ‘positive halos’; one was an equestrian application completed by a TA with a special interest in horses (approved); and the other was an application for self-catering apartments completed by a TA who had family connections with the bed & breakfast business (approved).
- The presence of the GO representative on the panel did not appear to have either a positive or a negative effect on the outcomes of any of the applications, as there appeared to be a high degree of agreement between the panel members about most of the projects. He acknowledged in a separate interview some doubts about his role:

That’s why I’m on the RAP, to ensure that things do stitch together. But while I can bring that wider perspective to the panel, the number of times when it actually counts a great deal are pretty minimal. However, I have been quite strong on some of them, and dug my heels in (PolicyImplementer1, pers.com).

- The issue of sustainability was not raised in relation to the majority of the applications. There were some comments about the environmental aspects of three of the projects, but none of the applications were subjected to any sort of overall sustainability template. The reasons for ‘liking’ a project depended on it having either a good regional fit, environmental benefits, a joined-up approach, high quality, cooperation, collaborative activity, the potential for wider spin-offs to the local community or a social dimension. The reasons for ‘disliking’ a project included the fact that it was seen as ‘boring’ or financially risky; that it had a low internal rate of return; that it was bad value for money; that the applicant was pursuing only his own financial gain; that there was no need for public funding; that the applicant was ‘grant chasing’ or fraudulent. There was very little discussion about the particular needs of localities. The GO representative explained in a separate interview how he thought about sustainability:

To some extent it does come down to a gut feeling, whether a set of criteria that are given to you by a technical assessor mount up to a project that you think can be self-supporting or self-sustaining, can continue to contribute to the local economy, can continue to provide local opportunity in the long term (PolicyImplementer1, pers.com).

## **Appendix 19 Analysis of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the ERDP**

### ***Context***

Rural areas are experiencing demographic change, with a rapidly rising population in the SW. With other factors affecting change such as housing availability, the evaluators felt that the ERDP had had little impact in this area.

### ***Progress to date in achieving objectives***

The evaluators found that the Programme seemed generally more effective in addressing Priority B (conservation and enhancement of the rural environment) than Priority A (creation of a productive and sustainable rural economy), although the survey carried out had revealed large differences between evaluators' results and the monitoring data used by Defra (for example 1,799 full time equivalent jobs created through the RES as opposed to 719 according to the survey).

### ***Effectiveness in meeting Programme objectives***

The achievement of the scheme objectives was found to be variable, from high (AES and forestry) to low (ECS, VTS). Environmental schemes were shown to be having a beneficial effect on the incomes of 90% of agreement holders, but impacts on the agricultural commodity market were negligible. It was, however, growing in some local and niche markets. The structure of the ERDP, where funds allocated to one type of measure (*ie* either accompanying or non-accompanying) cannot be transferred to the other, was seen to be constraining the programme's effectiveness. Deadweight and displacement<sup>1</sup> were seen as a particular problem for the project-based schemes and the Energy Crops Scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> Deadweight is the opposite of additionality and refers to changes that would have happened without intervention. Displacement refers to the effects of intervention realised at the expense of others (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003).



## ***Rationale***

While the public goods rationale for AES and forestry remained valid in the opinion of the evaluators, those supporting the market failure rationale needed revisiting, particularly in the case of RES, the Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) and the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS). A further rationale was proposed for the programme as a whole in relation to economies of scale:

If the effect of the Programme working together were to produce a total output greater than the sum of its parts, the lower cost per unit of output would be a strong argument for using an integrated programme rather than a series of stand alone measures (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003).

This relies on synergy between the different parts of the programme being achieved.

## ***Coherence***

The evaluators found that the ERDP schemes did not generally conflict, but neither did they work together across the programme to give synergy. It was felt that this could be improved in relation to non-ERDP activities at sub-regional level with the cooperation of stakeholders in more clearly defined roles. The potential extent of synergy was limited, but Defra and its partners were aware of the importance of this issue. Recommendations by evaluators included the use of integrated targeting statements and integration with non-Defra funding streams at sub-regional level, for example through the Rural Affairs Forums.

## ***Efficiency***

One of the rationales for the RDR was the simplification of bureaucracy involved with the administration of the disparate regulations from which it was formed. In spite of that, the accounting requirements of the EC still place a significant burden on programme administrators in terms of complexity, cost and difficulty in interpretation. Added to that, there have been calls for greater facilitation, based on the premise that facilitation improves the quality of applications and the targeting of the programme. High running costs should, according to the evaluators, be offset by simplifying low value application procedures and appraisal.

### ***Transparency of Project Selection***

Evaluators found that transparency in project selection varied considerably across the programme with high levels in WGS and HFA, and low levels in RES, PMG and VTS. They concluded that this was a result of RDS project-based scheme appraisers varying the scores where they thought a project was particularly strong or weak under one or more criteria. The report suggested there was an urgent need to communicate the processes of project appraisal to target groups and partner organisations, ensuring a level playing field for all applicants.

### ***Sustainability***

The report commences the section on sustainability by quoting Defra's stated aim of:

sustainable development, which means a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come, including:

- A better environment at home and internationally, and sustainable use of natural resources
- Economic prosperity through sustainable farming, fishing, food, water and other industries that meet consumers' requirements
- Thriving economies and communities in rural areas and a countryside for all to enjoy (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003, p109)

The terms of reference set out by the EC for the evaluation of the ERDP require future indications of sustainability to be considered in environmental, social and economic terms. In terms of *environmental sustainability* the surveys indicated that CSS applications were low and falling. Furthermore, there was little evidence to show that gains were maintained when agreements were not renewed. Evaluators suggested that the new Entry Level Scheme<sup>2</sup> may help to address this problem together with the improvements made through

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<sup>2</sup> The Agri-environment Review was launched in March 2002 by Defra having received prior approval from the Treasury. The 'Broad and Shallow' (B&S) AE scheme would comprise an Entry Level Scheme (ELS), together with a Higher Level Scheme, which would form the two parts of a new Environmental Stewardship (ES) Design Document. An important element of the rationale for adopting a scheme that was open to all farmers without being geographically or otherwise constrained, was to contribute in a significant way to changing farmers' expectations about the grounds on which they would receive public funds in the future. According to Defra, rewarding farmers for producing 'public goods' represented a great improvement over production subsidy in terms of economic rationality (Radley 2002).



the Mid-Term Review of the CAP<sup>3</sup>. The sustainable management of resources was important for future sustainability. There were few comments from evaluators regarding *social sustainability*, the role of the ERDP in combating poverty and social exclusion being seen as very limited. The HFA, VTS and RES most directly affected these issues, together with more general side effects in terms of quality of life and social sustainability. Improving social sustainability may benefit, the report suggested, by putting people at the centre, for example, by widening the range of groups who could benefit from the programme in line with Defra's social exclusion objective.

In terms of *economic sustainability*, the ERDP had effects on rural job creation and maintenance, population and particular groups (the beneficiaries). Its success as a catalyst for other programmes and interventions was, however, questionable according to evaluators. They concluded that sometimes it was, but not often enough for a programme its size. The costs and benefits of the programme were a major issue for Defra, and evaluators believed that the design of the ERDP was the subject of a serious attempt through the various evaluations to address this issue. The importance of the programme as good value for money was a message that needed to be understood:

On its own the ERDP does not address wider issues of an open economy. However, the RDPs in general can be seen as part of an important evolution of European agricultural policy away from production related subsidies. The June 2003 CAP reform agreement was a very significant milestone in this regard. In this connection, the important outcome of the ERDP is that it should be widely seen as money well spent, so that the consensus around the CAP reform process is supported (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003, p110).

The report referred to the 22 indicators of sustainability chosen by Defra to show progress towards sustainable development as a whole and produced a chart showing that the ERDP fitted well with many of the principles of SD (see Appendix 20).

In summing up the section on sustainability, the report emphasised the importance of integration of the three, still separate, elements of sustainable development:

Integration between the three main aspects of sustainability, economic, social and environmental should be reinforced to achieve truly integrated and sustainable rural

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<sup>3</sup> The CAP MTR increases environmental sustainability through 'decoupling' in 3 ways: 1) reduces the incentive to intensify; 2) provides more funds for RDPs; and 3) is better value for money (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003)

development. Further development of the social aspects, and the development of greater environmental resource protection and higher renewal rates for agri-environment schemes should evolve it further (ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited 2003, p113).

### ***Strategic and Regional Synthesis***

Within the section of the report dealing with the organisation of delivery there was a discussion regarding synthesis at both strategic and regional levels. Consultations revealed that there were genuine attempts at the strategic level being made to promote inter-agency working inside and outside of the formal mechanisms. Success, however, was constrained by the proliferation of other regional groupings within which it was difficult to maintain a dialogue. Some programme-specific characteristics of the ERDP militated against the programme providing a catalyst for strong synergy with partners. These revolved around the fact that the ERDP was constrained by match funding restrictions, its own scheme rules, and its top-down management regime. There was a sense from the consultations, however, that this was not important providing the key agencies could find a way of working together in a transparent manner when regional issues so demanded. In the evaluators' words ... "although we understand the appeal of the rhetoric for *strategic synthesis and integration*, we are not convinced that this is a priority to be pursued at the regional level".

### ***The Successor to the RDR***

The MTE was not expected by Defra to lead to major changes to the current ERDP, but was designed to inform changes to the RDR/ERDP in the next programming period. This was due in part to the unfortunate timing of the Mid-Term Review of the CAP (MTR) in relation to the MTE<sup>4</sup>. Included in the MTE, therefore, were comments and three recommendations regarding the successor to the RDR. The first recommendation concerned the rationale for certain of the measures within the regulation. To attract public subsidy programmes need a clear economic rationale backed up by reliable evidence. Citing the support for tourism explicit in the Article 33 measure, evaluators questioned the market failure rationale that measures were supposed to correct, recommending that more attention

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<sup>4</sup> The MTR was published in June 2003 and ratified in September 2003. The MTE was published in December 2003.



should be given to providing objective evidence of such failure. The second recommendation concerned what the evaluators referred to as 'deep facilitation', meaning working towards changing attitudes and behaviour in relation to SD. While the current RDR allows some progress to be made in this area, much more is needed according to the report. The third recommendation related to the structural inflexibility of the current regulation in relation to cross-chapter working, the reassessment of which was considered important by the evaluators.

ADAS Consulting Ltd and SQW Limited (2003). The Mid-Term Evaluation of the England Rural Development Programme. London, Rural Development Division of Defra.

Radley, G. (2002). Agri-environment Schemes Review: Project Initiation Document. London, Defra.

# Appendix 20 Links between Sustainable Development Indicators and ERDP Schemes

Source: ADAS/SQW 2003, The MTE of the CAP, p111

Defra sustainable development indicators	VTS	RES	ECS	HFA	PMG	CSS	ESA	OFS	WGS	FWPS
Qualitative assessment of connections and impacts										
Emissions of greenhouse gases		+			+				+	+
Population of wild birds			+			++	++	+	++	++
Condition of SSSIs						++	++		++	
Productivity of the agri.-industry	++	++	+	+	++					
Retail prices index		+			+			++		
River quality						++	++	+		
Consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables		+						+		
Health of farmed animals	++	+								
Economic performance of less well performing rural areas	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	+
Access to key services in rural England		++								
Change in countryside quality	+	+		++		++	++	+	+	+

Key: Blank = no significant effect. + = some effect but modest in relation to needs, ++ = strong effect.