

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

EFFECTIVE POLICY MAKING FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD  
SYSTEMS – THE EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE AND THE ABRUZZO REGION,  
ITALY

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the ways in which local food has increasingly been seen as an integral part of rural development, and explored the increasing interest in local food from academics, policy-makers, businesses and consumers. The overall question which the research attempts to address is what steps can policy makers take to establish sustainable local food networks, particularly in areas with a traditional background in intensive agriculture specialising in commodity production? These issues were investigated in two case study areas of the East Riding of Yorkshire, UK and the Abruzzo region, Italy using in-depth interviews with policy makers, businesses and focus groups with consumers. The East Riding of Yorkshire is an intensive commodity producing area, the type of area often assumed to be devoid of local food initiatives, while the Abruzzo is largely mountainous and remote, the type of area often assumed to be ideal for local food networks. Both areas are engaged in the EU's LEADER rural development programme and are working to support local food networks.

Theorisations of policy processes and policy making as rational and logical have been supplanted by conceptualisations which aim to adopt a more nuanced approach that accounts for the messy and chaotic worlds described by research participants. This research contributes to the corpus of work which sees policy makers act subjectively, drawing on their own interests and beliefs in driving forward some policy goals whilst 'ignoring' other themes. A new 'model' of policy making is proposed in response to earlier models which present policy as rational, linear and ordered. This new 'model' represents policy processes as complex, non-linear and messy. Policy practices are fluid and elusive, further complicated by the absorption and loss of ideas and initiatives through processes of policy transfer, translation, 'leaching', negotiation and implementation. As such, this research has produced an alternative, and perhaps more effective, representation of policy making.

Furthermore, the research suggests that notions of the 'rural' as being 'idyllic' are renegotiated and reproduced contemporaneously. The rural idyll influenced the imaginings of the role played by different rural areas in producing 'local' food. Policy makers, businesses and consumers all talked about the 'rural' as idyllic. This was not only in comparison to urban areas but contrasts were also identified between different rural areas. As a result, this research indicates that the concept of *the* rural idyll needs to be further fragmented to take account of the relational nature of rural areas.

The research concludes that 'effectiveness' is an intangible concept, for it suggests an approach to policy-making that can be universally applied to all places, and which will result in ideal policy outcomes. In practice, for many people even *talking* about policy is complex and contested. More realistically policies need to be customised to suit specific local circumstances. 'Policy/ies' are in a constant state of churn, and cannot be easily 'measured' or 'benchmarked'. This complexity of 'policy' itself is overlain by the opacity of concepts of 'local' food and rural development. Specificity and situatedness are important in understanding the ways that different areas and different people understand and apply these terms. The research thus challenges some of the assumptions frequently made about the 'success', or otherwise, of local food systems and rural development.

The research was undertaken as part of an ESRC-CASE studentship in partnership with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

### **Author's Declaration**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Hull 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 University.



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## **CHAPTER 1. EFFECTIVE POLICY MAKING FOR ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS – THE EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE AND THE ABRUZZO REGION, ITALY**

### **1.1. Introduction: Effective policy making for sustainable local food systems**

Recent research (Marsden *et al* 2000; Renting *et al* 2003; Seyfang 2006; Tregear *et al* 2007; Marsden and Sonnino 2008) indicates that local food projects can be a key part of sustainable rural development strategies, although this is not necessarily agreed by all scholars. However, we know relatively little about the *capacity* of different places to develop local food projects and the significance that the latter have for sustainable rural development strategies, and the ways that policy makers can effectively support their development. This is the central focus of the research in this thesis. In the last couple of decades, debates around what the countryside should be used for, the role of agriculture in rural areas, crises in farming and the food provisioning system have been critical in informing both policy and academic studies. Local food has become increasingly viewed as a means to: revive lagging rural economies; respond to farming crises and alleviate fears about food safety; and bring equilibrium to a food system regarded by many as being out of balance (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002; Goodman 2004; McMichael 2005; Seyfang 2006). However, although there is a clear record of policy intervention in the local food and rural development sector at different scales (local, sub-regional, regional, national and EU), and an ever-increasing volume of academic and policy research, three gaps stand out in the literature.

The first is the lack of attention paid to ‘conventional’, productivist agricultural areas, where the richness and diversity of farming and food associated with some other areas is often assumed to be lacking. These areas are, therefore, seen as being somehow marginal to the development of local food networks (whilst being central to the standardised globalised food chain) (see Qazi and Selfa 2005). Second, most research has focused on the production end of food chains and systems, largely ignoring the role of consumers, although this imbalance has been addressed to some extent in recent years. This more recent research (Hinrichs 2000; Holloway and Kneafsey 2004; Holloway *et al* 2007) has examined consumers’ involvement with local/locality, speciality and ‘alternative’ food in some detail. However, it has largely focused on the perceived environmental and social benefits associated with such consumption, rather than consumers’ awareness of, and concern for, rural development. Hence the key policy idea of ‘reconnecting’ producers and consumers is under-explored in relation to rural development objectives. Third, and finally, although policy and the work of policy makers are regarded by many as being critical to the future success of alternative food networks / local food systems,

and policy-makers themselves have picked up on the idea of such systems and the concept of reconnecting consumers and producers of food, very little work has been undertaken from an academic perspective which specifically tackles these issues. Moreover, little work has emphasised how policy-makers themselves define and make sense of ideas of 'local' food and rural development. Most often, 'policy' is relegated to a fleeting and momentary comment regarding its centrality without lingering to explore what this centrality might mean or even look like.

Cutting across each of these research gaps are debates over what the key terms might mean and how different people interpret them. The core terms addressed in this research are not universally agreed: the terms 'local', 'sustainable', 'policy' and 'rural' are polysemic and contestable. Although much research has focused, for example, on defining terms such as 'local' or 'rural' this has often resulted in greater complexities emerging rather than greater clarity. As such terms become associated with a wider range of further contested terms this leads to further ambiguity (see Morris and Buller 2003; Venn *et al* 2006; DuPuis *et al* 2006; Smithers *et al* 2008; Fonte 2008). These troublesome terms are explored empirically in this thesis.

The thesis will thus address critical gaps in the current academic literature as well as respond to current debates regarding agriculture as a central tenet of sustainable rural development. To address these lacunae this research involves in-depth work with policy-makers, local food businesses and consumers to explore how each group makes sense of policy, local food and rural development. The research takes two case study areas to explore these issues. The East Riding of Yorkshire<sup>1</sup> is an area of longstanding commodity production, while the Abruzzo is a more remote region in Italy (a country long assumed to have a strong local food culture – see Helstosky 2004; Montanari 1994). By concentrating on these two areas the research aims to highlight the complex ways that local food networks interact with commodity or conventional agriculture, rather than occupying the interstices of conventional production or being an entirely separate and discrete entity.

A key strand to the research is the role of the EU's LEADER rural development programme (which will be introduced in more detail in Chapter 2). Both of the case study areas have been implementing the LEADER rural development programme for a number of years. A central component of the LEADER programme in both areas is the development of local food systems, and LEADER emphasises the exchange of knowledge between such areas. My research

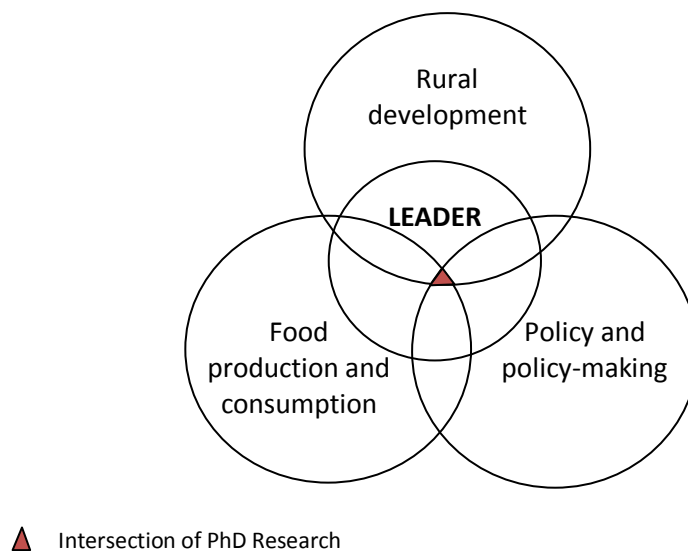
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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to this as 'East Yorkshire' in the remainder of the thesis in the interests of brevity.

specifically examines policy making for local food and rural development. As such, focusing on areas utilising the LEADER programme offers the potential to investigate how such policies develop in a locally contingent way, supporting and engendering rural development in two different areas in different countries.

Thematically, this research is located at the nexus of rural development, policy and policy-making, food production and consumption, as illustrated in Figure 1:

**Figure 1. Research themes**



The research questions are outlined below to show how these diverse themes are brought together in the research.

## **1.2. Research Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this research is to examine how policy makers can effectively establish and support sustainable local food networks. This is examined in the context of two case study areas (see below for an introduction). The question which the research attempts to address is what steps can policy makers take to establish sustainable local food networks, particularly in areas with a traditional background in intensive agriculture specialising in commodity production? Supporting this research question, there are five specific research objectives to:

- RO1. Examine how and why the idea of promoting a 'local food economy' has become a key aim within rural development policy making.

- RO2. Examine how the term 'local food' is constructed by policy makers, food businesses and consumers.
- RO3. Critically examine the notion of 'effectiveness' as it relates to sustainable rural development policy-making and practice in relation to local food systems.
- RO4. Critically analyse the key factors involved in the success of local food systems, with reference to a bulk commodity producing area in the UK and an Italian region.
- RO5. Develop conceptualisations of the role of consumers and consumption in the emergence of local food economies.

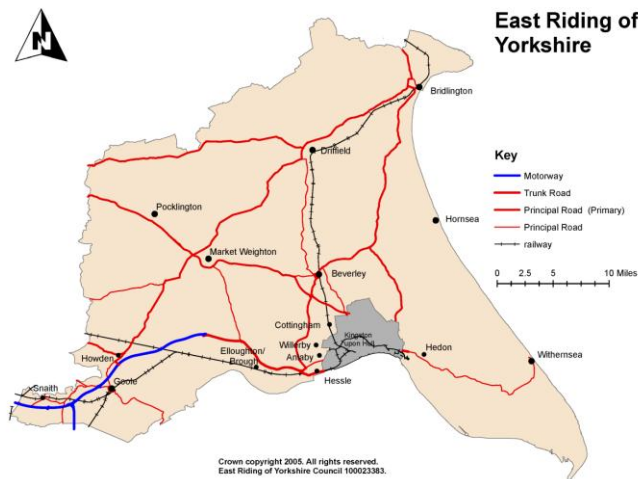
The research has been a collaborative project between the University of Hull's Department of Geography and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's (ERYC) Rural Team, via an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) CASE studentship. The East Riding of Yorkshire Council has an administrative remit to work within the unitary local authority area of the East Riding of Yorkshire (as a result of local government reorganisation in 1996 which saw the end of Humberside County Council). As such the research specifically focused on the East Riding of Yorkshire. The Abruzzo region of Italy, selected as the second case study area, is part of the EU's LEADER rural development programme, as is the East Riding of Yorkshire, which provides a natural link between the two areas in terms of learning how the other supports and develops local food systems. As mentioned above, Italy is long associated with having a strong local food culture and as such a case study of local food in Italy enables the exploration of how this operates in practice. The University of Hull's Department of Geography has developed a strong relationship with actors in the case study area of the Abruzzo (see Holloway 2002; Holloway and Kneafsey 2004; and Holloway *et al* 2006), which provided a direct means of accessing local food producers in the area. As can be seen in the introduction to the case study areas below, there are significant differences between the two areas. However, the LEADER programme links these two contrasting areas, and in particular the notion of international knowledge exchanges which are a key element of the LEADER programme, justify the selection of these two areas. In the following section, the two case study areas are briefly outlined.

### **1.3. The Case Study Areas**

#### ***The East Riding of Yorkshire, England***

East Riding of Yorkshire covers a geographical area of 933 square miles, to the east of the City of York out to Bridlington, down to Spurn Point and along the Humber Estuary, and incorporates the varied landscapes of the Humberhead Levels, the Humber Estuary, the Yorkshire Wolds and Holderness. Agriculture in the area has been successful as a result of the rich and fertile soils, especially in the Humberhead Levels and the Holderness Plain. Beans and peas, cereals, pigs and some minimal dairy production, as well as horticulture dominate the agricultural production in the East Riding (ERYC 2008).

**Figure 2. The East Riding of Yorkshire**



The population of the East Riding of Yorkshire is 314,113 (ERYC 2005). The contribution of agriculture and related sectors to Gross Value Added has declined by 25% to 7% (£213 million) (from 1995 to 2001). 4.27% of the working age population (aged 16-74) are employed in agriculture, forestry and hunting, equivalent to 6,186 people (UK Census 2001). The East Riding of Yorkshire Rural Strategy (2005) forecasts that jobs in agriculture and related sectors will drop by 80% by 2015; this is likely to have a further detrimental impact on the Gross Value Added (GVA) from agriculture. The area is accessible to world commodity markets through the Humber Ports; this makes the area more vulnerable to changes in world commodity market price fluctuations. Support for a more localised food system may help to mitigate some of these influences.<sup>2</sup> A more localised food system is starting to emerge in the East Riding of Yorkshire and has been growing steadily over the last five years. The East Riding of Yorkshire

<sup>2</sup> Whilst East Yorkshire's agricultural crops do include cereals such as wheat, which has typically been sold and processed through conventional channels and as such may be less suited to a localised food system, other crops may be more suitable. However, some local businesses already use cereals as a value-added local food product, for example in organic flour, muesli, etc products.

council developed a Local Food Directory detailing the local food businesses and farmers' markets operating within the East Riding of Yorkshire, and the number of local initiatives in the Food Directory has grown from around 35 in 2005 to over 90 in 2010. The number of regular farmers' markets in the area stands at eight, with the one in Goole having been established in 2008. Other markets (for example Beverley's Saturday Market) supplement the specific farmers' markets, and also have local produce available. There is also an annual Food Festival in Beverley celebrating local food and other products. The type of 'local' food available at such markets covers a broad range from a number of local ales, and cheeses to vegetables, meats, pies, preserves, cakes and breads.

### ***The Abruzzo Region, Italy***

The Abruzzo region is split into four provinces (L'Aquila, Pescara, Chieti and Teramo); the study area was within the L'Aquila province (the province was the epicentre of an earthquake in 2008). The Abruzzo region is a mountainous region in central Italy, although usually it is classed as being in the Mezzogiorno, the Italian South. It is considered by many Italians to be a wild and remote region; much of the region is covered by national parks (Parco Nazionale della Maiella; Parco Nazionale dell'Abruzzo; Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga; and the Parco Regionale Sirente Velino).

The region is approximately 70 miles east of Rome and has a population of 1.3 million. The region covers an area of 4,168 square miles, incorporating part of the Apennine mountain range and an Adriatic coastline. The mountainous areas are traditionally transhumance<sup>3</sup> agricultural areas, whilst the region is famous for the Montepulciano d'Abruzzo wine and wheat grown near the coast. In the mountainous parts of the region, where this research is focused, the main agricultural products are meat (sheep and beef), cheese, olive oil and jams and honey, as well as wool products. Compared to the 'successful' agriculture of East Yorkshire, the agriculture of Abruzzo is diverse and more marginal, although the picture is not homogenous across the region.

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<sup>3</sup> Transhumance is the traditional process of taking sheep flocks up to high mountain pastures for the summer, and is still practised in some parts of the European Alps and the Apennines in Italy.



**Figure 3. The Abruzzo region of Italy**

Source: James Martin, Europe for Visitors ([http://goitaly.about.com/od/abruzzo/l/bl\\_abruzzo-map.htm](http://goitaly.about.com/od/abruzzo/l/bl_abruzzo-map.htm))



As part of the Mezzogiorno, Abruzzo is classified as one of the poorer regions in Italy, especially given the North-South divide that exists in Italy, whereby the Centre-North of the country is wealthier with higher levels of industry and business. The Mezzogiorno experienced high levels of out-migration during the second half of the twentieth century, with people particularly moving towards the Centre-North of the country. The economy is still largely dependent on agriculture (with about 29,000 people employed in agriculture in 2001 (Adriatic Euro-region website) from 3.8 million in 1951 (Helg *et al* 2000)). The Abruzzo was previously designated as a European Objective 1 area (aimed at regenerating regions where development is seriously lagging behind and where Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is less than 75% of the EU average) but this designation ceased in 1996 when the area was judged to have made sufficient economic development progress to have passed the threshold of 75% of EU mean GDP per capita (Leonardi, 1995: 168). Leonardi (1995: 169) also categorised the regional and local government bodies responsible for the Abruzzo as weak, in addition to poorly organised business support organisations, which further contributed towards the Abruzzo as a lagging region. The area has recently been romanticised in a newspaper article for being 'as Italy used to be', with tradition still intact with frequent festivals still taking place (Hankins 2005). This is attracting second-home owners looking for cheap locations (Price 2007). The building of the A24 motorway linking the region to Rome in the West and to the coast eastwards has opened up the area economically, as has the development of Pescara airport offering cheap flights to other parts of Europe. The area is being promoted for tourism, with the attraction being the opportunity to escape from the ills of modern life and enjoy a slower pace of life.

In summary, both areas exhibit differences in terms of how agriculture, rural development and local food have developed, and how they have either become embroiled in producing food for local or global markets (or combinations of both). Undertaking case studies like this enables the analysis of the ways in which policies applied from above are interpreted and implemented within local contexts, illustrating the relational and contingent characteristics of local places, people and policies. Although the geographies of each area are varied (both within and between the areas), the policy emphasis given to local food and rural development (through LEADER as well as other policies), justifies the choice of these regions.

#### **1.4. Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter Two examines the changing policy landscape surrounding food, local food and rural development, although the emphasis is predominantly on the role of local food as an element of rural development. The chapter shows how, since World War II, there has been a series of changes to the policy frameworks concerning rural development and local food. These have both reflected and affected how rural areas are conceptualised and ideas about what rural areas should be used for, and by whom.

Chapter Three introduces three bodies of literature that this thesis sits within and contributes towards. The literature review is structured by first examining how academic research has theorised policy making as a practice, before moving on to how rural development policies have been critiqued, reviewed and conceptualised by academics. The literature review then specifically considers the ways that academic research has addressed developments of alternative and localised food networks, including the different ways that 'alternative' and 'local' food has been defined. Significantly for this research, this section of the literature review charts the 'new geography of food' (Whatmore and Thorne 1997; Morgan *et al* 2006) and examines how some places are positioned as being suitable for alternative food networks while others are not. The notion of (some) rural areas as being somehow different, and more idyllic and authentic, has a particular relevance with regards to local food, and the ways that academics have explored uses and constructions of the rural as idyllic are outlined in the literature review.

Chapter Four sets out the research methods in detail. As well as describing the extensive and intensive research which was conducted in order to address the project's aims, the chapter summarises results from an initial local food business survey in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the aim of which was to gain contextual background information about the food sector and to identify potential interviewees for the in-depth research.

The following two chapters, Chapter Five and Chapter Six, present and analyse the substantial empirical material generated by the research. Chapter Five demonstrates the complexity and fluidity of the world of policy-making inhabited by those involved in the research. It shows how the research participants deal with and navigate a changing constellation of policy relationships, and how often one particular person is responsible for promoting key ideas in policy terms. The chapter ends by challenging the linear and ordered ways of thinking about 'the policy-making process' that have dominated the academic literature, and by presenting alternative schematic models which attempt to conceptualise policy making.

Chapter Six takes the ideas of policy fluidity and messiness from Chapter Five and explores how the specificities of place and of concepts of the rural idyll and rural development add a further layer of complexity. This chapter analyses how the research participants thought about and used imaginaries of rural space (contrasting rural to urban spaces as well as differentiating different types of rural space ruralities) to determine whether fostering local food economies was an 'appropriate' policy focus in particular types of rural space. Both empirical chapters draw on the qualitative research results from the East Riding of Yorkshire and the Abruzzo region of Italy.

Finally, Chapter Seven summarises the conclusions from this research, as well as reflecting on the research, identifying the challenges experienced along the way and suggests further areas for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2. THE CHANGING POLICY LANDSCAPE IN THE UK AND ITALY**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Since the 1940s there have been perceptible changes in the way that the UK population views the countryside and what it is expected to be used for. Social and economic trends have resulted in fundamental changes in views of what the countryside is for and in priorities for public policy (PIU 1999: 27). The countryside is argued to have changed from a space dominated by food production to one where consumption of environmental goods and leisure and recreational activities becomes more prevalent (Cloke and Goodwin 1992; Marsden *et al* 1993, Marsden 2002, 2006, 2009; Curry and Ravenscroft 2001). However these trends have affected differently regions unevenly.

In the UK, government intervention and policies have played a central role in shaping the agricultural and rural development sectors since World War II, and as a result it would be unrealistic to research local food and rural development without considering the role of government policy in this. Lang (1999) is clear that food systems are the outcomes of policy and political choices. Therefore, this section takes the policy literature relating to food and rural development, which represents the arena that policy makers both work within and contribute towards creating. One of the key messages from reviewing this literature is of an ever-changing policy 'landscape', with frequent changes to both the policies and the organisations involved in making and delivering those policies. This chapter will demonstrate the shift in policies relating to the countryside, from the blanket application of agricultural (sectoral) policies to more differentiated and contingent policies adhering to so-called 'integrated rural development'.

I argue that policies concerning 'the rural' have moved through four key periods since the 1940s. The periods are not intended to be exactly distinct from one another – it is recognised that reality is too complex and messy to fit neatly into such divisions, yet they serve as a useful heuristic for the purposes of this research. Others (Scott *et al* 2007; Lang and Heasman 2004; Ward 2009<sup>4</sup>; Wilson 2001; Marsh and Smith 2000) have devised other ways of 'categorising' developments in government policy following World War II (WWII). WWII is largely viewed as

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/Plenary%20session%20two%20-%20Neil%20Ward.pdf>  
Accessed September 2009.

a key trigger for policy change regarding the countryside.<sup>5</sup> I have categorised the policy frames since 1940 as set out in Table 1:

**Table 1. Key periods of UK policy making for rural development and food**

	<b>Key periods</b>	<b>Key Themes</b>
		<b><i>Rural Policy / Agriculture and Food</i></b>
I.	<i>1940s-1980s</i>	<b><i>'Rural' as national agricultural asset</i></b> <i>Full steam ahead productivism and domestic food security</i>
II.	<i>1980s – late 1990s</i>	<b><i>Rural crises – rise of agri-environment</i></b> <i>Crisis of productivism and post-productivist transition</i>
III.	<i>Late 1990s – 2003</i>	<b><i>Rural policy creativity</i></b> <i>Animal disease and the search for 'alternatives'</i>
IV.	<i>2003 onwards</i>	<b><i>Rural development turbulence</i></b> <i>Food security and global recession</i>

Whilst these periods are fuzzy, the political and policy decisions taken by UK governments and the impact that this has had on the relationship between agriculture, food production and consumption, and rural development make them significant for this research.

The policy literature is often referred to as the 'grey' literature and its use in academic research, and the contribution of academic research to policy debates, has been recently discussed by some geographers. For example Martin (2001), Burgess (2005), Eden (2005), Dorling and Shaw (2002), and Pain (2006), amongst others, have questioned the policy relevance of geography and the use of grey materials. For my research the 'grey' literature is an important aspect of how to understand how policy-makers currently think about policy. Policy making is always informed by past policy developments, and it would be difficult to respond to questions concerning effective policy making for local food networks without first considering the history of policies concerned with such issues.

<sup>5</sup> Although historically the countryside has been subject to many changes, with regards to food and agricultural policy, WWII is significant.

## 2.2. 'Rural' as national agricultural asset (1940s – 1980s)

There is unequivocal agreement that the 1940s were a key period for 'rural' and 'agricultural' policy change. The decisions taken during this period shaped and influenced rural policy and the countryside for the next 40 years (Ward and Lowe 2007; PIU 1999). This period has been well-documented (PIU 1999; Lang 1999; Wilson 2001; Curry and Owen 2009), and therefore will be summarised here. The agricultural depressions of the 1920s and 1930s, in addition to the social concerns relating to conditions during the Second World War, mainly of (domestic) food security and the ability of UK agriculture to cheaply feed the UK population (Woods 2005a), set the tone for the 40 years following WWII. Prior to WWII, the countryside had become increasingly idealised in the face of an urbanising population (Bunce 2003). Sentiments that the 'real heart of England lay in the landscapes and traditions of the countryside' were often expressed, for example by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin (Bunce 1994). Views such as these were prominent throughout both World Wars, and posters such as the one below of a bucolic pastoral scene in the South Downs reiterated that it was 'rural' England that was 'worth fighting for' (Bunce 1994; Short 1991), and no doubt influenced the protectionist ethic established in the policy framework post-WWII.

**Figure 4. Wartime poster showing South Downs**

(source: <http://www.ww2aircraft.net/forum/album/general/p11967-your-britainfight-for-it-now-.html>)



However, key points include the Barlow (1940)<sup>6</sup> and Scott (1942)<sup>7</sup> Reports, which paved the way for the Agriculture Act 1947 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. Combined, these initiated a predilection for limiting development in the countryside and elevated agricultural interests above all others in rural areas,<sup>8</sup> and set the foundation for an institutional divide between rural and urban interests (Scott *et al* 2007: 20). The system established post-WWII was concerned with ‘producing food at all costs’ (Evans and Morris 1997) – farmers were seen as the natural guardians of the countryside and thus agriculture would maintain the ‘beauty’ of rural England. There was little political debate about agricultural expansion as food rationing of WWII continued into the 1950s.

The vision of agriculture created during this time was of efficiency and high productivity, so that areas suitable for large-scale industrial agriculture developed apace, creating large farms reliant on agri-chemical inputs.<sup>9</sup> Farming shifted from ‘dog and stick’ styles towards ‘scientific farming’ (Lang 1999: 173). This agrarian modernisation of conventional agriculture (Marsden and Smith 2005: 442) resulted in large farms specialising in specific commodities being the norm (see Symes 1991). These farms captured an increasing share of the market, with hotspots emerging in places like East Anglia (Morris *et al* 2000: 246) and East Yorkshire (Marsden 1979) in England and Iowa (Hinrichs 2003) and North Carolina (Murdoch and Miele 1999) in the United States. Such productivist<sup>10</sup> policies were grounded in the belief that it was in the national interest to maintain agriculture to feed the nation with a secure supply of cheap food. Areas not suitable for such agriculture were marginalised by policies favouring agricultural intensification and expansion and through subsidisation. Farming in these areas changed far less and has been less profitable (Ward and Almas 1997; PIU 1999: 27).

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<sup>6</sup> This was the report of the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Industrial Population (Cmd 6153) – set up in 1937 it enquired into the causes of the geographic distribution of the industrial population (Source: <http://fds.oup.com/www.oup.co.uk/pdf/0-19-927279-4.pdf>). The Barlow Report was concerned about the serious loss of agricultural land and argued that agriculture was of significant importance to the national economy and for food security.

<sup>7</sup> This was a report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (Cmd 6378) and considered the problems of piecemeal development of agricultural land and unrestricted development of the coastline (Source: <http://fds.oup.com/www.oup.co.uk/pdf/0-19-927279-4.pdf>).

<sup>8</sup> A minority report submitted to the Scott committee predicted that this would cause economic problems for rural areas in future, but was ignored by the committee: “*The main rural problems will come from the lack of a solid and diverse economic base in the countryside*” Professor Dennison, minority report from the Scott Committee 1942 (quoted in CRC paper Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities: The Big Picture).

<sup>9</sup> Cochrane (1958) first talked about the ‘agricultural treadmill’ in discussing technological advancements in American agriculture and Ward (1993) applied the concept to European post-productivist agriculture.

<sup>10</sup> Although this is a term that has only been applied in retrospect, Evans and Morris 1997.

Essentially, it was assumed that protecting agricultural land from industrial and residential development and providing an appropriate framework of price support for farmers would combine to produce an attractive rural environment – central to this thinking was the notion of farmers as the natural custodians of the countryside (Winter 1991: 48). Instead, policy failure led to low wages, problems of out-migration and rural housing supply in rural areas (Curry and Owens 2009: 577), declining farm employment, concentration of agricultural production in fewer larger holdings, and losses of smaller farms (Parrott *et al* 2002). These policy decisions set the UK on a path whereby development (and therefore economic growth) was concentrated in urban areas, leading to a residualised rural economy and stagnation of both rural economies and rural communities (Curry 2010), perhaps building on ideas of an idyllic rurality which was unchanging (Bell and Jayne 2010, and Phillips 2004 on Baudrillard 1996) and ‘traditional’.

Agriculture’s protected position was not confined to the UK (see Atkins and Bowler 2001: 28). Since the UK joined the European Union (EU) in 1973, the EU has increasingly influenced UK agriculture and rural development. The EU also envisaged rural as agriculture, through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP has further encouraged the intensification of agriculture.

Agriculture’s protected position continued into the 1970s in the UK, with the Labour Government’s 1975 White Paper *Food from our own Resources* and the 1979 White Paper, *Farming and the Nation* (see Winter 1991: 49; and Hodge 1996). Concomitantly, the 1970s saw the beginnings of a more holistic practice of rural development that went beyond the boundaries of agriculture, introduced by development workers returning from less developed countries (Wright 1992). This was a subtle shift, but set the tone for developments in the 1980s and beyond. Towards the end of this period, agriculture reached a crisis of production with surpluses resulting from price support mechanisms (Friedmann 1993). The next section will deal with the consequences of these crises and changes to the agri-food system and emerging rural development initiatives.

### **2.3. 1980s – late 1990s: Rural Crises / Shifting Ruralities – Rural in a New Light?**

The post-war emphasis on industrialising agriculture to ensure a plentiful supply of cheap food, combined with the equation of rural development with agriculture, led to wider problems in the rural economy and prompted reviews of agricultural policy to address the broader issues being faced by rural communities. The countryside was promoted as a good place to live and



relocate to either for business or for retirement. Counter-tendencies and activist movements emerged that sought to differentiate 'local' food from the corporate, multi-national agricultural systems that had emerged in the post-war period (Follett 2009; Raynolds 2004; Sonnino and Marsden 2006).

A number of parallel crises emerged, ranging from over-production to concerns about the effects of industrialised agriculture on the environment as well as the cost of running schemes like the CAP. As a result, agricultural policies shifted their emphasis from unrestrained production to incorporate wider views on rural areas. For example, agri-environment schemes were introduced, designed to promote more environmentally friendly (as demanded by society) farming practices (for example Environmentally Sensitive Areas, see Morris and 1995 Potter) and measures aimed at reducing production such as set-aside policies (Robinson and Lind 1999). Some commentators suggested that a shift to post-productivism was underway, moving away from the industrial agriculture of the mid to late twentieth century towards a more sustainable and diverse agriculture, further challenging the ways that rural is understood. However, the concept of post-productivism is not universally accepted (Walford 2003; Evans *et al* 2002). Evans and Morris (1997) observed that the shift in policy measures did not directly challenge the productivist regime, but were designed to run alongside the CAP (Walford 2003). The CAP continued to be scrutinised and underwent a number of subsequent reforms.<sup>11</sup> Despite CAP reforms, Marsden (1998: 110) notes that areas such as Lincolnshire and Yorkshire and the Humber continued to demonstrate intensive production, farm concentration, and contract farming.

The mid-1980s saw increasing interest at the European level to develop a new model of rural development support as the conflation of the rural with the agricultural was challenged (Ward 2002, quoted in Shucksmith 2009: 2), amidst growing concerns of agriculture's impact on the rural environment, communities and economies. As views on intensive agriculture shifted (from generally supportive to challenging), there was a move towards concepts of integrated rural development in Europe. The EU has been instrumental in introducing concepts of integrated rural development into Europe. The Future of Rural Society (CEC 1988)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The CAP has undergone a number of reforms since its introduction in 1962. Definitions of agricultural development and rural development have remained entangled, the amount of EU budget allocated to the CAP has steadily reduced, from three-quarters of total Community spending in the 1970s to around half in the 1990s (Lowe *et al* 1998: 67).

<sup>12</sup> The Future of Rural Society (CEC 1988) was a strategy document setting out the EU's vision for rural areas and informed the subsequent operation of the structural funds (e.g. Objective 5b) and community initiatives (e.g. LEADER). The structural funds, however, did not reach an adequate degree of integration across the agricultural / non-agricultural divide as agriculture did not feature prominently (Marsden and Sonnino 2008: 425).

emphasised the diverse nature of rural Europe and the need for spatial (horizontal) as opposed to sectoral (vertical) policies and approaches. It stated that “the EC will pursue a rural development perspective based on family farms and the exploitation of indigenous development potential of rural region” (CEC 1988: 67). Family farming was to be the cornerstone of EU agricultural policy. However, the CAP still embodies productivist values by financially supporting agricultural commodities (Clark and Jones (2007: 169), Bunce (1994: 31) reports similar findings from the US). Clark and Jones (2007: 184) quote a Defra respondent from their research who stated that there was currently a policy imbalance due to the strong incentive to stay producing subsidised commodity crops as the bureaucracy associated with diversification deterred all but the most determined of farmers, although perhaps farmers with no alternative would pursue diversification strategies.

As a way of implementing Integrated Rural Development (IRD) LEADER<sup>13</sup> was introduced in 1991 as a European Union-wide pilot programme as one of the Community Funds. It was targeted at rural areas that were considered to be ‘lagging’. It has always been presented, through LEADER I (1991–1994), LEADER II (1995–1999) to LEADER+ (2000–2006), as a kind of ‘laboratory’ in which new approaches to rural development can be invented and tested, with the aim that innovative approaches would be adopted by mainstream national programmes (Shortall 2008). LEADER I was a pilot programme linked to lagging rural regions through the Objective 5b structural programme, and subsequent iterations have broadened out the geographical areas that could be eligible for LEADER funding. The current LEADER programme has been ‘mainstreamed’ as part of the CAP’s Second Pillar and is thus available to any rural area in Europe, albeit on a competitive basis.

LEADER was designed to stimulate innovative approaches to rural development at the local level through small-scale actions and the valorisation of local resources (Ray 2000: 166), and initiated a move away from previous sectoral programmes focused solely on farming and farmers. As a programme, LEADER encourages local areas to form Local Action Groups (partnerships of local people, community groups, businesses and the public sector) which would develop integrated multi-sectoral plans for areas and on the basis of these plans, compete for LEADER funding for their area. If awarded LEADER status, the LAGs work with local partners to deliver projects which would address the needs and issues identified in the rural development strategies.

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<sup>13</sup> LEADER (an acronym from the French: Liaison entre actions de développement de l’économie rurale) translates into links between actions for the development of the rural economy.

Thus, wider rural communities were to be given an opportunity to influence the development of their community (Ward and McNicholas 1998), which has caused tensions with public sector bodies in the UK who did not want to be bypassed in this process, although not all communities were equally well equipped to work in this way. Ward (2000) has described this as an Europeanisation of rural development policies, which has encouraged the adoption of IRD (Marsden *et al* 2004: 79).

Critically, some communities are better suited to such developments, for example as a result of having previously worked in such ways which builds local capacity through community development practices in order to facilitate rural development, perhaps through a similar funding programme (see Perez 2000 for a discussion). Some have also suggested that LEADER problematically assumes place-based communities to be coherent and homogeneous without taking account of the contingent nature of rural development, for example as Shucksmith suggests 'communities of place are far from homogenous and include many 'communities of interest' with highly unequal capacities to act' (2000, p.208), and local groups may not give equal weight to discriminated groups. Illustrating an example from Italy, Trabalzi and De Rosa (2012: 123) describe how characteristic local situations have led to a weak LEADER programme, which has been susceptible to clientelism, neo-corporatism and political opportunism thus compromising local partnership working and prevented the development of institutional co-ordination and trust which are the basis of the LEADER programme. Buller (2002) also argues that LEADER can become a preferential avenue for powerful actors rather than a catalyst for inclusive territorial needs and interests.

As a programme, LEADER recognises that when suggesting new solutions to local specific problems, Rural Development Strategies must take account of availability of local resources, such as geographic, economic and socio-cultural contexts of the rural area in question (Pugliese 2001: 8), but the recognition of these contextual variations does not include the varying abilities to engage with the LEADER programme itself.

Building on programmes like LEADER, concepts of IRD were further embedded in the EU's rural policy framework with the 1996 Cork Conference on Rural Development, organised by the then Agriculture Commissioner, Franz Fischler. The resultant Cork Declaration envisaged rural development in the EU that would:

‘promote rural development which sustains the quality and amenity of Europe's rural landscapes (natural resources, biodiversity and cultural identity) so that their use by today's generation does not prejudice the options of future generations’<sup>14</sup>

The Cork conference didn't achieve its original aims as it coincided with the growing Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) crisis and certain ministers and farming leaders feared that rural development was to be promoted at the expense of agriculture (Lowe *et al* 2002). The European Union had also introduced legislation (EEC Regulation 2081/92) on Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)<sup>15</sup> as a way of protecting regional foods from appropriation, which Fischler (2004) saw as an integral part of rural development.

### ***UK Rural Development Policies***

So far I have focussed on developments at a European level. Rural development policy was simultaneously evolving in the UK, as agriculture's safeguarded position was also being confronted. The Conservative government produced three rural white papers, one each for England (*Rural White Paper 1995 – Rural England: A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside*), Scotland and Wales. The RWP was the first comprehensive statement on specifically *rural* policy for 50 years (Blake 1996), addressing the countryside as a whole and not just agriculture (Edwards and Woods 2004). There was recognition that rural no longer meant solely food production, and that agriculture ‘produced’ landscapes and should continue to further diversify.<sup>16</sup>

The English RWP emphasised the need for a living countryside which is prosperous and which contributed economically, but also built on discourses of the rural as idyllic, including a chapter on ‘Green and Pleasant Land’. The ‘cherished landscapes we all cherish’ were to be preserved as part of a national inheritance (John Major, foreword, DoE/MAFF, 1995:3), reinforcing the ideal of the English countryside as a landscape aesthetic (Bunce 1994: 34) and suggesting nostalgia for traditional rural life. The RWP essentialised supposed characteristics of ‘rural’ communities such as self-help and being close-knit. Another of the core messages was of government as a facilitator in the economic sphere and as a partner in the social sphere (Murdoch 1997c), indicating a shift towards governance rather than government (Goodwin

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<sup>14</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/cork\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rur/cork_en.htm)

<sup>15</sup> PDO and PGI (and the lesser-known Traditional Speciality Guaranteed, TSG) are a suite of measures devised by the EU, and based on France's AOC scheme, and provides legal protection to designated regional foods (Parrott *et al* 2002).

<sup>16</sup> <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1995/oct/17/rural-white-paper>

and Painter 1996; Jordan *et al* 2005), and embedding rhetoric of partnership working which has since become entrenched in government policy making generally. According to Stoker (1998: 17), *governance* refers to the emergence of 'governing styles in which the boundaries between and within public and private sectors have blurred', while for Rhodes (1996: 652-3) governance is synonymous with 'a change in the meaning of government...a new process of governing, or a changed condition of ordered rule, or the new method by which society is governed'. There are, however, no accepted definitions of governance (Jordan *et al* 2005).

The Conservative rural white papers framed rural areas as places of strong community ties and self-help<sup>17</sup>, drawing on a 'romantic naïve view of rural communities, where civic harmony and inclusion triumphs and there is little room for power struggles, exclusionary tactics by privileged groups or ideological conflicts' (Shortall 2004: 110). Self-help was particularly attractive as a result of restrictive public expenditure levels and was identified as one aspect of responsibility for rural development being shifted to rural citizens in a wider 'rolling back of the state' (Murdoch 1997c). Despite arguably representing a new direction in rural policy, Blake (1996: 214) described the RWPs as lacking a coherent vision of the direction of countryside policy and that the policies were primarily urban in origin and are merely being transferred to rural areas. Even though the EU was seen to be supporting economic diversification of rural areas (CEC 1988), Hodge (1996: 333) noted the RWP seemed not to support a similar view. Agricultural diversification is pivotal to the EU's efforts to recast agricultural goals for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and while the prevalence of the message is new, diversification<sup>18</sup> as a policy goal is less so (see Clark and Jones 2007: 168, who provide a broad summary). UK government policies, then, prioritised the diversification of agriculture and notions of the countryside as an economic resource which needed to contribute to national GDP. This broadly follows a political emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation that began in the late 1960s (Huggins and Williams 2009).

### ***Diversified Rural Economies***

Farm diversification<sup>19</sup> and agri-environment policies came to represent broader rural development activities and signalled a shift in the historical separation of agriculture from rural development (Ward 2000). However, most policies concentrated on on-farm diversifications

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<sup>17</sup> Not necessarily a characteristic of all rural communities (Wright 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Although in providing subsidies for production, CAP also works to encourage intensification (see Clark and Jones 2007).

<sup>19</sup> 'The use of on-farm resources for producing either new agricultural products which are not in surplus or non-agricultural products' (Shucksmith and Winter 1990: 429).

as a way of boosting farm incomes, rather than a more general diversification of rural economies.

Although Shucksmith and Winter (1990) argue that reliance on pluriactivity<sup>20</sup> was nothing new to farming families, political interest in farm diversification as a potential means to solve the ills of the farming industry was. The Conservative government's policies on farm diversification shifted the emphasis from farm support to a broader promotion of rural enterprise and a diversified rural economy (Shucksmith and Winter 1990: 430), (albeit still focusing on the farm household as the foundation of rural economies) and as such represents a key moment in the neoliberalisation of rural policy. Farm diversification schemes have been criticised for continuing to approach rural development from an agricultural perspective (Gasson 1988). Farm diversification has become a commonplace and unquestioned component of rural development, yet, Ward (2006: 13) suggests that the rationale for support for farm diversification within rural development strategies and action plans warrants a fundamental review.

Whilst interest in rural issues was mounting in this period, it is in the next period where interest really peaked as deep-set issues concerning industrial agriculture, and specifically animal movements, culminated in serious problems and a real search for alternatives became apparent.

#### **2.4. Rural policy creativity (Animal Disease and search for alternatives) (late 1990s – 2003)**

A discourse of crisis in agriculture became ingrained during this period; a discourse which continued to intensify with a number of concurrent crises affecting the sector. Most significantly, though, during this period a real crisis of confidence in agriculture was born out of animal diseases which entered the food chain and started to have consequences for human health too. These concerns about animal diseases and their impacts on human wellbeing brought about a shift in policy so that food itself became a priority alongside broader rural development policies.

In the UK the election of a new Labour government in 1997 signalled imminent changes for rural policy, although events beyond government control (particularly the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2001, see Winter 2003b) would eventually have a greater impact.

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<sup>20</sup> Pluriactivity is a term that is used to describe those farm households which engage in gainful activities, on or off the farm, in addition to farming (Gasson and Winter 1992: 388).

Labour's 1997 election manifesto promised to tackle a number of rural issues, including CAP reforms to save money, support rural economies and protect the environment. Other issues in their manifesto included freedom to explore the countryside and a free vote on whether hunting with hounds should be banned. Following their election success, 'rural' rose up the policy agenda as a result of intense campaigning surrounding the proposals to ban fox hunting (finalised in the Hunting Act 2004), and the Right to Roam (Countryside and Rights of Way Act, CRoW 2000) (Ward and Lowe 2007). The Countryside Alliance was a key lobbyist in suggesting that rural areas were 'under siege' from the new Labour government, threatening traditional rural ways of living. As a response the Labour government sought to prove its rural credentials with a Rural Economies report which laid the foundations for Labour's Rural White Paper (2000).

The Rural Economies report, overseen by the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU), was intended to provide a fresh approach to old problems, and to be cross-departmental, thus bypassing departmental 'silos' and special interests (Ward and Lowe 2007: 414). In accordance with wider Labour commitments to 'modernisation', the Rural Economies report sought to modernise rural policy-making, and suggested a marked shift from post-war concerns of agricultural productivity, favouring instead to talk of rural economies as being broadly similar to those of urban areas.

Reflecting a broader neoliberal perspective on the countryside, the report justified government support for rural areas based on their contribution to national GDP. The environment was emphasised, with farming's role as 'producing' landscapes rather than food. The 'environment' was also framed as an important resource for other economic activities including tourism, recreation and quality food production. Building on the diversification policies of previous governments, the report promoted food as a means of improving the competitiveness of farming through alternative forms of food provisioning such as organic production and farmers' markets.<sup>21</sup> This, it was suggested, will 'create a level playing field between farmers and other businesses' (p12). By changing the way farmers operate it was suggested that they can be more 'business-like', becoming more like other sectors of the economy<sup>22</sup> to improve the competitiveness<sup>23</sup> of farming and rural economies more widely.

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<sup>21</sup> Farmers' markets were introduced to the UK in 1997 (Kirwan 2003) and quickly caught the imagination of policy-makers who saw them as a way to diversify agriculture and 'reconnect' consumers with producers. Connections between consumers and producers remains a goal for policy-makers, see for example Forum for the Future's Farming for the Future special issue (March 2011).

<sup>22</sup> In the past many farmers had been networked into a range of organisations that acted on their behalf, particularly in relation to marketing their products, for example the Milk Marketing Board.

The overall message of the report is one of neoliberalism based on the principles of a free market and competition. Markets are suggested as being more important drivers than the state. The rural economies report was widely accepted by government (although see House of Commons 2000<sup>24</sup>).

The PIU report set the stage for the Labour government's refreshed Rural White Paper (RWP) in 2000 – *Our Countryside: The Future – a Fair Deal for Rural England*. This appeared to mark a promising and cohesive start for rural policy and outlined a range of policies and (funding) programmes designed to tackle rural issues holistically. Importantly, as Labour sought to position themselves as a party of the countryside as well as the city, the RWP highlighted the interdependencies between town and countryside, thus seeking to erode any differences between them (see Pahl 1966 for an earlier discussion of the rural-urban continuum). The RWP unquestioningly accepted the Conservative rhetoric of rural areas as repositories of community values such as 'self-help', again drawing on images of rural communities as 'authentic' and unchanging.

The RWP underlined the economic potential of rural areas – rural assets were to be utilised as economic resources to build business resilience. Farmers and rural businesses were offered support to become more economically self-sufficient. Farmers were to become more entrepreneurial and develop skills akin to those of the private sector (including marketing, innovation, utilising research and cooperation with others). Diversification was a key theme, in particular speciality foods and tourism enterprises, thereby further advancing the ideals of a post-productivist countryside (Marsden and Sonnino 2008: 425). The potential of alternative food networks to mitigate the crisis resulting from the negative impacts of 'conventional' agriculture (economically, socially and environmentally) stimulated policy makers' interest, as recognised in the RWP.

The RWP 2000 proposed new and creative policies for supporting rural development to be delivered by the Countryside Agency, including 'Eat the View' (DETR 2000: 93). 'Eat the View' encouraged consumers to purchase 'rural' products (primarily food and crafts) that are derived from sustainable production systems (Robinson 2003), to increase consumer awareness of the relationships between food production and the landscape. This, perhaps, introduced a subtle discourse of '*reconnection*' that came to dominate subsequent policies.

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<sup>23</sup> As Bristow (2010: 344) notes, 'competitiveness is everywhere...Local and regional strategies are littered with the language of winning, of gaining competitive advantage over other areas,...of competing for key resources such as funding, events, visitors...'

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmenvtra/32/3206.htm#n11>



In attempting to embed the 'rural' in policy making across the machinery of government, the RWP introduced '*rural proofing*' (a process of checking whether policy design would have unintended consequences for rural areas) for all departments. Significantly, this only applies to the policies and not the actual outcomes of delivering those policies (Milbourne 2008), as well as suggesting that rural problems and interests can be 'measured' and analysed leading to 'appropriate' (or even 'effective') responses (Woods 2008: 21). It was also intended that other organisations would follow this lead. Rural Affairs Forums were set up for the eight English regions (outside London) to bring together key rural organisations at a regional level with a direct route into government ministers through Defra.

### ***Continuing farming crises***

The government unfortunately suggested in the RWP (2000: 90) that the 'painful economic crisis in farming was not over yet'. This was an untimely comment in light of the impending Food and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak. The 2001 FMD outbreak not only had consequences for farming, but also tourism, and the government was generally viewed as having mismanaged the disease outbreak and responses to it (Scott *et al* 2004). It was one of the most severe disease outbreaks seen in the UK, although it spread to other European countries. In Britain, it caused a physical, psychological and symbolic upset, and, according to Scott *et al* (2004), may represent a crucial turning point in the intricate relations between predominantly urbanised economies and their rural counterparts. As Winter (2003: 53) notes, although FMD has no consequences for human food consumption, as it is not transmutable, it is paradoxical following the outbreak that policy initiatives concentrated on localised and shortened food chains. The foot and mouth epidemic which consumed much of rural Britain in 2001 was a stark reminder that the countryside has another (non-idyllic) face, and as a result, Cloke (2003: 3) suggests that previously idyllic landscape scenes were stripped of their essential animal contexts, and hidden away from much public view with disastrous consequences for the rural economy. Animal health issues had continually dogged rural policy, yet the FMD outbreak in 2001 was the starkest, with enduring images of burning pyres of animals. The integrated nature of the rural economy (including agriculture) was highlighted by the outbreak, with the significance of tourism being particularly highlighted (Ward *et al* 2004).

### ***Organisational Impacts of Farming Crises***

In the aftermath there was little clear direction for spending the funding<sup>25</sup> made available for rural areas, and no clear links were made between farming, land management and the wider rural economy (Ward and Lowe 2007), thereby missing an opportunity to integrate farming

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<sup>25</sup> The Business Recovery Fund, administered by the RDAs.

and rural development. FMD had consequences for government too. For the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), largely seen as a failing department over its handling of the BSE debacle, FMD signalled the end with then Prime Minister Tony Blair announcing a new Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) (Ward and Lowe 2007), the first time such diverse interests would be integrated in one department.

Defra's creation was particularly interesting for including 'the environment' in its responsibilities (Ward and Lowe 2007: 417), and for the omission of agriculture in the name. Defra heralded a change for rural affairs as for the first time a government department was specifically targeting *rural* areas, not solely *agriculture* as a proxy for rurality. This suggests the recognition of rural issues, at least in name if not in practice. As a result of the FMD crisis, and combined with the earlier BSE crisis, policy-makers began to really see the flaws of the framework established post-World War II, and increasing attention was paid to policy alternatives as a way of overcoming some of these problems (Morgan and Murdoch 2000; Wilson 2001; Hodge 2001).

Following a number of high profile disease outbreaks and deaths from food-borne illness, organisational and political manoeuvring led to the creation of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in 2000 and removed responsibility from MAFF as it was seen as inappropriate for MAFF to have responsibility for farming and food processing as well as food safety. The FSA was created to be non-ministerial, independent and transparent. The policy response to the BSE crisis was predominantly about the role of science in policy making (Hinchliffe 2001) and the ability of the public to comprehend risk and uncertainty in decision-making (for more thorough discussions see Hinchliffe 2001; Jacob and Hellstrom 2000; Frewer and Salter 2002), whereas with FMD the response was primarily in relation to institutional (mis)management of the disease and the interrelated nature of rural economies (Donaldson *et al* 2002).

### ***A new direction for farming – reconnecting producers and consumers***

While there was a lack of direction for spending the FMD Business Recovery Fund, Sir Donald Curry was enlisted to chair the Policy Commission on the Future of Food and Farming to mastermind a new direction for agriculture. A central tenet of Curry's Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming (2002) was of (re)connection between producers and consumers. Consumers were seen to be disconnected from food production due to an increasingly globalised food chain where production takes place at a distance from consumption. The Curry Report offered a framing device for emphasising local food at a government level.

The Curry Report (2002) was strongly influenced by the Prime Minister's Office which demanded a focus on the economic and environmental sustainability of the food and farming industries (Ward and Lowe 2007: 417), resulting in a highly sectoral, supply-chain perspective on the future of the farming industry. Little funding was made available to deliver the strategy (Clark and Jones 2007: 185). Missing from the Curry report and the government's subsequent strategy was a sense of how the development of farming might be better integrated with the economic development of rural areas. In refocusing attention and spending on the farming industry, wider rural development was again superseded by agricultural policy (Lowe and Ward 2007: 310). Conversely, in Marsden and Sonnino's (2008: 427) opinion the Curry Report prompted a new agenda for rural policy in the UK by redefining agriculture in more multifunctional terms. The Curry Report underscores the economic significance, despite the earlier PIU report claiming that its significance was considerably diminished. In addition, the report emphasised benefits to the rural landscape from farming, indicating farming's shift from food production to land management, but still reprioritising local food and rural development within government and related agencies.

The creation of Defra had not solved the problems of MAFF – policies and funding programmes continued to proliferate. In an attempt to address this confusion, Lord Haskins<sup>26</sup> was asked to review the delivery of rural programmes (HMSO 2003). The Haskins Report on Modernising Rural Delivery (MRD)<sup>27</sup> adopted a farm-centric stance and was starkly in favour of innovation in public service delivery. Haskins recommended the abolishment of the Countryside Agency to create a national land management agency (Natural England) – thereby effectively scrapping the rural programmes of the RWP. Haskins additionally called for greater 'local control over rural economic and social outcomes' (Haskins, 2003: 8) but the subsequent MRD programme has done little for rural local development, leaving many county councils weak in their rural economic development powers (Lowe and Ward 2007), as have the Rural Pathfinders where selected local authorities were allocated £100,000 to 'experiment' and 'innovate' new ways of delivering services in rural areas, for example transport and outreach information services. At the same time UK policy continued to be influenced by EU policy changes, which the next section will discuss in more detail.

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<sup>26</sup> Who had also served on the Sounding Board responsible for overseeing the development of the RWP 2000

<sup>27</sup> 'Modernisation' was a central strand of the Blair administration.

### ***European policy changes***

At the European level, following LEADER's pilot phase of IRD in 1991, the programme continued to evolve in this period. The EU's enthusiasm for the LEADER approach led to it being 'mainstreamed' into the Rural Development Regulation (RDR).<sup>28</sup> The RDR was proposed in Agenda 2000 (CEC 1997) as a new instrument to promote IRD (including agriculture) across the whole of the EU, and represented an attempt to make rural development policy a more significant element of the CAP (Dwyer *et al* 2002: 7). Dwyer *et al* (2002) suggest that the RDR was a prototype of rural-agricultural policy, designed to pave the way for more radical policies in future, although *how* radical was yet to be seen (Gorton *et al* 2009: 1308).

The RDR represents a mainstream approach to IRD through the CAP and has brought a new approach to European rural development policy, at least rhetorically if not in practice (Dwyer *et al* 2002: 15). Marsden and Sonnino (2008: 426) concur, and argue that the UK government's decision to implement 'modulation' (see footnote 26) reiterates the national commitment to a 'rural' rather than 'agricultural' model of multifunctionality, although the commitment to rural development may have been rather weak as few of the initiatives were entirely new and most had their roots in traditional CAP activity rather than signalling a radical shift to broader environmental and rural development that had been hoped for, although some progress has been made in promoting these goals (Dwyer *et al* 2002). It did not, therefore, offer the full scope for rural development that might have been achieved (e.g. Lowe *et al* 2002; Dwyer *et al* 2007). For Clark and Jones (2007: 169) the RDR symbolises European governments charting a new course for agriculture, with diversification remaining a core objective, yet their focus remains agricultural.

The CAP remained a contentious issue, both at the European and UK level. Agriculture's declining economic importance has fuelled government interest, particularly in the UK, for reforms to reduce the cost of the CAP in favour of a broader rural policy (Clark and Jones 2007: 184). In response, English rural policy has encouraged innovation and entrepreneurial business behaviour (i.e. diversification) while decreasing funding and subsidies (op. cit). For some, the reforms had not gone far enough in making the transition to IRD, for example, the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee stated:

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<sup>28</sup> The funding specifically allocated to the RDR was dwarfed by the main CAP budget (Dwyer *et al* 2002: 8), although Member States were given the discretion to switch funds from pillar 1 (agriculture) to pillar 2 (rural development more generally) (known as 'modulation') (Lowe *et al* 2002). Ilbery and Maye (2005: 332) suggest that growth in the 'local' food sector (and sustainable rural development more generally) has been encouraged by the introduction of the RDR.

...subsidies to farmers can only be justified if they are directed towards environmental protection and enhancement and supporting the social fabric of rural communities. Changes in this direction are starting to take place but the pace is slow and the need for a radical change in policy remains apparent and urgent (House of Commons 2000).

This underlined a shift in thinking about agriculture as an industry of national importance to one where support would be in return for desired outcomes (e.g. environmental protection). Multifunctionality was added to the EU's lexicon in the late 1990s (Clark and Jones 2007: 169) envisaging the production of non-market goods and services that go beyond farming, although this definition may vary for those in the farming industry, for whom it may represent something akin to diversification. Lucas (2002: 4-5) denounced the CAP for continuing to promote international competitiveness and thereby effectively encouraging agri-industrial farming methods and longer distance transport, which she saw as incompatible with the demand for farmers to raise their environmental and animal welfare standards. So, the CAP was not affecting broader rural development as envisaged under the RDR, nor perhaps broader aims desired by society.

As this section has so far demonstrated, organisational change was a key feature of this period, and it reflects a dynamic and messy policy environment wherein organisations are remoulded to meet political expectations and societal demands. Overall, policy complexity generally increased in delivering rural objectives (Marsden *et al* 2004: 80), and the next period sees further instability in rural policy.

## **2.5. The turbulence of rural development (2003 onwards)**

This final period sees the embedding of the policy responses to the FMD crisis and MRD. The start of the period saw interest in rural development and local food rising. However, agriculture's domination returned and marginalised broader rural economies, despite the continued reduction of agricultural employment. Concerns about the evisceration of rural issues in government policy and action emerged, with Ward and Lowe (2007) suggesting that rural is being 'written out' of national policy priorities. This eclipsing of rural issues occurred through an increased focus on innovation, which has been assumed to be an urban phenomenon (Simmie 2003), and key policies which focus on city regions that largely exclude rural areas (Lowe and Ward 2007). Later, interest shifted to food security, health and climate change, and less on rural development – rural economies and rural areas slipped down the policy agenda.

The concept of innovation gained prominence in government, with increased significance in policy terms,<sup>29</sup> yet there tended to be a presumption that innovation relates only to urban activity. Central Government tended to neglect rural areas as loci for innovation, focusing instead on cities and their adjacent regions. Innovation is also of great concern to the EU, with the then EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, declaring that 'innovation is the keyword for the future of our agriculture and rural development policies' (Times HES 2005), firmly suggesting that innovation is applicable to rural areas.

Mahroum *et al* (2007) further erase the idea of rural and urban as being different when they highlight examples of *rural* innovations, and argue that changes in rural areas, such as the spread of broadband, population growth, and a changing employment sector are leading to rural areas that are less distinct from their urban counterparts. Mahroum *et al* (2007: 10) conclude that the distinction between rural and urban *innovation* is, therefore, also blurred, yet they see rural innovation as being driven by demands from urban populations, for example they argue demands for healthy food (such as organic or 'quality' food) drives innovation in traditional rural industries of food and farming, although this position would see rural development as solely exogenous. They appear to conceptualise rural areas as inert, responding only to urban demands, especially those of urban consumers.

Defra's Rural Pathfinder programme espoused the innovation discourse (as promoted by Haskins' 2003 review), through rural service delivery 'experiments' at the local level (as part of the Labour government's commitment to devolution) with the overall aim of mainstreaming best practice (Goodwin 2008). Lessons learnt from the programme have not been taken forward representing both a missed opportunity for Defra, and an initial deteriorating interest from the UK government in rural development and rural economies. Interest in other policy areas such as climate change and the environment began to rise up Defra's policy agenda.

Four years after the RWP, the Labour Government attempted to put the earlier troubles relating to rural policy behind them by producing a Rural Strategy (2004). In her introduction to the Strategy, the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Margaret Beckett, outlined the government's approach to rural development. She placed a strong emphasis on economic development and prosperity in rural areas (HMSO 2004). She also talked of 'customers' instead of rural residents, supporting Shortall's (2004: 111) view that the

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.nesta.org.uk/library/documents/Essays%20-%20Rural%20Innovation%20ES.pdf> (accessed 11 June 2010) A research report coordinated by NESTA specifically on rural innovation

importance of economic development as an objective is clear in rural development. Rural development has increasingly been viewed as synonymous with rural *economic* development, as interventions in rural areas are justified by the economic contribution of rural areas.

The Rural Strategy (Defra 2004) has been criticised for being more engrossed with the institutions regulating and funding agriculture and land management than with the provision of a broad policy framework for rural areas (Ward and Lowe 2007: 9). Thus, the Rural Strategy further exacerbated the messiness of rural policy-making by concentrating on organisational change, rather than producing a clear vision for rural areas.

In a clear statement of the importance of the rural economy in justifying public support for rural areas, the government's rural advisor Ewen Cameron (Chair of the then Countryside Agency; 2004) reiterated:

‘it is crucial for both the countryside and the country as a whole that rural economies prosper and grow...they contribute significantly to the health of *UK plc* but also because growth in *rural economies* is the best way of helping to tackle unemployment and other forms of disadvantage among the 14 million or so people living in rural areas. Prosperous businesses are also vital for conserving, maintaining and enhancing the fabric of rural areas in their villages, market towns and in the open countryside’.  
(emphasis added)

The UK is envisaged as a private sector enterprise, UK Plc, business growth is seen as the means to securing rural areas' futures, not just for people but for landscapes and the environment. Cameron goes on to justify local products available through farmers' markets, farm shops and in market towns for the benefit they bring to rural economies.

The government's dissolution of the Countryside Agency (CA) in 2006 symbolised fading interest in 'rural' as a policy agenda. The Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) (established by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) would replace the CA but had diminished financial and human resources.

However, interest in rural issues remained on the agenda internationally. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published 'The New Rural Paradigm' in 2006, suggesting that changing rural economies render sectoral policies inappropriate and ineffective in stimulating rural development. The 'new rural paradigm' is based on new forms

of governance required to implement area-based policies to achieve horizontal coordination and communication mechanisms between a wide range of actors at national and regional levels, as well as vertically across different tiers of government (p139). The OECD sees this new rural paradigm focus on *places* instead of sectors and on *investments* instead of subsidies. As with the UK government, the OECD promotes rural development policies to release the economic potential of rural areas. The OECD and the UK government both justify public intervention in rural areas on the basis of overcoming market failures and ensuring the provision of public goods, illustrating the strength of the neoliberal discourse in policy terms.

In response, Ward and Brown (2009: 1238) use the ideas presented in the New Rural Paradigm in a later review of OECD countries and rural development; they note a shift from exogenous development (subsidies and support) towards endogenous development (a focus on improving indigenous assets and capacities, p1239). They argue that regions have become the focus of development policies and that within these regions, urban areas are assumed to have greater significance. Rural areas are viewed as undynamic and lacking innovation.

The dominance of urban areas in policy (and the associated diminutive position of rural areas) can be illustrated with reference to city regions. City regions are a key policy focus for the UK government. The city region approach reproduces a rural development dilemma as it establishes and reinforces out-of-date notions of geographical centrality and hierarchies, and actively marginalises (rural) places (Ward 2006: 6). For the most part, city regions tend to ignore rural areas, viewing them as recreational spaces for city dwellers rather than economically viable and dynamic areas. Despite criticisms of city regions and the potential for obfuscating the rural, proponents argue, 'when placed within the context of a given city region, the categories of urban and rural can be considered in a manner that more adequately reflects their inter-relatedness, especially relating to labour markets and housing markets, and shopping and leisure patterns' (Parr, 2005: 565; quoted in Woods 2009: 852). Consequently, 'the competitive and complementary aspects of urban–rural relations become more transparent' (Parr, 2005: 565; quoted in Woods 2009: 852). Despite a general blurring of boundaries taking place more widely, Woods (2009) warns that the city-region approach risks addressing rural localities solely in terms of their relation to the urban, disregarding any sense of an overarching, interregional rural condition, and marginalizing rural concerns within structures dominated economically and demographically by cities.

As interest in rural economies waned, the summer of 2007 pushed them back up the agenda, with another, smaller, outbreak of foot and mouth disease, flooding in rural areas, the Taylor



review of land use and planning (2008), and a rural economies report from the EFRA Select Committee (2008). The EFRA report outlined a general concern to reinstate rural issues in national policy priorities, in response to what they saw as a general erosion of interest in rural areas and rural issues. Despite these reports and their emphases on rural issues, relatively little activity occurred subsequently. Rural economies and rural communities continued to be overshadowed by interest in, and concern about, food security, health and climate change.

### ***Food Security***

Food security has risen up global and national policy agendas (Tomlinson, in press). At the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) "World Food Security" conference in June 2008, the Director-General of FAO, Jacques Diouf, stated that food production would need to double by 2050 to feed a world population of 9 billion. The doubling of food production for a global population of 9 billion was a projection only, and is contested by some, yet has already been incorporated into subsequent policies, including the Labour government's Food 2030 strategy. Interest in local food has also moved from being presented as a way of sustaining UK rural farm businesses and rural economies towards discourses of food security, global trade, health and climate change. Concern is now about meeting growing global demand for food traded openly and globally, in a context of challenging production conditions, economic recession and high levels of inflation.

At the national level, food security was also becoming an issue and the then Defra minister Hilary Benn's speech at the Oxford farming conference (2009) was widely taken to be indicative of Defra's priorities:

The best way for the UK to ensure its food security in the 21st century will be through strong, productive and sustainable British agriculture, and trading freely with other nations...I want British agriculture to produce as much food as possible...the only requirements should be, first, that consumers want what is produced and, second, that the way our food is grown both sustains our environment and safeguards our landscape.

Hilary Benn's comments demonstrate Defra's continued concerns with the environment rather than with broader rural social and economic development, yet producing as much food as possible may be contradictory to environmental preservation. As Defra (2008) stated the UK government believes that effectively functioning markets are fundamental to ensuring global

food security and remains committed to continuing market liberalisation through the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations and reform of the EU's CAP.

The following summer, the EFRA Select Committee published its report on 'Securing Food Supplies up to 2050: the challenges faced by the UK' (2009) and suggested that Defra had neglected food policy in the past. The report's mantra was of increased global trade on a large-scale to meet growing future demand and of increased production. The UK's, and other parts of Europe's, favourable environmental conditions confer an obligation to maximise food production. In this context, they argued, the EU must recognise the continuing importance of European farmers and the long-term contribution they could make to secure the world's food supplies.<sup>30</sup> Combined with the FAO's comments on global population and a doubling of food production, agriculture is allotted a future of intensive production, rather than the agro-ecological approach championed by Pretty (2008) and others. As such local food received little consideration in the report, continuing with the framing discourse of 'reconnection' rather than as a way of ameliorating food security issues. The Committee commented that:

"We welcome the increasing enthusiasm among consumers for buying food that is local to a particular area of the UK, and also for growing their own food. In terms of overall production, these trends are a small contribution to a huge challenge, but they are a way of reconnecting people with food production" (2009: 30)

Another report at the same time, from the Royal Society (2009) and entitled '*Reaping the benefits: Science and the sustainable intensification of global agriculture*' added weight to the argument in favour of genetic modification as a solution to such problems, and a discourse of 'sustainable intensification' encourages a continued role for productivist production techniques. The Cabinet Office Strategy Unit's *Food Matters* (2009) report set out the last Government's future strategic policy objectives for food, thus setting the scene for the Food 2030 strategy. Curry and Owen (2009) suggest that *Food 2030* was a response to the criticism that there was a distinct lack of clarity on food strategy from the government. *Food 2030* identified the last government's intentions for addressing food security and sustainability of food supply for the UK. The report was criticised for making the right noises but containing few new and original ideas (Marsden 2010a), reading more as a list of existing programmes

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<sup>30</sup> A view recently supported by Peter Kendall, president of the National Farmers' Union when he said 'The food needs of the world can only be met when the rich countries produce more and not less. In this context, British agriculture has a bright future. We have a good structure and a history of innovation, and the UK seems likely to be less affected by global warming' (Kendall, 19 June 2010) – climate change is thus seen as an economic opportunity for 'innovative' countries like the UK.

and plans. Particularly problematic is that the global and the local are conflated and elided (Marsden 2010a: 444). Moreover, a limited view of sustainability is taken within the strategy, focusing on maximising production rather than, say, changing diets. The strategy envisages future food delivery through the supermarkets and has little to say about other modes of accessing food. In addition, the strategy envisages that rural economies in the UK are now no longer solely associated with agriculture but primarily with rural tourism – this view of rural economies presents a narrow vision of economic activity in rural areas and would leave rural areas as structurally weak as if agriculture was the sole economic activity. Food 2030 arguably missed an opportunity to link growth in food demand and production with the revival of rural economies in the UK, akin to Ward and Lowe’s (2007) suggestion that rural is being ‘written out’ of national policy priorities.

Further evidence of the erosion of rural priorities at the national level can be substantiated by the new Public Service Agreements<sup>31</sup> (PSAs). The previous PSA relating to Defra (PSA4) was specifically rural. Although PSA4 was criticised by Haskins for being ‘woolly and aspirational’ it specifically recognised rural issues. The two new PSAs are:

- Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future
- Lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change.

PSAs are accorded higher priority than the new Departmental Strategic Objectives<sup>32</sup> (DSOs), which sit under the revised PSAs. As with the PSAs, the DSOs for Defra relate more to climate change than rural affairs:

- A healthy, resilient, productive and diverse natural environment
- Sustainable patterns of consumption and production
- Economy and society resilient to environmental risk and adapted to the impacts of climate change
- *Strong rural communities*
- *A thriving farming and food sector* with an improving net environmental impact
- Sustainable development championed across government, across the UK, and internationally

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<sup>31</sup> Public Service Agreements (PSAs) were first introduced in the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review which set around 600 performance targets for around 35 areas of Government, and have been reviewed a number of times since. PSAs detail the aims and objectives of government departments for three-year timeframes.

<sup>32</sup> Supporting objectives setting out actions to achieve the PSAs under which they sit.

- A respected Department delivering efficient and high quality services and outcomes.  
(Defra 2010, emphasis added)

So the rural communities and food and farming DSOs relate *only* to Defra and represent another missed opportunity for other departments to ‘mainstream’ rural issues. Rural proofing as an adjunct to a meaningful inclusion of ‘rural’ in policy making may remain prevalent, especially as issues of climate change and sustainable development are foregrounded.

A change of UK government in 2010 signalled possible changes for rural issues. The 2010 election manifestos of the three main parties (Labour, Conservative and the Liberal Democrats) said very little about food, farming or rural development. The Green Party had the most to say about food, stating that they would be in favour of more localised food chains, organic agriculture and support for smaller farms, although there was no mention of rural development. The Labour manifesto made little mention of food or rural development – focusing on food security instead. The Conservative manifesto stated that they will promote sustainable farming in a chapter on Protecting the Environment. Indeed, the rhetoric of the manifesto is similar to post-war ideas of farmland as a national resource at the heart of our food security, with development on fertile land prevented. Continuing to draw on traditional notions of the ‘rural’, the Conservative party website suggests that *‘Our countryside is home to beautiful landscapes, spectacular views and some of Britain’s most loved towns and villages’*,<sup>33</sup> signalling a return to wartime rhetoric on a ‘green and pleasant land’. Early indications are that food and farming will be foregrounded, whereas rural issues more broadly receive less attention.

## **2.6. THE CHANGING ITALIAN POLICY CONTEXT**

Following on from the introduction of the changing policy landscape in the UK, I will now explore the context of changes taking place in Italy. This will be a briefer summary of changes as access to Italian policy documents has not been as easy as for UK policy documents. Moreover, many changes at the European level have applied equally to Italy as the UK (even if state level interpretation and acceptance of such changes might differ). I will begin with a brief introduction to Italian politics.

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<sup>33</sup> [http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where\\_we\\_stand/Countryside.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Countryside.aspx), accessed 28 April 2011.

### ***State level changes***

As a newly unified country (in 1861) Italy has been a divided country, with linguistic and cultural variation. These varying local identities have not easily led to a national identity (Lanaro 1989: 28) – the unification ‘made Italy but not Italians’ as statesman D’Azeglio stated (cited in Partridge 1998: 1). Agnew (1997: 37) suggests that Italians are generally suspicious of the state. The country’s history of Fascism, Communism and Catholicism has strongly shaped future developments, especially relating to food (Helstosky 2004; Leitch 2003). The popular food guide, *Gambero Rosso*, was initiated in 1986 by the Communist daily newspaper, *Il Manifesto* (Leitch 2003: 450).

According to Partridge (1998: vi) Italy has long been stereotyped as a nation of upheaval and chaos, in which weak and incompetent political leaderships govern precariously in the face of an anarchic society. Although not specifically relating to local food or rural development, and being a stereotype rather a reality, this statement illustrates the complexity of politics and policy making within Italy. This ‘chaotic-ness’ of Italian politics has led to a general metaphor of ‘backwardness’ as an appropriate description of the social and political character of the country and its population (Agnew 1997: 23). He suggests that this often arises to ‘explain’ certain conditions such as organised crime, the Mafia, north-south disparities and so on, and goes on to note that it has become so embedded as to have become a myth about Italy. Agnew suggests that Italy is particularly presented as backward in comparison to the so-called modern countries of Northern Europe. This representation of Italy as backward is reiterated by Italian and foreigners alike. Italian politics are besieged with an image of clientelism (Agnew 1997: 28), for example the exchange of votes for favours, or giving planning permission or funding to friends and supporters. Italy’s notorious political corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency stems from the deliberate behaviour of parliamentary officials, who were concerned to enhance their own re-election prospects, according to Golden (2003: 189). Her view is in contrast to previous explanations offered by Banfield (1958) and Putnam (1993) that Italy’s corruption and poor institutional performance stemmed from an outgrowth of a weak civic culture and a low level of social capital (and ultimately of bad history).

### ***State bodies and organisations relating to local food and rural development***

The Italian national government departments that relate to local food and rural development are the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (Ministero delle Politiche Agricole, Alimentari e Forestali, or MiPAAF), Ministry of Environment (Ministero dell’Ambiente) and the Ministry of Economic Development (Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico).

In 1999 the Italian regions were given the power to determine their own form of government by being given the power to directly elect regional presidents, which represented an evolution of relations between the centre and the periphery (Baldini and Vassallo 2000). This follows a long period of centralisation since Italy was unified in 1861. Regional governments are responsible for the regions, which are divided into provinces, covered by local government (l'amministrazione locale). Below the provincial level are communes, with local organisations and mayors (i sindaci). In mountainous areas like the Abruzzo another layer of local government sits in between the region and the provinces – the Mountain Communities (comunità montagna).

There are a number of non-governmental bodies that lobby and campaign on agricultural, food and rural development issues. Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori (CIA) is the Italian equivalent to the National Farmers' Union in the UK, while Coldiretti represents smaller farmers and cultivators within Italy and at the European level – in 2008 Coldiretti created an organisation (La Fondazione Campagna Amica – Foundation of Countryside Friends) to be open to all citizens with an interest in farming and the countryside and to educate people in the ways of life of agriculture and rural areas, thus broadening the appeal of farming. Confagricoltura tends to represent the larger farmers. Each of these farming support organisations have branches at the national, regional and local level throughout Italy. In addition, there are organisations that support particular types of farming, such as organic. The 'Associazione Italiana per l'Agricoltura Biologica' (AIAB) supports organic farmers and is part of the international movement La Via Campesina which represents small and medium sized farmers globally.

Slow Food is a non-governmental movement arguing in favour of localised and artisanal food rather than globalised, placeless food. Although the movement began in Italy, it has now spread to over 100 countries. Carlo Petrini, a journalist, founded the movement which orchestrated a protest against the MacDonald's restaurant at the Spanish Steps in Rome in 1986 (Schlosser 2008<sup>34</sup>). Leitch (2003: 442) links the emergence of Slow Food to broader political and institutional changes taking place in Italy. Slow Food aims to protect agrobiodiversity, and has a vision of a new agriculture based on the existence of small producers and local food economies (Lotti 2010: 79).

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<sup>34</sup> [www.stuffedandstarved.org/drupal/node/041](http://www.stuffedandstarved.org/drupal/node/041). Accessed 30 September 2008.

### ***Agriculture in Italy***

In contrast to some other European countries, Italian agriculture did not undergo a wholesale conversion towards productive specialisation and the externalisation of farm functions (Gundle 2000); rather modernisation has been adopted to a different extent in different regions (Ventura *et al* 2006: 22). They suggest that important differences exist due to maintenance of traditional products connected with Italian food culture. The parts of Italy not suitable for modernised industrial agriculture have remained marginal, and it is here that multifunctional agriculture is most evident – Ventura *et al* (2006) argue that multifunctional agriculture has been a vehicle for achieving adequate income for farming families. Ventura *et al* (2006: 23) suggest that the CAP has favoured the commodity products of northern Italy and has provided relatively little support for Mediterranean produce, despite Gray (undated) arguing that the EU's vision of rurality was of small family farms, and not of the vast empty spaces of industrial farming.

Italy has a strong heterogeneity of the institutional and administrative contexts which have guided the evolution of the agricultural sector since the mid-1980s. Agriculture was the first sector to be devolved to the regions from central government due to its territorial specificity, leading to regional differences in policy terms for supporting rural development as well as regional differences in planning and administrative capabilities (Ventura *et al* 2006: 23). They also argue (p26) that the reduction in farm numbers has been slower in Italy, apparently leading to more vibrant rural communities, although this is not universally the case. Small and medium enterprises in Italy, producing food by traditional processes destined for local markets are safeguarded by a national regulation limiting the number of multiple retailers (Ventura *et al* 2006: 27). Regional governments are responsible for producing the Rural Development Plans for spending EU structural funds.

### ***Italian Rural Development***

In Italy, rural development policy is decentralised to the provincial (sub-regional) level, where public expenditure priorities are fixed and policy decisions applied. Differences in organisational capacity have led to regional differences in rural development activities, with supposedly 'competent' regions benefiting to a greater extent (Ventura *et al* 2006: 27).

Ventura *et al* (2006: 30) describe the role of non-policy actants in the evolution of rural development in Italy. For example social movements have driven developments in rural activities, including Slow Food and organic food. They argue that new rural economic activities often build on the strong cultural identity of local forms of agriculture and the food products

generated by these (Ray 1998; Bessiere 1998). New farm entrants with high levels of education and entrepreneurial spirit are credited with being able to tap into the markets for such products.

Ventura *et al* (2006) used the model used by Marsden and Kitchen (2009 see Figure 8, p. 55) in describing the new rural development paradigm of 'broadening, deepening and regrounding'. Ventura *et al* (2006: 36) suggest that although the interest of consumers and institutions in regionally specific products is growing continuously, EU regulations on food hygiene are threatening to compromise their survival. Following campaigning, the Italian government agreed to classify traditional products which could continue to be produced without changing techniques, instruments or procedures. With Decree number 350/99 the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry laid down rules to classify 'traditional' products. To be included in the list of 'traditional' foods a product must have been produced, processed and ripened according to production techniques that have been followed for at least 25 years. In terms of organic farming, EU and regional policies have been important in encouraging the growth of the sector in Italy.

LEADER is the responsibility of the regional governments in Italy, who work with the national level MiPAAF. Regional governments are diverse in Italy, leading to different styles and approaches to implementing LEADER, which influences progress made in delivering LEADER programmes (see Osti 2000). Osti (p175) suggests that the regional governments and the Mountain Communities can seek to exert powerful influences over the LEADER programmes, and that fierce territoriality and institutional overcrowding have impacted on the LAGs and LEADER more generally. There is a national network that coordinates LEADER activity and share experiences between Local Action Groups (LAGs). In terms of LEADER in Italy, Ventura *et al* (2006: 43) suggest that the bottom up planning approach was new and therefore partnerships (Local Action Groups) had to be established anew. Also, the concept of innovation in a rural context needed defining, which led to protracted negotiations with the EU. The role of animateurs is reported to be a real innovation for Italian rural development.

### ***Italy and Food***

'The Italian diet', is an essentialised concept, with assumptions about strong food cultures, the presence of local food shops and producers and committed consumers. Helstosky (2006: 1) states that what we understand to be 'the Italian diet' is a recent creation and bears little semblance to the inadequate diet endured by many Italians in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – she attributes this to the stony geography of the country as well as political, economic and



religious influences. For some the idea of a national Italian cuisine is a fiction, due to the heterogeneity of foods found regionally in Italy, yet Montanari (2006) states that building an identity based on food was more successful than the political unification. Mussolini and the Fascist party came to power in 1922 and set out to control every aspect of food consumption and to nationalise Italian cuisine (Helstosky 2006: 4). Some of the root of the idea of 'the Italian diet' can be traced to the large numbers of migrants leaving Italy, who constructed a national cuisine outside of Italy. O'Loughlin (2011) adds to the idea of Italians as being committed to their food, in stating that they are the lowest users of online food shopping in Europe, compared to the UK which are the greatest users of online shopping. While much has been written about the history of Italian food, much less has been written about policies relating to local food and rural development. As Vecchio (2010) suggests farmers' markets have received a great deal of attention in Italy's non-academic media, especially in farming, life-style, culinary, and travel magazines as well as in newspapers, television and radio, yet there is scant specific academic literature. Where such literature does exist, it is mostly by historians interested in the cultural and anthropological features (Montanari, 1994), or by scholars concerned by its normative aspects (Colaneri, 2008; Rossi *et al* 2008, both cited in Vecchio 2010).

Legislation relating to farmers' markets and other forms of direct selling by farmers in Italy was established under article 4 of Legislative decree 228 of 18 May 2001, which is still in force (Vecchio 2010). This opportunity for farmers was reinforced by article 1, paragraph 1065, of the 2007 Finance act: 'to promote the development of markets with direct sales from farmers, by decree of the Minister for Food and Agriculture and Forest Policies'. Despite this legislative basis, the farmers' markets are not regulated (in terms of distance food may travel, or types of food eligible).

## **Summary**

Although this has been a somewhat brief and non-exhaustive review of policy developments relating to local food and rural development in Italy, it has provided an opportunity to set the political scene for the Italian fieldwork, and to highlight some of the key similarities and differences between the UK and Italy.

## **2.7. Changing Political Landscapes – Conclusion**

There is a general lack of clarity over what rural areas should be used for and what policy-makers should be supporting that has continued since WWII. Moving from a position where

agriculture should be supported to produce food at all costs, opinion has drifted towards agriculture as damaging to the environment and rural areas as spaces of consumption as well as production. Although agriculture is important, its continuing relevance to rural economies can be challenged as concentrating on agriculture alone represents a narrow vision of how rural economies operate (Atterton and Ward 2007). Competing interests have sought to influence the direction of government policies, including the farming lobbies of the National Farmers' Union and Country Landowners Association, to local government, the environmental groups and others, with varying success. Much the same applies in Italy, with agriculture's national economic relevance declining and with organisations representing larger farms, like CIA, potentially sidelining organisations representing smaller farmers (such as Coldiretti). The concerns of smaller farms in Italy include organic production, an anti-GM stance and the preservation of family farming, set in contrast to those of larger farmsteads. However, as has been shown in this Chapter, a number of policy changes have been as a result of either things outside the control of policy makers and lobby groups, or as a result of unintended policy outcomes.

As far as policy concerns go, this review of the policy landscape has identified a turbulent interest in rural development and local food. Although rural development *per se* has somewhat slipped off the policy priority agenda (eclipsed by climate change, food security and health, and urban-centric policies), rural areas and rural economies have an important role to play in delivering these agendas. The challenge remains to see how rural development can continue to operate in the UK, rather than suffering at the expense of new national level priorities. Lowe and Ward (2007: 308-9) identify three fundamental causes of this systematic (rural) policy failure:

- I. the dominance of an overly agricultural approach to rural development;
- II. the eclipse of rural affairs in the responsible central government department, Defra;
- III. urban-centred approaches to rural and regional development.

In the UK the Coalition government's policies regarding farming, rural development and food are emerging. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government will no doubt change the policy landscape (including the abolishment of Regional Development Agencies and the Commission for Rural Communities), but as yet it remains to be seen what the impact of this will be on agriculture and rural development. The New Secretary of State for Defra, Caroline Spelman MP, has announced plans to introduce an ombudsman to oversee supermarkets'

treatment of farmers, to increase production and cut packaging, has pledged to provide broadband to rural areas, and embarked on a massive push for honest "country of origin" labelling (Hall, 19 June 2010), thereby potentially signalling an emphasis on food policy by the new government. Rural development may enter a new round of interest for the incoming coalition government. In Italy, the national government has not changed during the course of my research, although the regional government in the Abruzzo has changed from the Left to the Right, bringing policy changes at the regional level.

Additionally, the future of European agriculture is not clear and different member states will be looking to achieve different ends from the next round of reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy. One of the pressing issues that will be on the agenda is the forthcoming reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in 2013. CAP reform in 2013 offers scope for substantial reform as the budget for the CAP can be changed; there will no doubt be varied plans from member states about the best way forward. Indeed, member states will be looking to achieve a range of outcomes from the CAP reform, as an example from the UK demonstrates – the Department of Health has suggested that the CAP should focus more on public health, paying farmers to produce healthier food (Smith, 21 June 2010). A recent speech by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Dacian Cioloş, emphasised the wider aspects of the CAP not just being an agricultural policy:

*'The Common Agricultural Policy is for all of society. It is **your** policy, not just for farmers. European agriculture is about food security, but also about landscapes, employment, environment, climate change. Let us know what your needs and expectations are for the future of agriculture and rural areas in Europe. Help us put forward a policy that serves them best!'*

(Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/debate/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/debate/index_en.htm))

Having introduced the core policy developments that are relevant to research into how local food can contribute to rural development, and what rural policy makers can do to better support this field, the next Chapter will review the academic literatures surrounding policy and policy making, how academics have theorised rural development and the recent increasing interest in alternative food networks as presenting a challenge to the conventional food system, which has come to be regarded as unsustainable and disconnected from consumers. The final section of the literature review will cover the ways that rural areas have been thought about in the two case study countries, and in particular the continuing relevance of notions of rurality and idyllicism.

## **CHAPTER 3. ACADEMIC THEORISATIONS OF POLICY MAKING, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL FOOD**

### **3.1 Introduction to Literature Review**

By necessity, I deal with a number of different literatures, which although related often remain separate and distinct. In this chapter I critique the three key bodies of literature which are relevant to my research, including academic theorisations of policy processes, rural development, alternative and local food. In addition, the final section will address conceptualisations about rurality as a 'category' and its relationship with notions of the rural as being idyllic. Overall, while greater links are made between local food and rural development, processes and theories of policy making are less likely to be included in such studies.

The research is specifically concerned with policy making for local food systems, and as such slices through thinking about rural development, local food networks, and policy processes. Notions of the rural idyll as being important for rural development and especially local food emerged from the research and subsequent analysis. Thus, the ways that 'the rural idyll' continues to permeate thinking about rural areas and the countryside have emerged as a key tension between academic thinking and practice on the ground.

As Scott *et al* (2007) have argued the 'rural idyll' has been a concept that historically has shaped much policy and public response to changes in the countryside. They also argue that the term 'countryside' is deeply embedded in the UK's culture, and that resilient images portray a rural idyll with attractive farmed and wooded landscapes. In the UK, the countryside is strongly associated with a beautiful landscape and a specific country lifestyle (Boyle and Halfacree 1998). Representations of the countryside are through positive images surrounding many aspects of rural lifestyle, community and landscape. The rural idyll 'presents happy, healthy and problem-free images of rural life safely nestling with both a close social community and a contiguous natural environment' (Clope and Milbourne 1992: 359). These images are powerfully represented through the media, as well as within the various institutional structures relating to rural areas. McLaughlin (1986) suggested that policy makers in 1980s UK were susceptible to selective myopia, holding views and images of rural areas that were filtered through a 'village England' ideology, based on a romantic aesthetic. And writing ten years later, Jones (1995, following Short 1991) questions the extent to which popular discourses of 'the rural' influence professional discourses, in how professionals both see and

subsequently act towards the rural, and problems in rural areas. This research is concerned to address the ways that thinking about the rural has changed, or not, and whether this influences how policy addresses rural issues and concerns.

Notwithstanding academic debates surrounding the continued relevance of 'rural' as a concept different to 'urban', the category of 'rural' may still be utilised by social groups in their struggles over what constitutes legitimate economic activity, land development or social practices beyond towns and cities (Ward 2002: 172). Rural areas are complex places in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and changes in mobilities, transportation and communication have brought a wider range of influences to bear on rural areas (Scott *et al* 2007), although they only suggest that rural areas are being penetrated by urban values and influences, it is arguable that rural areas increasingly also have influence beyond their immediate boundaries.

'Rural' as a term is malleable, which has enabled different groups to interpret it to suit their requirements, and has led to continued contestations over what it can really mean (Ward 2002). For example the Labour Party's efforts to present itself as a 'one nation' party with political support in all regions (urban and rural) led it to define 'rurality' in the same way that county constituencies are designated as urban or rural, despite 'rural' constituencies often being primarily urban with a minimal presence of 'rural'. Ward (2002: 180) argues that this provides an example of how the malleability of the category rural can be utilised and exploited by socio-political actors when seeking to derive legitimacy for their activities. Illustrating the continued presence of thinking through a lens of rural idyllicism, Bell and Jayne (2010) found that notions of rural as being somehow idyllic were important in their research into creative industries in the countryside, influencing views regarding what could be rural 'creativity' as opposed to urban 'creativity'.

From here, this review of the academic literature will begin by reviewing how 'policy' as both a concept and a process has been thought about by political scientists whilst generally being overlooked by rural geographers. The ways that rural geographers have thought about policy will be addressed in the subsequent section on rural development. Whether food and agriculture should constitute a core aspect of rural development will be critiqued, before Section 3.3 which will look at the rise of alternative (or local) food networks and how geographers have attempted to make sense of such developments. The final section of the literature review will look at how notions of the rural as a place of tranquillity, authenticity and as a generally idyllic antidote to urban and modern worlds.

### **3.2 Policies of rural development and local food**

The last section revealed the ways that a number of core discourses have affected policies relating to agriculture and food production. In particular, key themes have been nostalgic and idyllic imaginations of rural areas and a broad discourse of innovation and diversification. Both have become embedded and continue to influence thinking today. Following on from the overview of the UK policy landscape, this section will examine the ways that policy-making has been conceptualised academically before illustrating theories of rural development.

#### **3.2.1. What is policy? Evolution of current thinking**

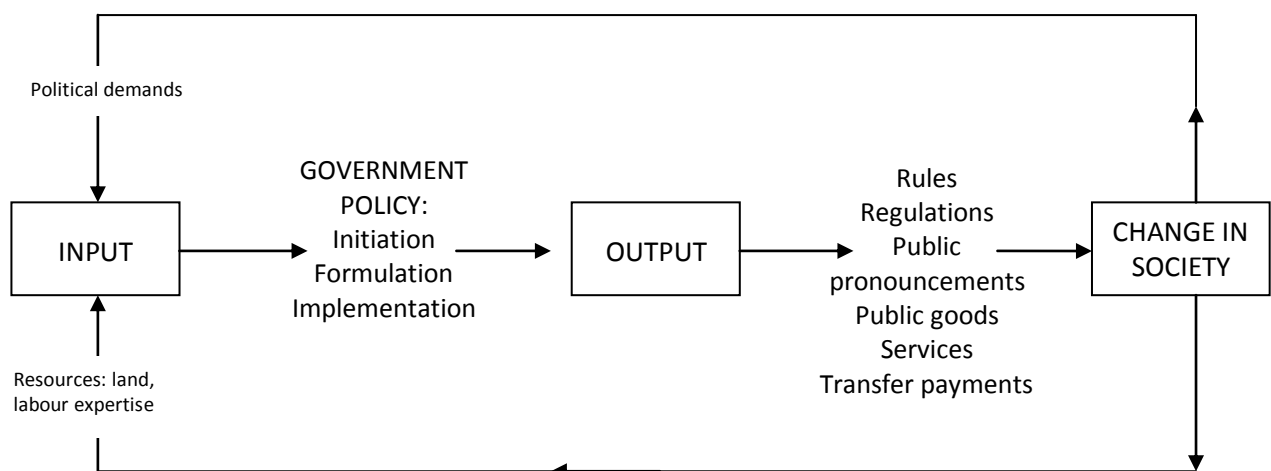
What is policy and what do policy-makers do? Policy is an ambiguous term (Spicker 2006: 15) and is therefore not easy to define, either as an entity or as a process, with Woods (2005: 130) having noted that rural policy is particularly mystifying. Winter (1996: 8) also observes that policy is not easy to define, quoting Cunningham (1963:229) that 'policy is rather like an elephant – you recognise it when you see it but cannot easily define it'. Cunningham (1963: 229, quoted in Woods 1996) observes that policy may emerge from legal and statutory instruments or from memoranda and circulars or the way that Ministers or public authorities settle a particular case (see also Lowndes and Wilson 2001, quoted in Krueger and Gibbs 2010). In other words policy can emerge from a host of activities. As a result, it is not always easy to identify which of these routes a policy has transpired from; it can remain a hazy and inaccessible phenomenon.

Policy making as a set of processes has been theorised in a number of quite different ways, from those who have conceptualised it as a singular, linear and ordered process, to those who have acknowledged the haziness and mess involved in policy making. Some authors have developed models which represent policy making in a linear or cyclical fashion characterised by compartmentalised activities, which neatly follow on from one another. More recently, and to overcome the limitations of thinking about policy as neat and linear, geographical research has focused on policy making and policies as an area of interest, and inspired by network theories which see the world as messy and complicated have incorporated such ideas as a means of making sense of policies and the worlds of those who are involved in policy processes. Political scientists have also increasingly focused on worlds of policy making as messy and vague, but interdisciplinary interest in 'policy' has advanced theories of policy processes.

The existence of the term ‘the policy making process’ suggests that there is some sort of system that translates policy ideas into actual policies that are implemented and have positive effects (Birkland 2010: 25). Ray (undated) suggests that this conforms to an ‘engineering’ metaphor where policy is regarded as a linear, causal relationship between the apparent intentions of the designers of a policy or programme and the consequent impact on the ground in a neutral, objective fashion. Winter (1996: 10), for example, utilises Figure 5 below to demonstrate the circularity and dynamic nature of the policy making process.

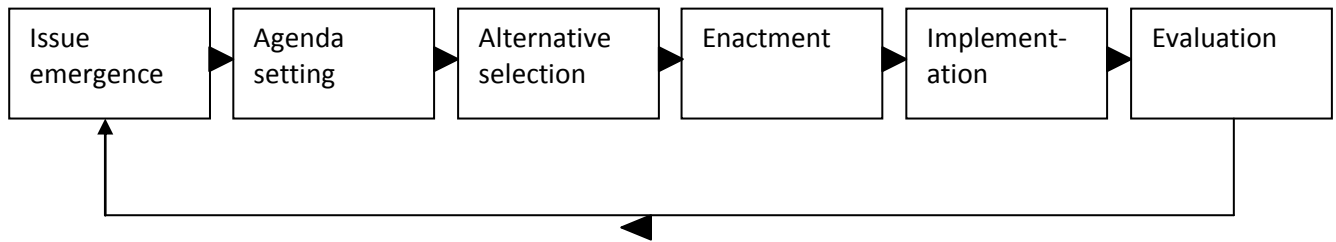
**Figure 5. The Policy Process**

(Sources: Winter 1996: 11, after Burch 1979; B. Jones 1991)



However, despite the apparent neatness of this model, Winter (1996: 10) notes how it gives little idea of how, and from where, policy inputs are fed into government and, once inside, how they are processed. However, from reading the diagram one can assume that once ‘inside’ the process, actions like ‘implementation’ are a natural corollary of top-down government policies. This is important as implementation, it is argued (see Barrett 2004: 253), should be regarded as an integral and continuing part of the political policy process rather than an automatic administrative follow-on. Implementation should also be seen as a policy-action dialectic involving negotiation and bargaining between those seeking to put policy into effect and those upon whom action depends. Nor does it encompass the role of organisations and bodies outside of official policy-making processes in influencing policies. Through the ostensible circularity of this model, policy-making is represented as a relatively neat and compartmentalised process with inputs leading to outputs and outputs resulting in societal changes. Other models of policy making also reinforce the idea of an ordered process rather than the messy and fuzzy experiences in real life situations. Birkland (2010) suggests that the ‘stages’ policy process is the *text-book* example of policy making:

**Figure 6. The 'stages' model of the policy process** (Source: Birkland 2010: 26)



Sabatier (2007) has criticised the 'stages' heuristic policy framework for presuming a linearity to the public policy process that does not exist in reality, and for postulating neat demarcations between stages that are blurred in practice. Despite this, Sabatier still refers to *the* policy making process, only that the boundaries between the stages are blurred. All these models share an approach that suggests clarity, linearity and singularity, yet say little about the actors involved in policy-making, or about the processes of negotiating and struggling over policy decisions. Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) state that policy making rarely proceeds in this fashion, and Kingdon (1995: 224) suggests it is, rather, a complex adaptive system.

Political scientists have typically differentiated between corporatist and pluralist systems of policy making, although more recently the language of policy networks has become increasingly popular. The table below illustrates the main features:

**Table 2. Key features of policy-making theories**

Corporatist	Involves a close relationship between the state and a limited number of interest groups representing major economic interests. The state is active in policy making but the interest groups are fully involved in policy-making and implementation, delivering benefits to their members (Woods 2005a: 135).
Pluralist	Policy is open to influence by a large number of groups responsive to grass-roots members. Government is passive, simply allocating resources and making policy according to the relative strengths of competing pressure groups (Woods 2005a: 135).
Policy Networks	There are different degrees of interaction between government and interest groups, ranging from loose issue groups to tight-knit policy communities (Woods 2005a: 135; Rhodes 1997: 38). Networks can be seen as a new form of governance or a mode of influencing policy-making and implementation (Marsh and Smith 2000). Partnership working can be viewed as an opportunity to enact a more pluralist policy approach (Cloeke <i>et al</i> 2000b), yet arguably is more characteristic of a policy network approach.



Corporatist approaches have largely been used to explain developments such as the post-war relationship between MAFF and the NFU in developing agricultural policy, although Marsh and Smith (2000) have also undertaken a policy networks analysis of the relationship. Modern policy problems are complex and no state agency has the resources to address issues single-handedly. They are dependent upon the cooperation and resources of other actors (Smith 2000) making network analysis look attractive. Within all of these approaches there are nuances and contestations. The transition towards focus on policy networks is concurrent with a more general shift in concern with networks in the social sciences per se, as a mode of understanding and making sense of the world.

My research has more in common with more critical views of policy processes as chaotic and messy (see Wilkinson 2011; Pemberton and Goodwin 2010), and as such questions these models and earlier assumptions about linear or neatly cyclical policy making processes. Wilkinson (2011) is quite clear that the simple sense of 'a policy-making process' although ubiquitous in policy analysis as outlined above, is not present in her case study of Defra. More nuanced thinking and analysis of policy processes is helpful in understanding the realities involved in setting agendas and delivering policies, as Lindblom suggested in 1959, a process of 'muddling through'.

Kingdon's (1995:177) writing on policy processes has been influential in thinking about the ways that people, ideas, problems, solutions and crises interact in messy and disordered ways. For Kingdon (1984, 1995) policy making can be conceptualised as three, largely unrelated, '*streams*':

1. A problem stream consisting of information about real world problems and the effects of past governmental interventions
2. A policy stream / community composed of researchers, advocates and other specialists who analyse problems and formulate possible alternatives
3. A political stream consisting of elections, legislative leadership contests etc

Major policy reform can occur, according to Kingdon, when a policy window joins these streams – so that in response to a recognised problem, the policy community develops a proposal that is financially and technically feasible, and politicians find it advantageous to approve it, although it is not necessarily so straightforward.

He notes the unpredictability and inability to control policy events once they've been set in motion and the dilemmas which this creates for those involved in the process. Policy makers need to remain aware of potential unintended consequences emerging from their original policy ideas. Kingdon talks of a complex mix of ideas, problems, solutions, alternatives combining with political acceptability bringing about change in policies or programmes, and as such the combination of these is key to understanding why agendas change (1995: 179). He conceptualises these ideas as floating around in a 'primeval soup', with any number being present at any one time, specifically commenting that this does not represent a rational decision making system with a few well-defined alternatives from which policy makers can choose. Although Kingdon (1984, 1995) is accredited with overcoming some of the rigidity of models such as those presented above, but is not without his critics, who suggest that the emergence of policy windows needs further refinement and the assumption that actors in the policy stream are apolitical has been challenged (see Sabatier

However, as Pemberton and Goodwin (2008, quoting Lagendijk 2007: 1196) indicate, in each case certain ideas and narratives shedding light on the situation will prevail, which they argue leads to territorial variation in what constitutes the 'rural' (or perhaps local food too) and that this will be constructed in a particular form which is more or less amenable in the given context. These ideas draw on particular local imaginaries and introduce concepts of policy maker subjectivities and the active production of spaces of local government / governance. Thus, actors (policy makers and those associated with the processes involved) are granted agency to (re-)define and (re-)negotiate economic and social spaces as part of spatial imaginaries (Pemberton and Goodwin 2008: 280). For Pemberton and Goodwin (2008) spaces are in a constant process of being made and remade.

Kingdon (1995) also discusses the role of policy entrepreneurs, building on earlier conceptualisations of policy entrepreneurs in moving policy ideas forward. He describes policy entrepreneurs as advocates who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and money – to promote a particular policy idea in return for anticipated future gain. Policy entrepreneurialism can be a shifting quality, present in particular people at different times and in different organisations at those times. Although they are not solely responsible for moving issues forward, they are often central figures. For Kingdon, policy entrepreneurs are well-placed to take advantage of 'policy windows' as they emerge in pushing through particular policy problems or solutions – windows may open as a result of a change in Government or less predictably in response to a crisis.

But, the opening of a policy window does not necessarily explain which issue is selected to be taken forward or how that issue is defined. Policy framing (and re-framing) has been identified as the process of selecting, emphasizing and organizing aspects of complex issues according to an overriding evaluative or analytical criterion, and policy framing asks how frames are constructed, how they influence the way issues are processed, how they affect which interests play a role during policy drafting and deliberation and what type of political conflicts and coalitions are likely to emerge as a result (see Rein and Schön 1996; Daviter 2007; Donaldson *et al* 2007; Wilkinson *et al* 2010). Policy frames can significantly affect who or what is foregrounded in policy processes and decisions, and can shift over time and in response to particular issues. As Wilkinson *et al* (2010) show, the foot and mouth disease shifted the policy frames on animal disease but also on the countryside and what it should be used for. Partnerships and partnership working have framed rural development (and other economic development) delivery for the last twenty years or so.

Partnership working has recently been valorised politically as a way of achieving citizen self-government – an opportunity to participate in these new forms of governance and an opportunity to raise the profile of issues, interests or client groups by entering into ‘partnership’ (Clope *et al* 2000b: 113, drawing on Stoker 1997). However, Murdoch and Abram (1998) suggest only those citizens and voluntary groups with the requisite resources and skills are likely to be able to fulfil the responsibilities associated with partnership working. As Clope *et al* (2000b: 130) conclude, ‘under the ‘New Labour’ government, the political air is thick with talk of ‘partnership’, and as a broad political discourse, partnership is clearly being characterized as being about inclusion in a stake-holding society, with pluralist visions about who ‘has a say’ and who ‘takes part’ in the running of the country’. Durose (2011) has described partnership working as introducing ‘muddle and mess’ to local governance processes, and that administrators and policy makers interact in complex and interesting ways thus challenging previous thinking about the roles as being demarcated. The coalition government’s Big Society concept echoes similar notions of self-help, inclusion and involvement, attempting to ‘correct’ society’s ills, and may come to be a framing device for localisation and innovation outside of government.

More recently, researchers have acknowledged the role of policy-makers and their practices and subjectivities in affecting both policy development and policy outcomes (the role of implementers is also important here – see Ray 1999). Harvey *et al* (2011) explore how regional policy makers imagine the spaces of the South West region in England, and how this influences the work that they do. Increasingly, the practice of ‘making’ policy is recognised as messy and

slippery. Little *et al* (2011) examined the way that policy makers understood and attached meaning to local food, and how this differed from those understandings held by farm businesses. Krueger and Gibbs (2009, 2010) utilised Bevir and Rhodes' (2006) interpretive approaches to examine how actors' beliefs, dilemmas, and traditions of governance, affected how two apparently contradictory ensembles of ideas – i) inter-urban competition, and ii) urban sustainability – can emerge simultaneously in policy development discourses. Network analysis allows the role of agents within those networks to be recognised as Marsh (1998: 194, quoted in Smith 2000; 97) states 'policy networks are structures within which agents operate. Agents are, in a sense, bearers of those positions, but they interpret, deconstruct and reconstruct these structures'. Bevir and Rhodes (2006) argue that policy analysis tells particular stories about policy-making that differ from others using different approaches, and such accounts offer accounts of policy making as a more nebulous and subjective set of activities. All of this points to a more interesting and reflective conceptualisation of policy processes in general, and my research will contribute towards this specifically from the perspective of local food and rural development in East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo region.

While academics have published a number of books and papers on aspects of rural policy (see for example Woods 2005a; 2005b; 2008; 2009; and 2010), on the whole the role of food in rural development policy has not been the core focus. For example in Woods' 2005 volume on Rural Policy, the chapter specifically discussing *policy* concentrates on agricultural trade reform, thereby reinforcing the dominance of agriculture in rural policy debates. In his volume on rural policy since the 1997 election of the Labour government, Woods (2008: 8) observes that studies of rural policy in Britain are relatively limited, and that very little attention has been paid to the role of policy in the social construction of the rural. Woods' 2008 edited collection concentrates specifically on changes to rural policy under the Blair government, and although local food is mentioned in passing, the majority of the volume concentrates on broader aspects of social rural development, such as housing, policing and so on, moving on from Winter's (1996) land-based focus.

Having reviewed some of the limitations of conceptualisations of policy-making, I will now critique the academic approaches to rural development and the ways in which agriculture and local food are viewed as integral (or not) to rural development.

### **3.2.2. Rural Development**

Despite sometimes being accepted unproblematically, rural development is not a clearly defined or universally accepted term. Most often rural *economic* development is the focus. Many researchers and policy makers focus solely on agriculture. This represents a narrow view of economic activity in rural areas, and may also exclude those who grow and produce food but who don't consider themselves to be farmers, such as smallholders and nurseries. In general, Thomson (2001: 9) suggests that 'rural development' is a term that needs more careful usage and interpretation and for Fournier, rural development means different things to different people, who suggests there are probably as many definitions as there are people who practice it (Fournier 2008).

The notion of 'the rural economy' also remains highly problematic, implying a bounded and unified (or homogenous) economy. Traditional rural economic activities such as those tied to the land are often emphasised (Ward 2006), creating an unrealistic impression of rural economies. Ward (2006, following Allanson *et al* 1994) argues that rural economies are diverse, complex and open systems, which are shaped by some processes that are localised but also by many that are not. He argues that no special privilege should be given to forms of economic activity that are tied to the land, as any type of business can feature in the economies of rural areas (p4). Winter draws the distinction between the traditional rural economy 'based firmly on its local natural resource base' (1996: 90), and a *new* rural economy. He argues that the growth and diversification of a *new* rural economy has meant that many traditional rural economic activities (such as hunting and shooting) have become 'hidden from view', which although relatively small-scale are peculiarly 'rural' by being non-agricultural activities directly dependent upon the land (Winter 1996: 96). This is in contrast to other businesses 'which might just as well be based in Bradford, Birmingham or Brighton' (Winter 1996: 97), thus indicating the variety of rural *economies* (i.e. that there is diversity between as well as within rural areas).

Agriculture's declining contribution to rural economies in both monetary and employment terms, combined with broader societal concerns about the negative impacts of agriculture, challenged agriculture's role in the development of rural areas. The assumptions that farmers were the guardians of the countryside, and that supporting agriculture would lead to healthy rural communities, has come under intense interrogation.

However, there is not agreement about the extent to which agriculture should be incorporated within rural development, what *type* of agriculture this should involve and how policy-makers can help achieve this (and even *if* they should support the sector in this way). Marsden *et al* (2002: 809) and van der Ploeg *et al* (2000) promote agriculture<sup>35</sup> as a critical part of rural development and suggest that policy-making is essential to bring about a holistic rural development incorporating agriculture. Yet, few academic studies have addressed the key role of policy in rural development, and where policy *is* considered, there is a strong leaning towards planning (Curry and Owen 2009) which indicates a predilection for land use rather than broader rural development issues.

Academic views on the role of agriculture in rural change have become bifurcated – some see it as central to rural change (Marsden *et al* 2002), meanwhile others suggest a more marginal role (Whatmore 1993: 366). Seminal works on the changing ‘countrysides’ within the UK included Marsden *et al*’s (1993) work on the role of rural space in the restructuring of capitalist economies, which brought attention to both those marginal areas excluded from the productivist project, and to those areas which were seen to offer attractive places to locate business and to move into for retirement or work (based on the unspoilt environment). Such a ‘post-productivist’ view of rural areas as attractive builds on ideals of rural areas as offering a more idyllic way of life, one not offered by areas committed to productivism.

### ***The role of agriculture in sustainable rural development***

Although agriculture is undoubtedly a key feature of rural areas, declining levels of agricultural employment and its reduced economic contribution to rural areas, coupled with increasing demands for other forms of land use, including recreation, conservation and residential purposes, have led some (Lowe *et al* 1993: 205; Marsden *et al* 1996: 366) to note the declining position of agriculture in rural development both from a policy-making perspective and in terms of what happens ‘on the ground’. Lowe *et al* (1993) termed this the ‘differentiated countryside’ following what they saw as the breakdown of productivist agriculture. In the past, many policies targeting rural areas focused solely on agriculture to the exclusion of other interests, and conversely, rural development policies either excluded agriculture by focusing on wider community interests or encouraged the transition away from agriculture. However,

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<sup>35</sup> Agriculture is a broad term encompassing many different types of activity, yet what form of agriculture this should be is not specified. For example the negative externalities of conventional agriculture are generally seen as detrimental to the health and success of rural areas and economies. More localised and diverse systems could, therefore, offer greater benefits for rural development.

the problems besetting agriculture prompted consideration of a more holistic approach to rural development to balance agriculture with wider rural interests.<sup>36</sup>

Some contend that agriculture is a central mechanism for achieving sustainable rural development in Europe, but that policy making is failing to recognise its role (Marsden *et al* 2002: 809). Building on previous work by Marsden (2000), Marsden *et al* (2002: 809) detail three differing but co-existing rural development 'dynamics', which each have relevance for understanding the crisis in agriculture:

1. Agro-industrial logic – 'rural' as intensive agricultural production space, linked to world commodity markets;
2. Post-productivist dynamic – 'rural' as a consumption space rather than an agricultural production space;
3. Rural development – 'rural' as holistic space, incorporating agricultural production as a central element in achieving rural sustainability goals for example by creating alternative food supply chains.

These three dynamics, they suggest, are shaping the governance and nature of European rural space in contested ways. Each has its roots in different social, economic, political and academic / scientific bases, but will continue to operate in parallel, unless policy frameworks and governance mechanisms move towards promoting rural development in a stronger way. However, as the last chapter illustrated, policy frameworks may not align so neatly and may even be incongruous. Although no recommendations are made in terms of the support that policy institutions and other support organisations might be able to offer, Marsden *et al* (2002) are clear that policy organisations have a critical role to play. Policy organisations can, they argue, influence whether or not the rural development 'dynamic' is adopted fully, rather than presenting isolated examples. They argue that the 'do nothing' option is not viable, but that if policy<sup>37</sup> does not advocate the rural development model then it is complicit in further promoting the conventional agricultural model.

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<sup>36</sup> The Rural Development Commission's Rural Development Programme only supported agricultural diversification activities; Rural Community Councils do not undertake main activities aimed at agriculture; the Common Agricultural Policy separated agriculture from other aspects of rural development, amongst others. The Countryside Agency's policies and programmes primarily targeted rural communities holistically, with the exception of Eat the View mentioned earlier.

<sup>37</sup> No particular policies are advocated, which seems peculiar. They are very clear that if policy action is not taken then sustainable rural development will be hampered. In their view, this will lead to the inappropriate agro-industrial model continuing to be maintained through inaction. The British government also seems to view England's food and farming industry as inappropriate – Ilbery and Maye (2005: 332) quote the Curry report as stating that it is 'unsustainable in every sense of the term' and

For Marsden *et al* (2002) there is evidence of this rural development dynamic ('3' above) emerging across Europe (although, again, this is not universally agreed). Activities under this 'dynamic' might exhibit the following features:

1. Adding income (and employment opportunities) to the agricultural sector
2. Expressing new relationships between the agricultural sector and society at large, moving towards *rural* (as opposed to *agricultural*) entrepreneurship and innovation in response to societal demands
3. A redefinition, recombination and / or reconfiguration of rural resources in and beyond the farm enterprise, contributing to a new development trajectory for rural economies.

(Marsden *et al* 2002: 816; and Marsden and Sonnino 2008: 423, emphasis added)

The rural development 'dynamic' sees farms and farmers becoming 'multifunctional' by engaging in diversification activities and engaging in a wider range of activities on and off the farm. Agricultural diversification is a process which requires agricultural businesses to develop 'the new skills, new relationships, and new entrepreneurialism required to participate in new market relations' (Marsden *et al* 2002: 814). They argue (p816) that by utilising economies of scope,<sup>38</sup> instead of economies of scale, farmers can increase their income and employment opportunities. Many new options exist for farm businesses able to innovate to take advantage of new consumption trends and practices (Marsden *et al* 2002: 812), although innovation is key here, there may be good reasons why some farmers do not innovate.

Rural development policies are critical in helping farm businesses to become more entrepreneurial and innovative, thus facilitating more sustainable forms of reproduction. Marsden *et al* (2002) promote on *and* off farm diversification, whereas many policies have ignored the role of off-farm income and have concentrated on promoting economic activity on the farm but not in agriculture, for example bed and breakfast accommodation (Shucksmith and Winter 1990). Local and quality foods are envisaged as part of this diversification.

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'detached from the rest of the rural economy and the environment' – which indicates some appetite within government for a move away from the industrial model of agriculture.

<sup>38</sup> The term was also used in the 1980s' debates around manufacturing industry. It describes a process whereby farmers create mutually interlinked products and services which use or exploit the same resource base, whether it is physical, social or knowledge-based. In contrast, economies of scale are characteristic of the conventional agricultural supply system whereby farmers are encouraged to reduce costs and increase production and efficiencies through increases in scale such as farm enlargement or increases in herd size, which Marsden *et al* term the 'race to the bottom' (2002: 809).

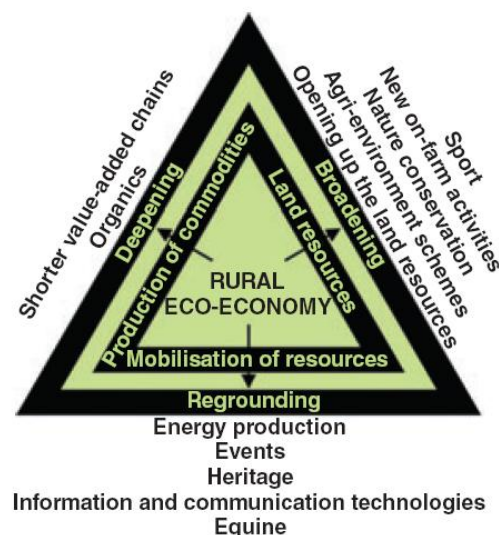


Agricultural rural development activities are, by their very nature, spatially variable and whilst they offer opportunities and potential to some, not all rural areas will benefit to the same extent (Marsden *et al* 2002). Farmers' ability to respond to the new challenges of rural development will be affected by their geographical location, individual business and management skills, practical skills, access to capital, entrepreneurialism, and the availability of support (both institutional and financial) (Marsden *et al* 2002: 813). Thus, benefits from such a model of rural development are likely to be spatially uneven, with some areas not benefitting. This may reinforce existing regional disparities (e.g. the fertile East of England versus poorer hill farming) or may lead to the areas that had been 'peripheral' to productivism being able to take advantage of a 'turn' to quality food, for example.

These diversification trends have seen a broadening out of rural economic activity into new realms, in the context of the new eco-economy as part of a revised rural development paradigm (Marsden and Kitchen 2009). Using examples of businesses in rural Wales they developed a model of the dynamics of rural development at the level of individual enterprises:

**Figure 8. The dynamics of rural development at enterprise level**

(in Marsden and Kitchen 2009: 281; adapted from van der Ploeg *et al* 2002)



Their model identifies three interrelated spheres for the development of the rural eco-economy: broadening, deepening and re-grounding as illustrated in figure 8. Using ecological modernisation (Hajer 1995) as a basis, Marsden and Kitchen (2009) discuss the degree to which the cumulative spatial development of these new processes can be considered as a new form of ecological modernisation in the rural sphere. Ecological modernisation evolved in the 1980s as a theory (Mol and Sonnenfeld 2000) and mode of practice that enabled the implementation of sustainable development in response to environmental issues that were

materialising (Gouldson and Murphy 1997). Although it is a somewhat diverse theory, ecological modernisation moves beyond apocalyptic orientations to see environmental problems as challenges for social, technical and economic reform, rather than as immutable consequences of industrialisation (Mol and Sonnenfeld 2000: 5). Jonas *et al* (2004) observe how ecological modernisation has influenced the implement of activities contributing towards sustainable development in the UK, finding favour through its compatibility with neoliberalism. It has generally been associated with clean industrial technologies and the ways in which environmental movements and coalitions begin to effect reluctant state agencies, although it has rarely been applied to the rural sphere (Marsden 2006: 207). Ecological modernisation in agriculture needs to be distinguished from conventional modernisation which devalues agricultural production and practice (Marsden 2009). For policy-makers ecological modernisation is palatable, as it does not seriously challenge existing economic (neoliberal) practice (Gibbs 2000: 17). Indeed, insofar as it is based upon innovation, technological change and greater competitiveness, it would appear to fit closely with other attempts to modernise developed economies. It is this seeming compatibility with mainstream economic activity (Gibbs 2000: 17) that makes it an appealing approach for policy-makers, even if the rhetoric rarely transfers from paper to practice.

As seen in the last section, despite the 'rural' becoming lost within broader policy contexts, Marsden (2006) suggests that rural areas offer services that will be increasingly important in managing contemporary risk, for example issues such as food security, biosecurity, the control of energy resources and development of renewable energy technologies, and responses to climate change. This casts a new focus on the use and regulation of rural space and rural commodities (Woods 2009: 850) and suggests an important future for rural areas and indicates their continued prominence amidst other seemingly more pressing issues. Marsden and Kitchen (2009: 275) argue that reintegrating the 'agricultural' with the 'rural' and the 'urban' in new and innovative ways has become essential as future resource constraints become increasingly likely. All of which suggests an increasing relevance of 'rural' to policy-makers in the face of climate change, food security and other issues.

### **Multifunctionality**

'Multifunctionality' is often used to explain agricultural change and rural development. Concepts of multifunctionality have found currency within rural and agricultural geography (Wilson 2009; Marsden and Sonnino 2008; Potter and Tilzey 2007, 2005; van Huylbroek and Durand 2003), although 'multifunctional agriculture' is not clearly and uniformly conceptualised (Wilson 2007). However, multifunctionality is often conceptualised as

agriculture which embraces all goods, products and services created by farming activities (Marsden and Sonnino 2008: 422) and is a Europe-specific approach to sustaining small family farms and diverse rural economies (Potter and Tilzey 2005). For Henke (2004) 'multifunctionality' has become part of the terminology in Italy, and brings agriculture and rural development together. However, producers may interpret 'multifunctionality' as 'diversification' to broaden the economic base of their farm enterprise.

Over the last decade multifunctionality has entered political and academic debates over the role of farming for the economy and society as a whole (Marsden and Sonnino 2008: 422). Faced with such a challenge, Potter and Tilzey (2005: 596) suggest that policy-makers are following a bi-modal rural policy that implicitly accepts the reality of productivist agricultural spaces on the one hand while attempting to map out an alternative 'consumption countryside' on the other, leading to further unevenness across and within regions. However, Potter and Tilzey (2005) view the concomitant development of productivist and post-productivist agricultures and ruralities as taking place in distant and distinct areas, leading to an 'enforced segregation of rural space' (p595), rather than more complex and hybrid rural spaces combining both in proximity. As such, these debates bear strong resemblance to the proposed new geography of food (see p71 of this chapter).

For Marsden and Sonnino (2008: 427-8), multifunctional agriculture is territorially based and emphasises social, economic and ecological embeddedness to deliver, simultaneously, safe and healthy food and non-food products, a visually attractive countryside and distinctive local food products that support tourism and positive images of [the area]. This image of multifunctionality is denied for some areas, when they comment that:

'in the more industrialised agricultural areas of Eastern England...where farmers have to accommodate the private-interest models of regulation and governance led by the corporate retailers there is very little (if any) potential for the development of a more re-embedded and multifunctional model of agriculture' (Marsden and Sonnino 2008: 429).

Such statements deny the validity of actions already taking place in some areas of Eastern England. Although parts of Southwest of England have more advanced multifunctional agriculture (Marsden and Sonnino 2006), a scale of multifunctionality would allow developments in parts of Eastern England to be identified. Despite having argued that the 'rural development dynamic' is spatially distinct, Marsden's (2010) paper on the rural eco-

economy, alludes that *all* rural areas clearly display features of multifunctionality and eco-economical development, perhaps acknowledging that a scale of multifunctionality is more realistic. The form of multifunctionality put forward by Marsden and Sonnino (2008) appears to be arguing in favour of *agricultural* multifunctionality rather than *rural* multifunctionality, despite earlier arguments by Ward (2006) that agriculture is less significant to rural economies than in the past as contemporary rural economies are based on a broad range of sectors. Marsden and Sonnino's (2008) approach is also largely production oriented, despite calls for placing consumers into such research (see section 3.3.4).

Marsden and Sonnino (2008: 423) argue that there are three main and competing interpretations of multifunctional agriculture (see Table 3), which correspond to the competing approaches outlined in their rural development 'dynamic' mentioned above (p54):

**Table 3. Characteristics of multifunctional agriculture** (adapted from Marsden and Sonnino 2008)

Multifunctional agriculture as a palliative to the productivist 'cost-price' squeeze	Connected to the ' <b>agro-industrial paradigm</b> ' and a neoliberal 'virtual' logic of scale and specialization that ties farms and agri-food into an industrial bio-science dynamic.  Tends to reduce multifunctionality to mono-functionality.
Multifunctional agriculture as spatial regulation of the consumption countryside	Linked to the contested ' <b>post-productivist paradigm</b> ' based on rural areas as consumption spaces for use by industrial capital and growing urban populations. Agriculture loses its centrality to society and nature is conceived in terms of landscape value. Agricultural multifunctionality is in the form of farm diversification.
Multifunctional agriculture as part of sustainable rural development	Linked to the ' <b>rural development dynamic</b> ' which redefines nature by re-emphasising food production and agro-ecology. The socio-environmental role of agriculture as a major agent in sustaining rural economies and cultures is reasserted. This is strong multifunctionality (Wilson 2009), displaying integrative development potential between farms and their locale. Multifunctionality is seen as a pro-active development tool to promote more sustainable economies of scope and synergy rather than as a survival strategy (Marsden 2003: 185).

These three 'dynamics' of multifunctionality are concurrent but spatially varied, with some areas exhibiting different degrees of advancement. For Marsden and Sonnino (2008) the third dynamic is the one that should be dominant, but without appropriate encouragement this is unlikely to occur. Marsden and Sonnino (2008: 426-7) argue that where multifunctional agriculture has occurred in the UK it has been a kind of rupture with the state sector rather than being achieved through policy incentives per se. Nonetheless, they suggest that a (policy) discourse of 'reconnection' may provide an opportunity to chart a new route for endogenous rural development, rather than the old corporatist, sectoral system.

### **3.2.3. Conclusion**

The ways that political scientists have theorised about processes of policy making have represented it as a straightforward and logical approach, yet a number of academics have hinted at the limitations of this. The last Chapter demonstrated the fluidity of the 'real' policy landscape, with the frequent changes in organisations, policies and thinking about the best way forward. The ways that organisations, groups and individuals are involved in policy processes are argued to have shifted from a corporatist approach involving the state and a few powerful interests, to a policy network approach, whereby more groups are able to access policy makers but this doesn't necessarily imply that their interests can be heard or acted upon.

This first section of the literature review has also covered the ways that academics have conceptualised rural development, and these theories have shifted in parallel with the changes taking place in policy spheres, especially the shift from agriculture having unquestioned support to agriculture being part of a broader rural development, although not all academics necessarily agree that agriculture should form a core part of rural development. Many of those disputing such a position argue that agriculture no longer contributes to the rural (or even national) economy and employment in the sector is generally less significant (although not all rural areas are affected in the same way). These arguments are also represented in policy spheres as suggested in the last Chapter.

Academically, the role of policy and policy-makers has been recognised as critical in studies of local food and rural development, yet few of these studies have made material suggestions as to how policy could be improved or the form it should take. Additionally, key theoretical developments in the local food literatures have not always had rural development at their core and as such have had little to say about how these new food networks could contribute to

broader rural development. The diagrams introduced at the start of this section were identified as being limited in their ability to represent the realities of policy making processes – the research aims to explore with participants how they interact with, negotiate and navigate processes of policy making and policies themselves, not only with policy makers but also businesses and consumers. The research offers the opportunity to rethink and revise models such as those presented by Winter (1996) and Spicker (2006).

The next section will assess the rise of alternative (and local) food networks as offering an alternative to the conventional, globalised food sector. Such alternative food networks are argued to be leading to a new geography of food as well as offering the potential for a new rural development.

### **3.3. LOCALISED FOOD NETWORKS AND RURALITY**

So far I have outlined the changing UK policy landscape and subsequently the academic debates over policy. In this section I now turn to the ways in which 'local' and 'quality' food have been constructed as a way of bolstering farming and rural economies, amongst other roles of AFNs. This section will specifically tackle the ways that food generally, and local food in particular, have been theorised in academic research. Gaps in this literature relate to the potential for AFNs in areas of productivist agriculture, locating the consumer within the research, and the role of policy and policy makers in driving forward such agendas. As with the time periods set out in Chapter 2, transitions between theoretical approaches cannot be demarcated or closed off. Even when some approaches have come under heavy criticism, some scholars have remained committed.

For much of human history most food was produced and consumed locally, within a given location and within a specific set of biophysical and cultural constraints (O'Hara and Stagl 2001: 535-6; Atkins and Bowler 2001), whereas in developed countries post-World War II a more integrated system evolved, in which food production and consumption have become increasingly spatially and culturally independent.<sup>39</sup> The food system is treated differently to other commodities as a result of its 'organic' properties, and whilst human control has increased, food production is still largely dependent on (local) production conditions influenced by soil, sun and water (Atkins and Bowler 2001: 12-13). The ways that academics analyse and theorise food production have changed since WWII as refinements have been made to previous approaches, and in response to changes in society and the economy. In general, approaches have shifted from a historical and descriptive account of farming, to the quantitative and scientific approaches of the 1960s (e.g. advancements in agricultural processes, rolling out capitalist agriculture and the Green Revolution, see Goodman 2001), before moving to a broad political economy approach which dominated research but which was later superseded by post-structuralist consumption and network approaches. I will start this section by reviewing political economy work from the 1980s onwards, followed by more recent research relating to alternative food networks and the theorisations about them, including how to define and analyse such networks and how to give appropriate recognition to consumption and consumers. This is not to disregard the work taking place before the 1980s, but a recognition that developments relating to food and rural development since the 1980s

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<sup>39</sup> For a review of rural policy and agriculture prior to the 1940s see Goodman and Redclift 1991 and Shoard 1997.

are more significant in the context of research responding to the rise of local and alternative food networks. Immediately post-WWII and into the 1950s the primary concern was on producing *enough* food (especially since rationing continued until 1954) and there was a general acceptance of the post-war framework to ensure the plentiful supply of food. Although Carson (1962) highlighted the problems of this approach, it was not really until the 1980s that the post-war framework of productivist agriculture was called into question. During the 1980s concerns arose about producing too much food and the methods by which food was produced.

### **3.3.1. Political Economy Research on Food 'Chains' and Regimes**

Political economic analyses have become the dominant discourse, and in some instances have even come to be synonymous with agricultural geography (Morris and Evans 1999: 349). Political economy theorisations of the agri-food system have included approaches centred around 'commodity chains', 'filières', and 'systems of provision' (Fine *et al* 1996; Atkins and Bowler 2001), which involve the vertical analyses of commodity chains. Political economy approaches have also addressed farm diversification and demonstrated agriculture's chronic structural supply-demand imbalance within Europe and globally (Clark and Jones 2007: 170) – these studies clarified agriculture's interrelationships with other economic sectors, thereby promoting a better understanding of agro-food production and consumption (p171). Food regimes have been popular in political economy analyses. Friedmann's (1993) food regime concept developed from the French school of regulation theory in the 1980s and categorised historical periods into food regimes. Food Regimes covered three historical periods:

1870 – 1914 'extensive' regime: 19<sup>th</sup> century industrialising countries changed centuries old systems by importing food to meet demand from a growing population;

1940s – 1970s 'intensive' (or 'productivism') regime: linked to Fordism and strong state intervention (e.g. through agricultural support programmes) (Friedmann 1993: 30). The end of this second food regime was marked by the food crisis of 1972-3, and partly based on the concerns of surpluses (Le Heron and Roche 1993).

A potential third food regime (McMichael 1992) based on the IMF and the GATT regulating the growing power of transnational companies to restructure production and consumption relations on a global scale.



A third food regime is not universally agreed, although some argue that it has been developing since the 1980s following a crisis in Fordism (post-Fordism) (Atkins and Bowler 2001: 22).

However, others point to the development of more complex, heterogeneous systems contradicting an international food regime, and the evolution of localised and alternative food systems which subvert what bodies like the IMF want to control.

Critics of food regimes are numerous (Le Heron 1993; Goodman and Watts 1994; Atkins and Bowler 2001). Key objections include persistence of conditions from one regime into another so that regimes cannot be clearly delineated, the disguising of micro-level activities (and therefore diversity) as a result of a macro level focus, and for not adequately dealing with consumers as active and relational actors, akin to those criticisms levelled at 'filières' type approaches. Whatmore (1994: 53) criticises regulationist concepts such as food regimes as they:

impose a categorical logic on the restructuring of the production and consumption of food representing it as a coherent process determined by the structural requirements of capital accumulation.

Ward and Almas (1997) indicate that as a result, there is not only a tendency to conceal, rather than reveal, local and regional differentiation in the integration of agriculture into wider circuits of capital, but also a downplaying of the role of social agency in building and maintaining the technical and institutional relations of global agro-food complexes. Although criticisms of such approaches are longstanding, Horlings and Marsden (2011) use food regimes as an approach to understanding agricultural ecological modernisation. Horlings and Marsden (2011: 9 (following Campbell 2009, and Bové and Dufour 2001)) use '*food from nowhere*' and '*food from somewhere*' regimes to describe shifts from intensive and standardised food production to more embedded food systems. Campbell (2009, quoted in Horlings and Marsden 2011) suggests that the 'food from somewhere' regime represents a glitch in the 'food from nowhere' regime (i.e. a niche) rather than a fully blown contender. 'Sustainable intensification' represents a case in favour of continuing the 'food from nowhere' regime, and has been incorporated in current thinking on the future of food production for example the Royal Society's (2009) report on science in agricultural development, as outlined in Chapter 2.

Lockie and Kitto (2000: 5), for example, challenge the '*Systems of Provision*' approach for focusing on the activities of food production, processing, distribution and retailing of food, in combination with socio-economic variables, and treating them as the *determinants* of

consumption practices despite the lack of any causal relationship between any of these activities or variables and food consumption practice. '*Systems of Provision*' analyses do not allow for the exploration of relationships between the actors involved, and what these relationships might entail (for example between consumers and retailers) (Lockie and Kitto 2000). Murdoch *et al* (2000: 112) are also critical of the heavy focus on corporate power and the corporate outflanking of (biological) constraints (i.e. the organic nature of food) thus viewing nature as passive in the face of unfolding socio-economic processes. This understanding of nature as a passive entity, that is appropriated and substituted for within the process of agro-food system industrialisation and globalisation, is no longer considered sufficient for analysing food chains in which nature is being reasserted as a key component of their development (Morris and Kirwan 2011). Consequently, approaches have been sought which allow for the status of nature within the operation of food chains and networks to be accounted for (Goodman 2001; Marsden *et al* 2000).

Lang and Heasman's (2004: 12) *Food Wars* thesis has much in common with political economy approaches to studying the food system, in particular the periodisation of food regimes. Lang and Heasman (2004) posit that a number of historical and emerging food 'paradigms' can be identified, based on the revolutions that occurred in the preceding centuries, in particular the industrialisation of food and concurrent advances in chemical, transport and agricultural technologies. They note that long-distance trade in certain commodities (notably spices and sugar) grew to meet demand from an industrialising and urbanising nation, suggesting that international trade in food is not new. Subsequently, food supply has undergone a transition from local and small-scale supply to concentrated production and mass distribution of foodstuffs (p18). The developments prior to, and during, World War II provided the conditions for the '*Productionist Paradigm*' to develop. Succeeding the '*Productionist Paradigm*', Lang and Heasman (2004) propose two new 'biological' paradigms running concurrently from the mid-1990s, which they argue will guide the evolution of the food system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Life Sciences Integrated Paradigm (LSIP) is based on the rapidly emerging scientific framework heralding the application of biotechnologies to food production on an industrial scale (p21-22). This Paradigm is seen as being compatible as it builds on the Productionist Paradigm but with the promise of solving the issues resulting from that Paradigm. Concomitant but marginal to the LSIP, they propose the Ecologically Integrated Paradigm (EIP) that is finding favour with those more hesitant about the potential for biotechnology (criticisms include that the LSIP represents no more than a modernisation of the Productionist Paradigm) (p25-6). Agriculturally, this Paradigm is closely related to ideas of agro-ecology,

based on a rediscovery of local skills and traditional knowledge applied with modern understanding to meet the challenges of food production (p27). However, it seems that this model has so far not gained widespread support and may be limited to developing countries (but see Pretty 2005). Lang and Heasman's (2004) focus on health, diet and nutrition results in an overly scientific approach that is not particularly 'geographical', or helpful for problematising rural development issues. However, Lang and Heasman (2004: 12) conclude that food policy-making matters more than ever. They identify a long-term transition in food policy, which would involve a shift from the domination of farming and agriculture, agri-business and commodity-style production to a food policy world dominated by consumption issues, hence illuminating the continued relevance of calls for locating the consumer in such research.

Although political economy approaches to food studies, based on Marxist traditions (borrowed from other strands of geography), were seen as the most appropriate ways of analysing events in the 1980s, they reached an impasse in the mid-1990s (Goodman 1997). The political economy research agenda of the 1980s was overtaken by a combination of shifts in social science and as a result of dramatic changes in the political and economic configurations of food regimes and rural regions (Marsden *et al* 1996: 364). New theoretical directions were needed to take account of this and the effects on the countryside and farming (Marsden 1988). These calls for theoretical advancement coincided with increased recognition of the role of consumption and culture within geography (Morris 2004). Yet it was not until the 1990s that alternative theorisations developed, particularly around the 'quality' turn, the 'cultural' turn and localisation strategies, that academic research began to take note of emerging *networks* of food production – consumption. The predictive powers of political economy analyses were challenged by new and different forms of consumptive rural space such as increasing organic production (Wilkinson 2006: 21). Ward and Almas (1997: 619) also identify regional organic food production, as well as community supported agriculture and farmers' markets as key trends. The emergence of such systems challenged the role of globalisation theories and the potential for more local spaces to develop was recognised and problematised. Yet, despite this, some scholars continued to argue for the relevance of political economy approaches (Marsden 2000), but more broadly diverse concerns as such as consumption and nature / environment, reflecting a broader cultural 'turn' and consumption 'turn' in human geography were favoured (Morris 2004).

Marsden *et al* (1996: 366) recognised an increasing need to acknowledge local distinctiveness which was gaining political and market attention, such as the promotion of locality as a marker

of quality. Yet, despite dissatisfactions with the limitations of the political economy approach, rather than developing entirely new theoretical approaches for studying agriculture and rural development, a 'new' political economy of agriculture was proposed, with Marsden (2000: 20) suggesting that a revised political economy of agro-foods holds a growing salience. This saw existing theoretical tools being adapted to attempt to incorporate ideas of localness, specificity, nature and the environment. The next section will outline how rural geographers and others have sought to conceptualise developments in food production and consumption to overcome the criticisms of the political economy approach.

### **3.3.2. Food and Rural Geography**

In broader terms, Woods (2009) suggests an introspective mood in rural geography, both looking back to past developments and looking forwards to potential directions for the sub-discipline. He suggests an uneven development in both theoretical and empirical terms with a continuing parochialism in much of rural geography research (p850). Food is one area where rural geographers have broadened out to engage with other strands of geography (Woods 2009). New developments relating to food include, for example, efforts in economic geography to trace agri-food commodity chains, examining the impact of globalization and the role of policy regimes and of transnational corporations (Jackson *et al* 2006; Marsden, 2007; Stringer and Le Heron, 2008; Ward *et al* 2008); work in cultural geography to link food production and consumption, exploring consumers' practices and attitudes (Holloway *et al* 2007; Clarke *et al* 2008; Cox *et al* 2008; Eden *et al* 2008), plus research that extends the concept of hybridity to analyse processes of food localization (Trabalzi 2007). Woods (2009) suggests that both strands of research have transgressed the rural–urban dichotomy to expose the networks of rural–urban co-dependency in the agri-food system, articulated for example through initiatives such as community supported agriculture and farmers' markets (Slocum, 2008; Smithers *et al* 2008). It should be acknowledged, though, that these binaries may retain relevance for those outside of academia.

Cloke (2005, 2007) also charts the changes in thinking in rural and agricultural studies and states that the sociology of knowledge that has underpinned post-WWII rural geographies can be conveyed in terms of a series of discrete approaches reflecting broader philosophical fashions and trends, moving from positivistic geographies to political economy, post-modern and post-structural approaches. As Cloke (2006) summarizes in the *Handbook of Rural Studies*, rural geography moved during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s through three theoretical framings of rurality: from a *functional* perspective that sought to fix rural space through the

identification of its distinctive functional characteristics; to a *political-economic* perspective that attempted to position the rural as the product of broader social, economic and political processes; to a perspective in which rurality is understood as *socially constructed*, such that 'the importance of the 'rural' lies in the fascinating world of social, cultural and moral values that have become associated with rurality, rural spaces and rural life' (Cloke, 2006: 21, quoted in Woods 2009) – networks and performativity may well be added to this list in thinking about developments in the 2000s.

In the mid-1990s, human geography became increasingly concerned with 'the local, the particular, and the social and political structures defining the market' (Marsden *et al* 1996: 362). Marsden *et al* (1996) argued for greater integration of research themes including consumption, global-local networks and 'the environment'. Agricultural and rural geographers quickly identified the need to keep pace with such developments so as to remain relevant (Marsden *et al* 1996). Academic research responded to the changes taking place in rural areas too, for example, new uses and populations in the countryside, and changes in food production-consumption. Alternative food networks have been a core feature of this burgeoning literature.

### **3.3.3. Alternative Food Networks**

The processes of globalisation<sup>40</sup> have tended to be regarded as inescapable (Kirwan 2003; Whatmore 1995), yet Kirwan (2003) recognises the growing realisation that there is the potential for 'alternative strategies' to develop. These alternative strategies can overcome, or at least circumvent, some of the problems associated with the globalised agro-food system (or the 'conventional' agro-food system). As Murdoch and Miele (1999: 469, drawing on Arce and Marsden 1995) put it:

there is now a great deal of evidence to suggest that a variety and differentiation in food production processes may not simply be passing away as we move towards the full-blown standardised processes deemed to be symptomatic of globalisation; these more traditional aspects of food production may actually be enhanced by key trends sweeping through the agro-food sector.

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<sup>40</sup> Murdoch and Miele (1999: 467) state that globalisation is the most important process of change in the contemporary food sector resulting in food production that can take place at a considerable distance from its eventual consumption.

There has been recognition of the broad range of food production-consumption initiatives that can be classified as alternative food networks. A number of studies have sought to define alternative food networks, although the term 'alternative' is conceptually problematic (Holloway and Kneafsey 2004; Holloway *et al* 2007). Alternative networks have been associated with a range of characteristics, from quality (Gilg and Battershill 1998), localness (Norberg-Hodge *et al* 2002), social embeddedness (Murdoch *et al* 2000; Sage 2003; Kirwan 2004), ecological embeddedness (Morris and Kirwan 2010), aesthetics (Murdoch and Miele 2004b), and reconnection (Renting *et al* 2003; Ilbery and Maye 2005). In addition, many authors have developed notions of conventional and alternative food networks as operating quite separately and independently (see, for example, Ilbery and Maye 2005; Watts *et al* 2005; Morgan *et al* 2006) to highlight the economic, social and political differences between them. For Morgan *et al* (2006) this difference occurs in a comparison between 'deterritorialised' conventional food networks and 'reterritorialised' alternative food networks. However, conventional and alternative food networks are not homogenous entities, and may both incorporate different foods, processes and consumers (Tregear 2011; Carolan 2011; Morgan *et al* 2006; Murdoch and Miele 2004a). To conflate the alternative with local or quality for example is a questionable approach. Holloway *et al* (2007: 81) suggest such food projects can be understood as being arranged across a series of interrelated 'analytical fields', from the site of production, the supply chain or the motivation to participate, amongst others. As Morgan (2010: 1853) notes, often alternative food networks have been defined by what they are not, as an opposition to the conventional narrative which extols intensive, industrialised production devaluing farm production.

AFNs tend to be associated with both spatialities and ethical frameworks which differ from those of 'conventional' food supply systems (Holloway and Kneafsey 2004, quoted in Holloway *et al* 2006) and perhaps allow greater connection between producers and consumers. Kirwan (2003, 2004) discusses the role of farmers' markets as an alternative method of food purchasing which builds on increased face-to-face interactions between the producer / grower and the consumer, leading to, he argues, greater trust in the food purchased. Community supported agriculture (CSA) is another form of production-consumption relations that vary from the conventional food production system. CSA is characterised by a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or figuratively, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production (Holloway *et al* 2007: 83). CSAs are suggested as a means of reconnecting consumers to food growing and the land (SRDC 2008). Some members choose to get involved in the physical growing of the food in

return for receiving a reduction in the cost of that food. Other examples of AFNs include an orchard in East Sussex which ‘rents’ cherry trees out to people who are then guaranteed the fruits from the rented tree, which they ‘harvest’ themselves (Country Living 2008). Farming organically has been described as an alternative food network, although this has been particularly open to appropriation by the agro-food industry that has been quick to recognise the financial benefits and consumer demand for food produced organically (see Guthman 2003).<sup>41</sup>

These different methods of food production-consumption involve *different* relationships between the growers and producers of food and those who consume it. *Different* from the ‘conventional’ system of food provision where consumers are argued to be geographically and physically removed from the production process; where food is viewed as anonymous or ‘placeless’ (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000: 319). Watts *et al* (2005) stress that it should be the *networks* that are investigated in analyses, rather than the *food*, as it tends to be the networks that represent the alterity not the food.<sup>42</sup> For example, with peas grown in East Yorkshire, the food is arguably local. However, they are then processed, packaged and retailed by companies linked into a transnational (vertical) network of supply and demand, therefore it is not ‘alternative’ compared to foods processed through the ‘alternative’ channels of farmers’ markets or farm shops. Morris and Kirwan (2011:329) cite the example of an intensively managed wheat field in Cambridgeshire, East England, which can be said to be embedded in local ecologies because it is, like all other forms of food production, ‘fixed firmly in its surrounding mass’, but this does not mean that it can be understood as being part of a distinctive, ecologically-sensitive food network (as part of an AFN). Despite all these incantations to focus on the networks, Holloway *et al* (2010) highlight how *food* itself might also be ‘alternative’, as conventional markets forsake some items, such as rare-breed animals that do not fit into industrial production methods. Alternative networks are often characterised by shorter links between the producer and consumer and have been referred to as Short Food Supply Chains (SFSC) (Renting *et al* 2003).

Similar concerns have been experienced in Italy, relating to health scares and the modes of production involved in globalised food products. Corti (2009: 256) suggests that:

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<sup>41</sup> In 2009 sales of organic products in the UK were worth £1.84 billion – a decrease of 12.9% on 2008, with 73.7% of organic food being sold through just three of the multiple retailers (Soil Association 2010). Growth in the amount of land under organic management rose to 4.3% of agricultural land.

<sup>42</sup> See Fuller *et al* (2010) for a comprehensive discussion of alterity.

I produttori agricoli hanno progressivamente rescisso le reti orizzontale locali di solidarietà e sono risultati incapsulati in filiere verticali, dominate dall'industria e dalla tecnoburocrazia.

Agricultural producers have progressively lost local and horizontal links of solidarity, and this has resulted in vertical chains dominated by industry and techno-bureaucracy.  
(author's translation)

Research into AFNs has been preoccupied with the question of 'what is local?', and how it may be defined. Defra (2003) noted that there is no clear, single definition of local food.<sup>43</sup> Subsequently a range of characteristics has become associated with the idea of 'alternative' food networks, including ecological, local / locality / regional, quality, fresh, embedded, reconnected, sustainable, and natural (see Tregear 2011). Holloway *et al* (2007) suggest that despite the range of work looking at these characteristics they do not actually help to clarify the term 'alternative', instead they suggest it actually becomes more clouded as 'alternative' becomes associated with, represented by and refracted through these other terms. Holloway *et al* (2007: 8) develop a heuristic which allows, they argue, a more sophisticated approach to production-consumption and producer-consumer relationships, rather than the cruder dualism of conventional-alternative.<sup>44</sup> Evidence of the interest in these terms and their (mis-)use can be found in SUSTAIN's (Dalmeny 2008) policy statement entitled '*Ethical Hijack – why the terms "local", "seasonal" and "farmers' market" should be defended from abuse by the food industry*' – which establishes an action framework to protect these terms from use by what they see as inappropriate products and organisations. 'Local' does not necessarily mean the same as 'alternative'. Qazi and Selfa (2005: 49) highlight that 'local' agro-food networks are not always characterised by practices that qualify as ecologically embedded or socially just, they may just entail shortened supply chains.

The highly contextual nature of AFNs (i.e. differentiated, heterogeneous, with different notions and dimensions of quality, amongst other things) makes theorisation difficult, both geographically and socially (Goodman 2003: 185). Despite the difficulties, Sonnino and Marsden (2006: 185) state that theorisation is necessary in order to understand whether food

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<sup>43</sup> Defra noted that the most commonly used in practice is the one stemming from farmers' markets and this governs that food (or the main ingredient within that food) should not be grown or produced more than 30-50 miles away from the market or from outside the county boundary (see FARMA).

<sup>44</sup> By identifying a number of 'heuristic analytical fields' Holloway *et al* (2007: 8) propose a more appropriate way of analysing heterogeneous food projects. The heuristic analytical fields include: site of food production; food production methods; supply chain; arena of exchange; producer-consumer interaction; motivations for participation; constitution of individual and group identities.



relocalisation represents a new rural development paradigm. This theorisation would also help to appreciate the kinds of institutional practices and interventions necessary to stimulate and consolidate the emerging AFNs, especially important given the increasing importance given to local food by some policy-makers. In order to problematise alternative food networks, a range of theoretical tools has been utilised, borrowing concepts developed in other areas of the social sciences, in particular regulation theories, consumption and science and technology studies.

Much of the emphasis on policy interventions in alternative systems of food provision focuses on marginal areas and what can be done to boost their economies and mitigate the (uneven economic development) impacts of the policies of neo-liberal organisations like the World Trade Organisation which favours the phasing out of subsidies (Watts *et al* 2005). There is also a debate within agro-food studies about the potential for alternative food networks (AFNs) to re-incorporate and reinvigorate areas that are 'marginal' in some way to the conventional agri-food system and marginal geographically, as the development and promotion of regionally distinctive products has been seen as an alternative development trajectory for regions less able to compete in a globalised, commodity driven market place (Gilg and Battershill 1998). However, little is said about how currently 'successful' conventional agricultural areas might also benefit from AFNs without their characteristics being appropriated by corporate agriculture (except Selfa and Qazi 2005), rather than a real and meaningful adoption of the (vague and contested) principles of AFNs.

### ***A New Geography of Food***

In discussing an 'alternative geography of food', Murdoch *et al* (2000: 111) proposed that the newly enhanced status of 'nature'<sup>45</sup> should enable a new map of food production to be drawn which highlights the regions and localities that have not been fully incorporated into the industrial model of production and which have retained the ecological conditions necessary for quality food production (drawing on Ilbery and Kneafsey 1998). In order to identify this '*new geography of food*' (Whatmore and Thorne 1997: 294), Murdoch *et al* (2000: 111) recommend looking beyond the agricultural 'hotspots' (such as East Anglia's grain production or North Carolina's pig industry); the areas where, they suggest, industrialised production has become concentrated into larger and larger units and where local ecologies tend to reflect the

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<sup>45</sup> The status of nature has been enhanced both theoretically through theories such as actor network theory (moving away from political economy approaches which unproblematically accepted ideas of nature as something for industrial capitals to overcome), as well as practically as consumers search for 'natural' food as a reaction to dissatisfaction with the conventional food system and policy makers aim to support the provision of more natural foods as 'a good thing' (see Goodman 1999 and 2001 for a more detailed discussion of nature and food specifically).

standardised nature of industrial food production. They comment that 'quality food production is often located in areas that have escaped industrial agriculture'. However, Whatmore (1994: 48) suggested that these marginal areas, what she refers to as 'cold spots', may represent sites of active resistance, whether in defence of traditional or progressive alternatives, rather than the passive marginalisation that is frequently implied. Yet, this account was written 16 years ago, and the research gaze has since shifted from the dominance of political economic approaches to food studies to analyse food production-consumption activities (almost exclusively) beyond the industrial hot spots – what is needed now is a re-examination of those hot spots to assess how 'the alternative' and 'the marginal' might actually co-exist with agribusiness, perhaps even challenging its dominance in areas such as East Yorkshire, rather than being located in the 'interstices'.

The assumption that a new geography of food will be separated out into 'hotspots' and 'marginal' areas is not sophisticated enough and does not recognise the complex nature (heterogeneity) of agriculture and the wider rural economy (as with other dualisms such as 'alternative' and 'conventional'). For example, it cannot be assumed that so-called hotspots are problem-free, as they are vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the global market and other shocks such as oil price rises, and as such alternative food networks may offer a valuable option for some businesses in such areas. Winter (2003: 24), for example, recognises that the development of localised food production-consumption takes place *within* the globalised food economy – it would be too easy to suggest that 'alternative' methods of food production will only take place outside of viable 'productivist' agricultural areas, or that one will operate at the expense of the other. Should AFNs be able to contribute towards the sustainable rural development of marginal areas then currently 'successful' farming areas must surely also be able to benefit.

The academic literature does not tend to highlight the potential markets for conventionally-produced local food<sup>46</sup> that can run alongside important new markets based on sustainable agriculture (Winter 2003a: 29). As he notes, much of the existing literature focuses instead on food produced 'alternatively' such as organics. There may be opportunities to develop local markets for more conventionally-produced food, at least in the short term and perhaps as a 'stepping stone', before a more radical break with conventional agriculture occurs. Little work has been undertaken looking at alternative food networks in 'successful' farming areas like East Yorkshire compared to work done in the more marginal areas like Wales, Devon and

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<sup>46</sup> Winter (2003a: 26) suggests that to ignore foods sold locally but produced conventionally would be to obscure what he argues are determined efforts by retailers and some farming organisations to re-build trust in the quality of British products through farm assurance schemes.

Cumbria (e.g. Marsden *et al* 2002). There is some disagreement as to whether marginal areas can be successful areas for AFNs as a result of their 'exclusion' from the conventional farming system – Marsden *et al* (2002: 820) and Winter (2003: 26) suggest that farm shops near to urban areas have good opportunities for accessing markets – not necessarily a characteristic of 'marginal' areas.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast, Weatherell *et al* (2003) found that urban consumers in the North of England expressed less desire to purchase local foods than rural consumers. From Winter's (2003) empirical work with consumers in remoter lowland agricultural areas, although not necessarily 'marginal' to conventional agricultural systems, he recorded higher levels of local purchasing than in his other case study areas adjacent to larger metropolitan areas. This would indicate that East Yorkshire, a largely rural area with rural neighbouring counties (e.g. North Yorkshire, Lincolnshire) and with relatively large urban areas like Hull, York and South Yorkshire nearby would have great potential for the development of alternative or local food systems.<sup>48</sup> Winter (2003) argues that to equate 'marginal' with 'quality' is simplistic and fails to fully recognise the variety of components within the 'turn' to quality. Building on work by Hinrichs (2003), he goes on to point out that to conflate 'quality' with 'local' production is to ignore the realities of an emerging 'defensive localism' in food consumption. Defensive localism in relation to food localisation initiatives has been debated within the literature and will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

### ***Defensive Localism***

Defensive localism is often presented as being a negative force, based on a culture of defending rural areas against infiltration from other areas. It could, however, be seen as a starting point in areas like East Yorkshire which are less advanced in developing innovative and creative industries (a lagging area in different respects), as recognised by Qazi and Selfa in their conclusions (p68). Defensive localism, as a political discourse, is not progressive or transformative, whereas AFNs are regarded as being so (although this should be regarded with caution). Holloway and Kneafsey (2004: 266), for example, suggest that 'buying local' might

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<sup>47</sup> Although of course marginality can refer to economic marginality and geographical marginality – they can occur concomitantly yet may also occur independently; for example an area may be far away from main areas of population and markets, yet can simultaneously be performing economically well, while other areas can be close to more populous areas and markets yet still underperform economically.

<sup>48</sup> Although this cannot be assumed, and proximity to urban areas does not guarantee a ready supply of willing consumers. The reconnection of urban consumers to rural producers has been a policy objective for the British government and the European Union (for example, the European Union's 'Urbal' (a combination of the terms urban and rural) programme aimed to reconnect urban consumers to rural food production and the British government's Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy (resulting from the Policy Commission on Sustainable Farming and Food).

represent a reactionary (re)turn to a parochialism in which the local is imagined as a fixture against the anxieties of change, rather than as a cosmopolitan engagement with global ecological and social issues.

In one of few studies to look at alternative food networks in more conventional agricultural areas, Qazi and Selfa's (2005: 49) findings suggest that while AFN spaces are being carved out within their case study area (Washington state, US), they are based on a politics of defensive localism (Winter 2003a) as a result of the long-established importance of agriculture to the region and the need to support this local industry. More work is required in such areas to better understand these relationships and tensions.

Morris and Buller (2003) expand on the idea of defensive localism, as their research pointed to a range of localisms being in operation within the food sector (Bell (2009) has also discussed a 'world of locals'). The first of these, which they term '*parochial localism*', emphasises the defence and support of local farmers, in addition to the protection of the local area (either in a socio-cultural or environmental sense) and the maintenance of tradition (see also Hinrichs, 2003; Winter, 2003). '*Flexible localism*' meanwhile, implies that the emphasis on local food provisioning is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself – they identified that Gloucestershire retailers used 'local' in a very fluid sense which typically related to their need to maintain supplies, sometimes referring to 'British' as local and at other times 'within a 25 mile radius'. Producers also used the notion of local in a flexible way (although less frequently than retailers) where they extended their networks, e.g. buying in from outside the county, in order to ensure the output of a locally branded product. Although not featuring in Morris and Buller's (2003) account, consumers may also use 'flexible localism' in their food shopping choices, utilising a 'politics of pragmatism' (see Anderson 2011, drawing on Chatterton 2006). Finally, a '*competitive localism*' can be identified which, more than the other two forms, arguably presents one of the biggest threats to the sector, for example farmers' markets and other forms of direct retailing organised by producers which was seen to negatively impact on the ability of more established local retailers to source local supplies. The evident tensions presented by these different forms of localism will need to be addressed if the local food sector is to realise its potential.

Further research is needed into the extent of the local food market to better understand the 'existing and emerging contours of the local food sector' (Morris and Buller 2003: 560), as well as into local producers who also supply conventional markets to better understand their

reasons for doing so and also into whether the local food sector can become a significant alternative to conventional food supply chains (Ilbery *et al* 2006: 213).

### ***Disconnections and (re)Connections***

It is generally acknowledged that the 'conventional' food system has disconnected consumers from the production of food, with production often taking place at great distances away from the final consumption – Bell and Valentine (1997: 5) quote Gofton (1990) who suggests that our 'total reliance on outside food production giv[es] us ever greater anxiety about food safety and acceptability'. As a result of this and the other concerns raised above, policy makers and consumers have developed a greater interest in so-called 'alternative food networks'. Alternative food networks encompass a number of diverse initiatives and developments that have recently risen to prominence within the agro-food system (Morris and Kirwan 2010: 132). Although diverse, what they have in common is a concern with 'alternatives' to the norm, or conventional forms of food provision. As (Renting *et al* 2003: 394) observe AFNs represent "newly emerging networks of producers, consumers, and other actors that embody alternatives to the more standardised industrial mode of food supply'.

Farmers' markets, for example, were introduced to the UK in 1997 and were seen to herald a 'reconnection' between consumers and producers, and consumers with their food (Curry 2002). Morris and Kirwan (2010: 132) have called this reconnection a 'thickening of the connection' between production and consumption, or, "as a process interpreted in more theoretical language, through challenging the fetishism of mainstream food commodities". They are critical of the way that (re)connection has been treated by both policy-makers and academic analysis in that it has been seen normatively, as something to be worked towards as a desirable end goal rather than a process that needs to be subject to critical analysis (Morris and Kirwan 2010: 132). In discussing alternative food networks, Watts *et al* (2005: 24-25) point out that however current developments in alternative food networks are conceptualised – whether as agricultural multi-functionality (Wilson, 2001), ecological modernisation (Evans *et al* 2002), a post-productivist transition (Ilbery and Bowler 1998) and so on – it is clear that they are linked to, if not driven by, policy developments occurring at a variety of spatial scales. There perhaps needs to be greater connectivity between policy-makers and the analyses from academic research.

The next section will address the various theoretical approaches specifically problematising alternative and local food networks. Different scholars have utilised many different theoretical approaches, from networks and relational approaches to regulationist and embeddedness,

with the aim of uncovering the characteristics of these new networks and what they might mean for the future production and consumption of food. In addition, the role of consumers in participating in such food networks has become increasingly significant. I will begin by looking at Conventions Theory and the general shift to relationality and networks in the literature.

#### **3.3.4. Understanding local and alternative food networks – theorising difference**

Moving beyond social constructionism, rural geography has turned to networks and hybridity to explore emerging trends and to enable a rematerialising of rural space. Theories include actor-network theory and Deleuzian ideas to emphasize the rural as a multifaceted and co-constituted space, 'defined by networks in which heterogeneous entities are aligned in a variety of ways ... [that] give rise to slightly different countrysides: there is no single vantage point from which the panoply of rural or countryside relations can be seen' (Murdoch, 2003: 274; quoted in Woods 2009). These developing perspectives on hybrid and networked rurals offer prospects of recovering the material and social dimensions of rurality, complementing the cultural narratives that have dominated in the past decade (Woods 2009: 852).

Importantly, these hybrid and network perspectives also point to a blurring of the spatial boundaries of rural geography research and to forging interdisciplinary connections that can interrogate the 'more-than-human' constitution of the rural. Food provides an interesting example of a 'more-than-human' rurality and certainly 'performs' the rural through the embedded messages discussed above (see Woods 2009: 852). Specific examples include Law's (2006) examination of the flows and materialities of the foot and mouth crisis in 2003 and the impacts on rural areas and farmers; Holloway *et al*'s (2009) analysis of genetics and livestock breeding; Atchison *et al*'s (2010) discussion of wheat mobilities in the industrial food chain and so on. In addition to this, performative approaches have allowed a focus on 'practice' in addition to social construction (see Holloway 2000; Edensor 2006).

#### ***Networks and Conventions theory***

Conventions theory (CT, developed by French regulation theorists, quoted by Murdoch *et al* 2000: 113) is closely allied to Actor Network Theory (ANT; see Latour 2005). Drawing on Wilkinson (1997), Murdoch *et al* (2000) suggest that CT has developed from an analysis of the rules, norms and conventions that underpin the wage relation in contemporary capitalism. These conventions (domestic, civic, industrial, ecological, market performance, inspiration, renown (Murdoch and Abram 1998: 244)) can be bundled together in various permutations to create 'worlds of production' – these are in effect ideal types that demonstrate the likely

combinations of conventions found in any particular production structure. It is argued that the various conventions associated with the 'worlds of production' become 'embodied' within the product(s) concerned (Murdoch and Miele 1999: 470). CT gives a great deal of attention to the qualities inherent in different production systems, yet, again, it pays little attention to the consumer perspective.

CT has been used in research relating to farmers' markets (Kirwan 2003), the European Union's regional food protection marks (Protected Designated Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)) (Parrott *et al* 2002) and differences between industrial and 'natural' foods (Murdoch and Miele 1999). Parrott *et al* (2002: 244) note that CT begins from the recognition that 'economic growth is the product of particular, often localised, institutional and political structures and cultures' (quoting Storper and Salais 1997). They go on to argue that there is a spatially distributed hierarchy of 'conventions' in Europe, corresponding to two different food cultures in Europe – a Southern culture with a wealth of local and regional food specialities; and a Northern functional, commodity-driven culture. Yet this is rather crude, and reverts back to simplistic arguments that different geographies of food can be identified and demarcated, and that they operate separately – in recognition of such criticisms, Parrott *et al* (2002) conclude that a more finely grained alternative geography of food can be observed. However, CT is still finding truck in food studies, for example, in innovation in the Spanish wine industry (Sánchez-Hernández *et al* 2010) and in Morgan *et al*'s (2006) *Worlds of Food* thesis, although academic research has become more captivated with hybrid and network approaches.

As a result of this increasing emphasis on networks, Marsden (1998) notes the links between policies and activities surrounding farm diversification which require farmers to develop new networks and connections. For example, farmers are having to change their perspectives of interaction, in that once remote markets, accessed through middlemen, are now being supplemented with a plethora of alternatives with, for example, some markets coming direct to the farm (yet, again, this moves back towards the sphere of production and somewhat ignores consumption interests). Marsden *et al* (2002) detail changes in agriculture whereby the farmer is now required to create and maintain new associations with a whole range of external actors and institutions, and becoming increasingly business-like in the process. The conventional commodity farmer often supplied distant markets accessed through local agents and livestock marts whereas now he / she has market relations of different 'lengths' to negotiate or consider, with some markets coming to the farm and other market relations that involve new networks of actors and agencies beyond the traditional reference group. This

applies to both the traditional zone of food production but also to the new markets of the consumption countryside. Marsden *et al* (2002: 814) argue that this represents a radical break from the past period where diversification was seen as an 'optional extra'. Now it is a more complex system that involves two multi-dimensional processes that give critical importance to the creation of new associations as a means for economic survival:

1. Farmers continually having to reposition themselves in relation to wider spheres, this requires difficult decisions in the context of unstable markets;
2. Multifunctionality where farmers are running a number of businesses simultaneously and have to take decisions relating to which aspect to prioritise. They suggest that this is far removed from mono-cultural productiveness of industrial agricultural production.<sup>49</sup>

This requires farmers to adapt and respond by acquiring new skills, trust, relationships and knowledge and their ability to apply these will be critical for the overall success of rural development. More conceptually (Marsden and Smith 2005: 448) these new networking activities can be seen as distinct 'socio-technical niches' which begin to reclaim parts of the rural land- and social-scape back from the homogenising tendencies of the conventional system.

A key question regarding alternative food networks for Marsden and Smith (2005: 443) is the extent to which they represent the evolution of a more sustainable rural economy based around the redefinition of social, economic and ecological resources, or whether they are destined to remain 'socio-technical' niches (see Smith 2003 and 2006) in a wider economy which continues to devalue local and rural natures, and as a result, aspatialises rural space. It is likely that future developments will incorporate a combination of these.

### ***Embeddedness***

Concepts of embeddedness have been adopted in the analyses of alternative food networks, as a way of addressing the 'turn' to quality (and thus a turn away from the agri-industrial food supply chain) by producers and consumers. The concept of 'embeddedness' has also been applied to research on multifunctionality. Multifunctionality debates draw on ideas of embeddedness to differentiate products and behaviours from those of the more conventional approaches. The notion of embeddedness stems from Granovetter's (1985) interpretation of

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<sup>49</sup> Yet even co-called monocultural industrial farms may incorporate many different facets to the enterprise.



Polanyi's (1944) earlier work (Winter 2003a). Central to the idea of embeddedness is the emphasis laid on the necessity of social relations to all economic transactions. For Granovetter (1985) social relations play a role in generating the necessary trust for economic transactions to take place. Local food networks may offer an opportunity to engender such trust. But embeddedness has been extended in the AFN literature to incorporate the ways that food is 'embedded' within (or disembedded from) economies and the ways that food can be embedded with information about where, how and by whom it was produced.

Holloway and Kneafsey (2004: 267) suggest that the embeddedness dynamic is 'a form of resistance to the disembedding forces of globalisation', based on the development of niche products that appeal to consumers on the basis of their ecological, moral and aesthetic qualities (Sonnino and Marsden 2006: 302). These qualities are 'in turn embedded within producer-consumer relationships in which notions of trust, regard, authenticity and 'connectedness' are given prominence' (Holloway and Kneafsey 2004: 267). Murdoch, *et al* (2000) suggest that these renewed relationships between producers and local ecologies arise from consumer pressure following the food and health scares associated with the industrial food chain, all of which have led to a loss of consumer confidence in the food system and a rise in the level of concern for the way in which food is produced (Nygård and Storstad 1998), although Tregear (2011) posits alternative reasons for their development, beyond the oft cited health scares.

Morris and Kirwan (2010) further explore consumer and producer understandings of embeddedness in relation to 'naturally embedded food products' (NEFP – from Murdoch *et al* 2003). They argue that producers are more likely to emphasise environmental or ecological embeddedness to the exclusion of social or economic embeddedness, an area that they suggest requires problematising. By placing consumer understandings of food produced in 'alternative' ways alongside those understandings of the producer, Morris and Kirwan (2010) demonstrate how producer intentions can lead to unintended interpretations which can result in unwanted understandings of these ecologically embedded food products.

Embeddedness is likely to continue to be of relevance in alternative food networks research, as well as having relevance to the embeddedness of agriculture in rural economies and rural development. Using a case study of the South West of England Sonnino and Marsden (2006: 301) suggest that the 'degree of 'alternativeness' is actively *created* and *constructed* through the development of embedded social, ecological and economic relations which imply sets of reconstituted ('re-localised') spatial relations' (original emphasis). For them, the real

distinctiveness of alternative food networks comes from their variable ability to reconfigure the *time-spaces* and *spatial* relations around them, yet this does not mean that they are completely separated from the powers, conventions and competing geographies of the conventional sector.

Murdoch *et al*'s (2000: 108) research in Wales explores the idea that a previously marginal agricultural region could 'reinvent' itself in a context of quality food production, drawing on the concept of embeddedness (also reinforcing ideas introduced above relating to a new geography of food, by focusing on AFNs in marginal areas). The organic properties of food mean that it is difficult to detach it from place and space, even where it is incorporated into globalised commodity systems and as such that 'contemporary food chains are not as disembodied as a superficial reading of the globalisation literature might indicate'. Sonnino and Marsden (2006: 304) assert that successful quality food must be accessible to more than just a narrow range of localised consumers; Murdoch *et al* (2000: 119) state 'this forces quality food chains to combine embeddedness and disembodiedness in rather complicated ways'. Being too embedded in a locality may have limitations as food production might remain too small-scale and local to become more profitable (especially if food-related businesses continue to resist the industrial and commercial conventions) but these food-related businesses might also be too inflexible in a context of changing economic conditions (p117). Watts *et al* (2005: 28) reinforce this by arguing that while economic growth may be generated through the production of speciality or niche foods, it may leave such areas vulnerable as all producers in one area are encouraged to focus on one speciality and thus place themselves in competition with other areas trying to achieve the same goal (they cite Parmigiano Reggiano as an example).

To reverse this, successful farming 'hotspots' such as the East Riding may be well placed to develop local food systems, as they already have experience of accessing markets and benefit from physical conditions amenable to agriculture. Marsden *et al* (2000) suggest that the result of both scenarios could be food production that is weak and relatively marginal compared to the globalised food sector (this analysis still focuses heavily on the production end of the spectrum). Going back to CT, they recommend that, in order to become significant players in the global food system, these actors must adopt and adapt the industrial and commercial criteria – they conclude that the domestic, civic and ecological conventions alone are not enough. Kirwan (2003: 2) notes that although these alternative strategies of food production-consumption are still likely to be based on commercial imperatives, they may also incorporate a broader range of exchange logics than simply profit maximisation.

Critics of the embeddedness approach have suggested that it can inadvertently produce an overly benign view of economic relations and processes (Sayer 2001, quoted in Goodman 2004: 5), reinforcing an exaggeratedly optimistic view of local economic relations (Sonnino and Marsden 2006: 303, quoting Hinrichs 2000), based on a crude division of 'global capitalist actors' and their 'embedded local counterparts' (Goodman 2004: 5).

In summarising their discussion of embeddedness, Sonnino and Marsden (2006: 304) conclude that the literature on agri-food networks suggests that embeddedness and disembeddedness are not mutually exclusive, and that there is a tendency in both the 'conventional' and 'alternative' food sectors to create products that are rooted in a specific territorial context on one hand, and have the potential to travel to distant markets on the other (Fair Trade or locality foods, for instance). They advocate (p305) a more sophisticated approach to embeddedness which can incorporate the vertical (links to larger society, polity and economy) and horizontal (links to social, cultural and ecological domains) aspects of embeddedness, and suggest that this broader perspective helps to view alternative and conventional food networks not as separate spheres but as highly competitive and relational to one another in and through space.

### ***The consumption 'turn'***

As already mentioned, there have been calls to more adequately locate the consumer in AFN research, amid a tendency to focus on the production sphere. A further change of academic attention and approaches can be termed the 'consumption turn'. Miller (1995) describes a 'turn' towards acknowledging consumption in the social sciences more generally. This consumption turn does not only concern the geographical study of alternative food networks (see Marsden 1998b), as is the concern here, but the wider relevance and implications of consumption from looking at shopping malls and landscapes in geography to the effects of advertising and media on consumption and the sociological impacts of consumption (see Miller 1995). Consumption is particularly relevant for food-related studies, for as Bell and Valentine (1997) point out, we all need food to survive and it is consumed daily. Yet, more than this, 'food is packed with social cultural and symbolic meanings. Every mouthful, every meal, can tell us something about ourselves, and about our place in the world' (p3), reiterating Bourdieu's (1984) earlier thesis. They clearly link food consumption to geography, as a result of the daily experience of different spatial scales, from the body to the community / neighbourhood to the region right up to the global level.

Goodman (2003: 6) notes that work in the field of alternative food networks has focused overwhelmingly on the supply (production) side, with a serious neglect of consumers and consumption. Moreover, where consumers *do* feature they are cast in stratified, market research terms without 'agency' or meaningful everyday practices (drawing on work by Goodman and DuPuis 2002: 8). Goodman sees this as a glaring omission, as alternative food networks rely on consumers to reconfigure consumer-producer relations. Goodman and DuPuis (2002: 7) express frustration, in that while recent studies have aimed to give consumers a key role analytically, they are not explicitly about consumption and consumer practices: 'the consumer emerges only to disappear again into a production-centred framework'.<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, Goodman presents a clear call for more sophisticated work on consumers and consumption – moving away from the situation where consumers are framed as 'discerning', 'affluent' and so on. Yet theoretical development remains focused on the behaviours of producers and forms of productive organisation: 'consumption has been neglected, under-theorised, treated as an exogenous structural category and granted 'agency' or transformative power only in the economistic abstract terms of demand' (Goodman and DuPuis 2002). So, it is clear from their arguments that consumers need to receive greater recognition, but also that theories need to be able to incorporate and give sufficient weight to consumers.

Agri-food studies have only recently begun to explore the importance of consumers' attitudes and practices in creating sustainable food systems (Selfa *et al* 2008: 263). As will be discussed below, despite the fact that many (for example Goodman and DuPuis 2002) have called for consumption and consumers to receive greater attention, theoretically and empirically, research purporting to investigate the role of consumers in alternative food networks has often been unsuccessful, frequently focusing on production (agricultural) issues despite the original good intentions. Goodman and DuPuis (2002: 8) criticise Murdoch and Miele (1999) and Arce and Marsden (1993) amongst others, for briefly focusing on the consumer before returning to the sphere of production where theories around 'worlds of production' and the behaviour of producers have dominated. This leads Goodman and DuPuis (2002: 9) to suggest that the 'turn' to consumption [in agri-food studies] is illusory. Subsequent research (see Kneafsey *et al* 2008) has gone some way in overcoming these criticisms, while Eden *et al's* (2008: 1055) call to 'put consumers back into research' highlights the continuing need and desire to locate the consumer. The consumer is present in geographical research that extends beyond food (see Mansvelt 2009 for a review), but Mansvelt (2009: 272) warns of labelling people as 'consumers', and notes that many researchers choose instead to focus on people's

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<sup>50</sup> See for example Marsden *et al's* (2002) model of rural development as discussed on page 53 above – whilst this model is useful, it still very much places power in the farm unit and therefore agency is not granted to consumers or other actors.

practices, and the particular subjectivities they embody in place in relation to consumption and other social processes, thus recognising the complexity of the act of consumption (see also Tregear 2011). Consumers are increasingly recognised as embodied, sentient and relational beings (Mansvelt 2009). Such work on consumption often uses theoretical frameworks developed from broader sociological debates.

Holloway and Kneafsey (2004: 278) suggest that in considering 'alternative' food networks, consumer agency needs to be further understood. Studies need to focus on the fluid and relational construction of consumption identities, and on the different motivations and desires which structure consumers' social, economic and cultural engagement with food production-consumption. Consumers' positions within networks are negotiated, contested and able to shift. Again, specificity is important: consumption practices and identities will vary within and between different types of production-consumption network, and across time and space.

Cox *et al* (2008) and Seyfang (2008) explore different 'alternative' food systems and consumers' motivations for participating in them. Seyfang (2008) takes the case of an organic cooperative operating in Norfolk. She aims to explore what the implications might be for AFNs as supermarkets adopt the sale of organic and local foods as another option for boosting sales. Yet her research does not explore this in any real depth with either the consumers or the AFN to identify what they think this might mean for AFNs. Both Cox *et al* (2008: 205) and Seyfang (2008: 191) highlight the important role that AFNs can play in rural development by helping to mitigate the crisis of conventional intensive agriculture, and building up the local economy by keeping money circulating locally. Consumers are recognised as being well-informed and as drawing upon a range of 'knowledges' in making their food choices (Cook and Crang 1996). However, no work to date has explored what consumers' regard for rural development policies and strategies are, nor rural development more broadly, and this is an area where this research can offer some insights. Although there is increasing evidence of consumers being included in AFN research, Tregear (2011) remains critical and suggests that much remains to be done.

### **3.3.5. Conclusion**

This section of the literature review has examined the core ways that academic research has explored the emergence of new modes of food production and consumption. New networks of food consumption and production have developed, largely argued to be as a consequence of concerns about the agricultural policy framework established post WWII, health risks

from a series of disease outbreaks (including those affecting human health such as pesticide residues in food, salmonella, BSE, e-coli, and other animal diseases like foot and mouth which don't directly affect human health) (see Sage 2003; Ilbery and Maye 2005 and Murdoch and Miele 2004b; Stassart and Whatmore 2003). Additionally, Murdoch and Miele (2004b: 156) describe a more cultural response rising from a rejection of standardised food in the quest for a more artisanal, traditional and natural methods. These reactions have led to consumers looking for foods that meet their new needs, and producers who want to take advantage of new customers but also move away from productivist systems which devalue farmers and farming, pushing them into the 'race to the bottom' (Marsden 1998b; Marsden *et al* 2002). These changes are leading to growing divergence rather than greater standardisation (Murdoch and Miele 2004b: 157). As demonstrated above, recent research into alternative food networks has identified a confusing array of terms associated with such networks, and this conflation of terms has led to further opacity.

This research will examine the extent of alternative food networks in East Yorkshire (traditionally viewed as a producer of standardised commodities) and the Abruzzo (a marginal region of Italy, a country long assumed to have a strong food culture). Taking two differing case study areas will enable the identification of similarities and differences between them, as well as any possibilities for the sharing of ideas or practices. As argued above, calls for consumers to be located in such research are responded to here in this research. Consumers are included in this research, along with producers and policy makers in an attempt to capture the views of all three groups relating to local food, rural development, and how policy works to promote both of these.

The literature introduced so far has identified a shift from agriculture to a broader approach to rural development. Local or alternative food networks are seen by some to be integral to rural development, and also enable research to incorporate the views and actions of consumers in contrast to previous work where production concerns have been the primary focus. As Bessi re (1998) notes, as rural areas become increasingly associated with activities of consumption, local rural identities become redefined. She goes on to suggest that food, in particular, is a marker of regional identity, being promoted to benefit local producers, consumers and other actors, specifically in rural tourism. She argues that as the uses of rural areas, specifically manifested in acts of consumption, change and become more multiple, so too do the meanings and identities attached to rurality. However, notions of the rural as being idyllic are pervasive, and food can be seen to link into these perceptions. The next section will address these issues of food, rurality and idyllicism. The literature surrounding notions of the

rural idyll and the influences of such thinking on how people make sense of rurality was not an area that originally stood out as relating to this research. However, the responses relating to geographical comparisons between the case study areas and other, supposedly more idyllic, places, thoughts about why some areas were more suited to local food networks, and talk of 'rural' traits and characteristics that are somehow different to those of urban people highlighted the need to examine such literature in more detail. As such the next section of the literature review will turn to address these issues.

### **3.4. CONSUMING THE IDYLL: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RURAL AS IDYLIC**

This section of the literature review will examine literature relating to representations of rurality, in particular the ways that rural areas are seen as being more idyllic. The 'rural idyll' has often been regarded as a homogenous space ('Arcadia' – Strong 2011) although one that has changed and morphed in line with thinking at a given time (see Williams 2011, 1973 for a discussion of changing perspectives on what is seen as idyllic or pastoral going back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), yet this section will illustrate recent thinking which demonstrates how rural space is more fractured, and that it might be more appropriate to conceptualise 'rural idylls', a more multiple description. As Bell (1997) suggests, concentrating on representations of the rural may expand debates about the countryside as an imaginative resource, something which arguably is key to considering effective rural development policy alongside its more material dimensions. He goes on to observe that by thinking about rurality as an imagined cultural geography, we can examine issues of, amongst other things, the importance given to the rural and the urban as popular cultural tropes – and begin to see how the interplay of lived cultures and cultural 'texts' works and reworks our understandings of what those tropes mean (Bell 1997: 94-108). Phillips *et al* (2001) building on Bell's (1997) work, argue that the notion of 'the rural idyll' may neglect differences between rural areas, resulting in overly monolithic and static images of the cultural construction of rurality. They argue in favour of recognising the co-presence of other, non- and anti-idyllic constructions of rurality.

'Rurality' can be interpreted in multiple ways. As socially represented, rurality is a de-spatialised cultural concept that has a 'disembodied and virtual character' by being detached from specific geographical localities and thus 'lacks empirical clarity' (Halfacree 1993: 32). Instead, it is a discourse about a type of space that is usually morally charged and infused with assumptions of which activities are apposite. Images of landscape are critical in these representations. Rurality is related culturally to representations of other spaces, particularly urban space (Williams 2011, 1973; Creed and Ching 1997, quoted in Gray, undated). The myths and symbols of rurality are recognised as pervading wider social spaces (Clope 1997: 368), with rural imagery and lifestyles offering a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984).

Ever since there has been a clear distinction between the country and the city (see Williams 2011, 1973), the rural has occupied an ambivalent position in the popular imagination...the appeal of the countryside remains strongly magnetic for those with sufficient mobility (Bell 1997). In addition to lived experiences of rurality Bunce (1994) has described the significance of the 'armchair countryside' allowing urban dwellers further opportunity to 'escape' to the



countryside. The *imagined* geographies of rurality have become as significant, if not more so, than the *material* geographical spaces of rurality (Cloke 2007: 96, emphasis added). Taking Mormont's (1990) study as a basis, Cloke (2007: 97) asserts that there is no longer any such thing as simple rural space, but, rather, a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical areas.

### **3.4.1. The Rural Idyll**

There is a long history of societies constructing notions of the rural idyll (Williams 2011, 1973; Short 2006, Hopkins 1998, Burchardt 2011), linked to a particular English<sup>51</sup> (sometimes British, see Jones 1995) consciousness. However, representations of the rural as being somehow more idyllic are not confined to the UK, and such representations in Italy will be specifically detailed in section 3.4.2.

English rural areas and the countryside are synonymous with a wider sense of Englishness (as a national identity, see Strong 2011), evoking a sense of belonging and a yearning for home (Berberich 2009). While Berberich (2009) suggests that although the origin of this notion of Englishness and rurality being tightly bound together began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Williams traces a much longer history (2011, 1973) which sees literary descriptions of a lost pastoral life, and the concept persists today through television programmes and tourism. Bunce (1994; 2003) notes the depth and durability of the rural idyll as a cultural construction which has evolved with the rise of urban-industrialism. Cloke (1997) also suggests that the outpourings of popular media place rurality firmly in the imaginations of (English) people wherever they live. Moreover, in turn, the imagined geographies of rurality are coloured by these very representations (Cloke 1997: 372). He also notes that many people are likely to 'know' rural areas more through watching popular television programmes than through personal experience (see also Jones 1995; Short 1991), as he later elaborated:

[T]he long fingers of rural idyll reach into our everyday lives via the cultural paraphernalia of film, television, art, books, magazines, toys and cultural practices. We are brainwashed from birth by idyllic representational values which present a cumulative foundation for both reflexive and instinctive reactions to rurality. Almost without realising, it seems, we learn to live out these knowledges in perception, attitude and practice (Cloke, 2003: 1).

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<sup>51</sup> Although the rural idyll is often argued to be a particularly English phenomenon, the existence of the concept has been explored in New Zealand (Swaffield and Fairweather 1998), the Netherlands (van Dam *et al* 2002) and Michigan in North America (Browne 2011).

Phillips *et al* (2001) have termed the ways that the media conveys senses of the rural, which often communicates the rural to people who have had little or no direct personal experience of rural places (p1), 'mediated ruralities'. Magazines like *Country Living*<sup>52</sup> play an active role in selling the desirability of rural living (Jones 1995: 42; Short 2006: 143), which has more recently included promoting local food as part of the appeal of the rural idyll.<sup>53</sup> In reviewing work on representing the rural idyll, Halfacree (1995) discusses the ways that rurality has been used as part of a national environmental ideology. Short (1991) outlines a contemporary 'pastoral myth' (the '*rural idyll*') which sees the countryside as a less-hurried lifestyle with people following the seasons rather than the stock market, and have more time for one another, and communities are more organic, and where people have a place and an 'authentic' role. Rural life has been cherished and idealised, and notions of close-knit communities leading happy, healthy lives in an idyllic and problem-free environment have become a powerful representation of rurality (Clope and Milbourne 1992), infiltrating national policy as suggested in Chapter 2. The countryside is viewed as a refuge from modernity (Short 1991: 34), despite Newby's (1979) work which challenged the depiction of rural England as a 'green and pleasant land'.

Although there was a period of academic focus on the rural idyll as a widely accepted phenomenon in the mid-to-late 1990s (Jones 1995; Wright 1992; Hoggart 1990; Halfacree 1993 amongst others), as a concept it received relatively little critical attention (Little and Austin 1996), indeed, it has largely been neglected as a topic of academic research in recent years. Most academic work in the 1990s concentrated on the ways that the rural idyll could be used to convey typical features of rurality, such as traditional rural communities and kinship networks. Cloke (1997: 373-4) comments that this trope celebrating the rural idyll has its limitations: it does not necessarily map onto some parts of rural England, nor does it translate to other national contexts (see Wilson 2001; Eriksson 2010). However, most arguments for the rural being closely tied up with notions of the idyllic are based on language – that some countries do not have words for 'rural', 'countryside' or 'idyll' – whereas Italy does have, and uses, such words ('*rurale*', '*campagna*' and '*l'idillio*' respectively), albeit interpretations of what is idyllic in Italy varies from those in the UK, as will be discussed below.

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<sup>52</sup> In addition to other media such as *Horse and Hound*, *Country Life*, *Country Homes*, *Period Homes* etc.

<sup>53</sup> Recent editions have included a series on 'Made in Britain' – in search of the country's best food producers, food towns as a place to live in the countryside, and recruiting Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall to outline 'The Changing Face of Food' as well as promoting local food initiatives such as procurement and the EU's PGI and PDO system (see figure 20 on p297).

Although the landscape features in constructions of the rural idyll (see Williams 2011, 1973), it tends to be in relation to the attractiveness of the environment for recreation and tourism, and on the whole the productive nature of the land(scape) with respect to food production was largely ignored. Agriculture has been viewed as a producer of landscapes rather than of food. Agriculture was viewed at the time (1990s) as having moved into a post-productivist phase yet this further eclipses places like the East Riding of Yorkshire which have, on the whole, continued to operate a productivist based mode of food production. Cloke (2007: 100) suggests the changing needs of rural production systems, notably in terms of farm diversification, are aligned with new forms of commodity consumption that broadly uphold enduring conceptions of the rural as idyllic, pastoral, close to nature, rich in heritage, safe and problem-free, although such images may not apply equally to all rural areas. As will be seen later, although a localised food network is emerging in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the commitment to intensive agriculture is strong in the area, and many locally embedded food businesses still practice intensive farming methods despite localised food chains through farmers' markets and farm shops.

Recent contributions to thinking about the enduring relevance of the rural idyll as a way of communicating rurality have been few (Short 2006; Bell 2006; Cloke 2007), but persist in excluding areas such as the East Riding of Yorkshire as the rural idyll continues to be interpreted in terms of the attractive landscapes popularised through the media and tourism. These rural idylls are principally set against the urban as the Other, rather than un-idyllic Other rural places (although see Bell 2006).

Imagined landscapes and lifestyles of farming constitute a 'bucolic fiction' (Shepard 1996, quoted in Holloway 2004: 319) and rural landscapes are somehow seen as more 'authentic' (Bunce 1994). Other images of agriculture include modern agriculture as being associated with environmental damage, animal welfare issues, and food and animal health scares (Morris and Buller 2003), but, as Bell (2006) suggests, these 'realities' of agriculture are ignored as an 'un-idyllic other', but without which the 'bucolic fiction' cannot exist. However, often the rural idyll is perceived as only being the 'other' of the urban setting, and not as a contrast to 'other rurals' as in Bell's un-idyllic rural 'others' which includes agribusiness and other types of rural areas (such as ex-industrial counties like County Durham or parts of South Yorkshire where coal mining and steel works were dominant features of the rural 'landscape'). The limitations and heterogeneity of notions of 'the rural idyll' can be augmented by taking 'other' places such as the East Riding of Yorkshire or the Abruzzo region as case studies, as I have done in my research. Concepts such as the rural idyll can be argued to be spatially differentiated, as even

within a seemingly homogenous rural area there can be places that are idyllic sitting alongside those seen as less so. In addition, what is idyllic for one person may be not be so for another, thus suggesting that a blanket approach to the rural being equated with the idyllic should be challenged, as Bell (2006) and others have done. These imaginings of the rural are strongly linked to agriculture, and as such food.

### ***Food and the Rural Idyll***

The use of rural imagery and traditions to sell food is not new: the packaging and marketing of rural foods and rural food spaces contributes towards the ways in which the rural is imagined and packaged for consumption. For example, in the 1860s Cadbury's used idyllic paintings of the countryside to sell their chocolates leading to the 'chocolate box' image term in common usage (Short 2006: 141). Indeed, Gallent *et al* (2008: 119) promote the idea of capitalising on the rural idyll and suggest that quality niche products and related alternative marketing strategies advance the notion of a rural idyll by affirming the notion of a pure and community-based lifestyle. Gallent *et al* (2008: 116) specifically identify food as being a means of promoting this rural idyll when they describe the rural economy as one made up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which are able to focus on niche products and cashing in on the various aspects of the rural idyll such as local and organic foods (cf. Winter and Rushbrook 2003). The imaginings that rural and urban people alike hold about the 'Other' play a significant role in how the town and country are perceived, and the types of activities that could and should take place on those stages.

Bell (2006: 150) makes passing reference to how the rural idyll can be found on our plates and lists numerous ways that one can buy into the rural idyll as a statement of style or taste (see also Bourdieu 1984). Bell identified three ideal-typical types of rural idyll: the pastoral ('farmscapes'), the natural ('wildscapes') and sporting ('adventurescapes'). For him, the farmscape reflects the agricultural landscape associated with a specific type of agriculture, one that is artisanal and, importantly, *not* agribusiness. These three rural idylls represent variable combinations of the following elements, according to Bell (2006): nature, romanticism, authenticity, and nostalgia, which are all stamped onto the land and its inhabitants. Bell outlines further 'idylls' later in his chapter, including a gastro-idyll specifically dealing with food but which focuses on the material qualities of that food in terms of freshness, quality and taste. He states that 'as one of the most rudimentary ways in which we seek to connect with nature and the rural, then, the food we eat occupies a symbolic centrality that makes *the gastro-idyll a potent and complex sign of our feelings about the countryside*' (Bell 2006: 157-8, emphasis added). While in his conclusion Bell suggests that the three processes he has chosen

to examine, food, tourism and the mass media, produce particular imaginings of the countryside that feed into our experiences of it, he has not explored any of these processes in any detail. Agribusiness is established by Bell (2006: 157) as an anti-idyll whose practices are often obscured at the point of consumption, a point made earlier by Halfacree (1999) that 'superproductivist' areas were the dichotomous opposite of the 'rural idyll'. By concentrating on the East Riding of Yorkshire, the idea that the rural idyll only gains identity and meaning in contrast with an un-idyllic rural rather than singularly urban 'Other' (Short 2006: 133) can be critically evaluated. Local food can also be viewed as an 'Other' in contrast to supermarket food which anyone can buy and use, while local food is presented as an *experience* and something that requires effort.

In relation to ideas of rural idylls in policy terms, Philo *et al* (2003) note work undertaken by researchers such as McLaughlin (1986), Cloke (1997) and Cloke *et al* (1995), in persuasively debunking the myth of the 'rural idyll' which they claim has dominated intellectual debate about, and policy initiatives towards, rural areas in both Britain and North America for too long. However, Cloke (2007) argues for the continued utility and existence of such thinking about rural areas, and illustrates how images of a rural idyll remain relevant for tourism, local food and other 'rural' products, even though such images may serve to exclude other less idyllic rural places. Yet despite work to debunk the rural idyll myth in academic research, the myth may be argued to persist in policy and in everyday life. For example, the British Association of Nature Conservationists (2001: 8, quoted in Horton 2008) stated that:

The authentic British rural scene – Postman Pat, skylarks and all – is still a perfectly viable option, but only if we ourselves are determined to conserve it and make it work by making critical changes to our own lifestyles, *withdrawing our patronage from supermarkets and agribusiness* and reinvesting all our energy at a local level' (emphasis added)

Arguments such as these, promoted by (certain parts of) the media reinforce the idea that productivist areas like the East Riding of Yorkshire have no place in the rural idyll, drawing on Short's (1991) earlier comments about rural areas being somehow more 'authentic'. This also indicates the necessity of an active resistance against the unwanted symbols of modern (urban / global) life in order to retain the ideals of rural living.

It is not only the media that are complicit in promoting representations of the rural as idyllic. Woods (1998: 24) describes the role of one local authority in the South West of England in an

explicit identification of itself with an idyllic representation of rurality. He surmises that if the involvement of elected local government in advocating particular discourses of rurality can be identified on a wider scale, then it might be suggested that the restructuring of the past 20 years has produced not only a 'new local governance' on a national scale, characterized by dispersed responsibilities, networking, public-private partnerships, increased central influence and entrepreneurialism; but also a 'new rural local governance' in which a primary concern of elected authorities has become the discursive regulation of 'rurality'. Consumers can also replicate such imaginary impressions of rurality. Eating foods that are seen to be 'rural' in some way may represent a way of appropriating a rural identity (Bessière 1998: 25). It is not only people that can perform rurality, but also things and artefacts such as 'food' itself can convey meanings and imaginaries of rurality, as the next section will discuss.

### ***Performance of the Rural***

Edensor (2006) laments that studies of performativity have neglected the rural, focusing instead on the urban realm. In response, rural geographers' interest in the *performance* of rurality has increased, and reflects, in part, a recognition of the limitations of social constructionism in conceptualizing the rural, dominant in rural geography since the 1990s (Clope 2006). Social constructivism emphasises the discourses through which ideas about rurality are produced and reproduced and the texts through which they are represented, and has usefully provided an insight into the contingent and contested nature of rurality. Yet, social constructivism has also been criticised for neglecting the material dimensions of the rural condition that have a real impact on the experiences of people living and working in, and visiting, rural space (Clope, 2006).

Acknowledging the *performance* of rurality can reveal how discourses of rurality are enacted and routinised with material effects, and how the practices and performances of rural actors in material settings contribute to the production and reproduction of a discourse around rurality (Woods 2010). In addition to the staged performances of the touristic experience, performance can include everyday iterative practices. For Horton (2008), the ways that the rural idyll is encountered and 'consumed' in practice are fundamental to the actual, lived, and detailed nature of 'consumption'. Horton (2008) concludes that the everyday encounters and happenings *are* the 'consumption' of the 'rural idyll'. Edensor (2006) also illustrates that rurality is performed in a less-staged manner in the everyday actions of people who live and/or work in the countryside, in addition to the staged experiences of rurality. The staged can become the everyday, as after time the repeated performance of everyday practices becomes instinctive and intuitive (Edensor 2006: 486; Woods 2010: 837). These everyday practices can

involve forms of embodied being in rural space that cannot be adequately represented in text or language, and as such can be described as 'more-than-representational' (rather than 'non-representational') (Carolan 2008, quoted in Woods 2010: 837).

Although Woods' (2010) review of rural performance is anthropocentric, I will argue that food can be seen as a more-than-human way of representing, communicating and consuming rurality, as Carolan has recently done (2011). Performance of rurality often focuses on the touristic experience of rural areas, yet food is often a major part of the tourist experience (and is promoted by tourism officials as such) and often represents a material item that returns home with the tourist.

Edensor (2006) identifies a number of 'stages' on which, he suggests, the theatre of rurality is played out, by urban and rural actors alike. However, he neglects an important aspect of the countryside. Whilst Edensor (2006) discusses agriculture, he limits this to the daily rituals and knowledges of the farmer in carrying out his or her tasks (the method of food production, rather than the food itself), and the role of country shows in staging a representation of farming to a broader audience (see also Holloway 2004). Food production and the ways that food performs the rural, through 'stages' such as farm shops, farmers' markets and food fairs (which could also include marketing material, labelling and branding initiatives) are ignored. The productive spaces of the rural are thus overlooked. Although Holloway and Kneafsey (2000: 290) argued that for farmers' markets the space of consumption is as symbolic as the produce consumed, in addition to specific consumption sites (farm shops, farmers' markets, vegetable boxes, and other food fairs), the food itself can be argued as being imbued or embedded with stories of rurality, that may differ markedly from urban food stories. Hence, it can be suggested that although 'stages' of food consumption have been investigated, the role of the *foods* as sites of performance and a staging of rurality have largely been neglected.

Although embeddedness has been explored extensively (Murdoch *et al* 2000; Hinrichs 2000; Winter 2003a; Sage 2003; Kirwan and Morris 2010; Morris and Kirwan 2011) within the local food literature, the 'things' that are embedded in the food have tended to be issues relating to, for example, production (labour relations, social justice, small scale) or environmental messages (organic, low input) (see, for example, Morris and Kirwan 2010). Food's materiality has not been considered specifically as *performing* rurality, although reference to food with a story is more common. For Bessi re (1998: 24) regional and so-called 'traditional' food offers an escape (either real or imagined) for city dwellers from his (sic) daily routine and ordinary fare, suggesting that food can indeed be seen as performing rurality.

### **3.4.2. Rural Idyll(s) and Italy – l'idilli rurale in Italia**

In comparison to the UK, little academic attention has been paid to the study of social representations of the rural and the urban in Italy. As De Gennaro *et al* (undated<sup>54</sup>) states:

soprattutto nel [Italia], è stata prestata poca attenzione allo studio della rappresentazione sociale dominante del concetto di rurale e di urbano e alle presenza di eventuali differenze tra la percezione di coloro che vivono in un contesto urbano o rurale.

Above all [in Italy], little attention has been focused on the study of dominant social representations of the concepts of rural and of urban, and of the eventual differences between the perceptions of those people who live in the context of urban or rural (author's translation)

Romanticised images of the Italian countryside are popular in tourism brochures and in promoting second homes in the Italian countryside. Messina and Gottardo (2008) stated that '[il] idillio rurale tradizionalmente associate alla campagna inglese' ('the rural idyll is traditionally associated with the English countryside'). But, to say that the idea of rural idylls is solely an Anglicised concept would be to ignore a broader history. Bunce (1994: 6) describes early Roman responses to the countryside as an escape from the crowded decadence of Rome. Although he suggests these early links are somewhat tenuous to today's modern countryside ideal, urbanisation triggers such romantic notions of the countryside. The idea of rural as idyllic is not only a concept applied to Southern European countries like Italy, France and Greece by Britons, but has meaning for Italian people too. Movements such as Slow Food promulgate such images (Donati 2005) by 'tapping into a deep cultural well that romantically harks back to illusory images of a rural idyll or utopian past in which people and nature lived together' (Jones *et al* 2003: 303). In Italy, agriculture is not just attributed with creating a particular type of landscape but with a deeper connection to rural areas, through the types of plants, traditional ways of doing agriculture such as transhumance, climactic conditions and so on, in a similar way to the French concept of *terroir* (Barham 2003).

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<sup>54</sup> <http://diapnw4.diap.polimi.it/~grabino/aisre/2000/Contenuto/Contributi/Sessione%2007/DeGennaro.PDF> accessed 27 April 2011.



**Figure 9. Logo of Parco Produce, Local Food Consortium, Abruzzo Italy**  
(source: <http://www.laportadeiparchi.it/tutela.htm>)



Contributing to ideas akin to the rural idylls presented above, Holloway (2002: 75) describes the web content of one of the businesses (La Porta dei Parchi) involved in my research, which draws on an anti-modern aesthetic in promoting their business. The countryside is presented as a refuge of traditional skills, stress-free living with preserved gastronomic traditions, kept safe from the modernising effects of the urban. The business is part of a consortium of local food producers, the branding of which suggests the need to protect the pastoral products of the area (see Figure 9). Yet, few involved in the business have a farming background or are from the local area (see Holloway *et al* 2006).

Although not necessarily couched in terms of idyllic-ness, ‘beauty’, whether of landscape, people or food, is a strong discourse in Italy and can be utilised to the same effect as idyllic-ness. Rural areas are seen as repositories of beauty. For example *I Borghi Più Belli d’Italia*,<sup>55</sup> (‘the most beautiful villages in Italy’), is a scheme celebrating the beauty of Italian villages. Describing itself as a club established in 2001 to ‘promote the great heritage of history, art, culture, environment and traditions found in small Italian towns.’ Visitors are invited to taste the history and savour a moment in these beautiful places. Ventura *et al* (2006: 30) note that ‘quality’ food production in Tuscany and Umbria is more significant than the Italian average, which may be due to the levels of agritourism in these regions. Earlier, Ventura *et al* (2001) suggested that this is attributable to ‘the beauty of the landscape and the wealth of historical

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.borghitalia.it> Admission to the ‘club’ is not guaranteed and villages can be removed if they don’t adhere to standards. Accessed 25 May 2011.

and artistic patrimony in these regions'. Thus, beautiful landscapes and a strong historic and artistic heritage lend well to quality food production, hinting at ideas of rural areas as idyllic. Despite this, Dickie (2007: 7) resolutely states that Italian food is city food. Dickie (2007) charts the creation and re-creation of rural idylls in Italy, with one particular brand being prominent in this trend. '*Il Mulino Bianco*' (the White Mill), a brand of biscuits, were instrumental in creating an image of rural idyllic-ness in an advert – the Po valley where the company is based was seen as 'flat and featureless', so Tuscany was chosen for its attractive landscape. The advert drew on a suite of images that are popular in Italian culture and which portray rural as idyllic: the *trattoria* in an olive grove, hams suspended from the beams of the farmhouse kitchen, the noisy family gathered under the pergola while *mamma* serves dinner (Dickie 2007: 5) – such images are replicated in television adverts today in both the UK and Italy.<sup>56</sup> Together these images weave a powerful rural myth that finds its favourite setting in Tuscany (something which Williams 2011, 1973 also alludes to). Corti (2009: 260) also observes *Il Mulino Bianco* as commodifying the rural idyll and as an especially emotive image for consumers. In an earlier paper, Corti (2007) describes how the countryside has been key in a process of nation-making, constructions and representations of nations. He links this to a predominantly urbanised population and the recent food scares:

In un mondo dove la maggior parte della popolazione vive ormai in agglomerati urbani e dove l'agricoltura e la trasformazione alimentare sono totalmente industrializzate, il 'revival' rurale, il Mulino Bianco usano l'angoscia del consumatore che, di fronte all'artificializzazione di ogni aspetto della vita e del consumo, desidera essere rincuorato con rappresentazioni che sfruttano i richiami al 'tradizionale', al 'naturale', all 'antico'. (Corti 2007: 169)

In a world where the major part of the population lives in urban agglomerations and where agriculture and food processing are totally industrialised, the rural 'revival', the White Mill uses the worries of consumers about the artificiality of all aspects of life and consumption, it is desirable to cheer them with representations that exploit the allures of the 'traditional', the 'natural' and of the 'past'. (author's translation)

Corti, then, suggests that the rural idyll finds truck given recent concerns relating to food scares and in an increasingly urbanised population looking to hark back to some imagined bucolic rural lifestyle, something he suggests is invented in some imagined heritage. Dickie (2007: 6) also notes that for Italians, nostalgia for the rustic way of life is a recent

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<sup>56</sup> For example in Dolmio ragu adverts.

development, particularly once the vast majority of Italians had left the hardship of the countryside safely behind. It is not only ideals of a rural idyll that are invented. Helstosky (2004: 154) concludes that the Italian traditions and recipes that are commemorated globally are invented traditions.

Organic food in Italy is taking hold not purely due to its 'organic-ness' but to some extent by building on its associations with a rural idyll (Holt *et al* 2002: 4), and can be attributed with Italian consumers relearning their cuisines (Marsden 1998a: 110). Local food is seen as being more important for rural areas and residents, yet there is increasing demand from Italian consumers (urban and rural alike) for food that is healthy, nutritious and safe, as in the UK. Ventura *et al* (2006: 30) describe the importance of quality production for (the economy of) parts of Italy like Emilia Romagna, home to products such as Parmesan cheese and Parma ham.

As in the UK, changes in the countryside (including food production and consumption, increased demand for recreation and leisure, renewable energy, biofuels, cultural resources and biodiversity resources of traditional agriculture) are leading to increasing interest in concepts of rurality in Italy (Corti 2007). Corti (2007) describes changes in the countryside similar to those taking place in the UK, and that as a result of agricultural intensification since WWII, rural areas have become less definable spatially and that their role is contested. He suggests that:

[lo spazio rurale] e uno spazio di consumo bucolico e compensazione ricreativa, emozionale, edonistica delle deprivazioni e delle condizioni stressanti imposte dallo stile di vita urbano-industriale (2007: 169)

[rural space] is a space of bucolic consumption and recreational compensation, emotional, hedonistic of the deprivation and the stressful conditions imposed by the urban-industrial life style (author's translation)

Montanari and Staniscia (2011<sup>57</sup>) describe areas in Abruzzo being affected by significant depopulation, resulting in a greater number of people going overseas than remaining in the Abruzzo. They describe that recently a revival of Abruzzo agriculture has occurred, driven by small groups of pioneers, often complete outsiders to Abruzzo (see Holloway 2002), or of Abruzzian origin, who have been attracted by the beauty of the region and its age-old

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.terredelvino.net/sites/default/files/Proceedings%5B1%5D.pdf#page=51> accessed June 2011

traditions (Montanari and Staniscia 2001: 63). Sonnino (2007) describes a similar 'pioneer' in revalorising saffron in Tuscany in promoting an 'invented tradition' (quoting Ulin 1996).

### **3.4.3. Conclusion**

This section has critiqued academic approaches to thinking about rural areas, which have shifted from a position of accepting notions of the rural idyll (Short 1991) to one where 'rural' as a category has no import, and more recently back to a position where rural idylls are still recognised in affecting thinking and practice, but are acknowledged to be fractured representations in a constant state of becoming (i.e. not one rural idyll, but multiple idylls in conjunction with what some authors have conceptualised as an anti-idyll, see Bell 1997 and 2006). Phillips *et al* (2001: 5) suggest that the rural idyll can be seen as a socially dominant and dominating way of conceiving and presenting rural space. Recent work has attempted to avoid essentialising the rural as being more idyllic than urban areas. Italy also has images of rural idyllicism, created through food advertising of '*il mulino bianco*' ('the white mill' Dickie 2007) with an imagined and real presence in the region of Tuscany. This more recent thinking about rural idylls has acknowledged the multiple and contested ways that rural idylls apply to different types of rural space.

As Bunce (2003) concludes, the existence of social representations of a rural idyll is not debatable, but that what remains debatable and, until lately largely unaddressed, are questions surrounding the contemporary strength and influence of the rural idyll. In the first instance this is a question about how the cultural construction of this idyll translates into values and actions about how people will perceive and use the countryside. These are all points that will be addressed in the later analysis chapters.

Ideas of rurality as being somehow idyllic and as offering an unchanging space and community were important themes for the research respondents. Many of the research respondents referred to themes that drew heavily on ideas of rural and urban (people, places, things, behaviours) as being in some way 'different'. In addition, a number of respondents talked specifically about food and notions of rural idyllicism and authenticity. The literature presented in this chapter has illustrated how academic analyses have examined notions of the rural as 'idyllic', 'authentic' and as offering a nostalgic harbour from modern life. This literature has also explored the relationship between rural and urban areas, and how for some people towns and cities are viewed as being un-idyllic (the 'Other' to the rural idyll) and even as threatening and dangerous. These images of the 'rural' and the 'urban' can be seen as

influencing some policies about rural development, the subjectivities of some policy makers, how food is produced and marketed and retailed. Some rural and urban people continue to draw on a discourse of 'difference' between rural and urban that policy makers and academics have sought to erase, and replace with a discourse of similarity. Notions of a rural idyll are pervasive and can be identified as a strand running through many of the policies and developments detailed so far. My focus here is how research participants emphasise the differences between rurality and urbanity, and the ways that this is reinforced in thinking through food and what type of rural development for what type of rural area.

### **3.5. Effective policy making for sustainable local food networks – conclusion to the literature review**

Following on from the review of the changing policy landscape in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 has examined the core bodies of research underpinning this thesis. My research is specifically concerned with how policy makers can effectively support local food and rural development, and the first section started by reviewing how political scientists have understood processes of policy making. The limitations of the neat and orderly representations of policy making were introduced in section 3.2.1., as well as introducing policy research which conceptualises policy processes as multiple and more entangled. The literature on local food and rural development largely ignores the role of policy-makers and their policies. Although many scholars acknowledge the critical nature of policy and policy makers in engendering a shift to a more sustainable rural development and in supporting the future expansion of local or alternative food networks, policy makers as research subjects have been relatively excluded from such research.

The role of agriculture and food production in rural development is also contested in the literature, although programmes like LEADER include the agricultural and food sectors with the measures that local areas can incorporate in their rural development strategies. As shown in Chapter 2, discourses of innovation and diversification have been important for policy makers. Local or alternative food networks can be seen as an aspect of such policies, as some argue, farmers move away from conventional agriculture (through diversification) and those with the necessary skills and motivation innovate to generate new products and revenue streams. Some authors (e.g. Marsden and Sonnino 2008; Wilson 2010) argue that agriculture needs to be a central aspect of rural development for it to be sustainable, whereas others (see Ward 2006, 2008) suggest that the role of agriculture has diminished, economically and culturally, and as such rural development should focus on the broader range of (economic) activities that occur. Moreover, Marsden and Kitchen (2009: 290) bemoan that despite the attempts of

scholars to reintegrate agriculture and forestry into broader rural development debates, there seems to be a tendency in both policy-making and academic circles to maintain clear boundaries between these spheres. This is often exacerbated by distinct policy and institutional frameworks and mind sets, such as those that still exist between agricultural policy and rural development policy (see Lowe and Ward 2007). This research explores how policy makers, businesses and consumers see local food as contributing towards processes of rural development (or not).

As stated earlier, the title of this thesis concerns *local* food networks, as opposed to *alternative* food networks, and the research addresses the extent of 'alternativeness' found in East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo. The contested meanings of such terms were outlined in section 3.3.3., and conflating 'alternative' with 'local' is a questionable approach, something which the research illustrates, especially in East Yorkshire an area typically associated with intensive agriculture. Generally, it is assumed that globally (vertically) integrated agriculture has little benefit for specific rural areas and therefore does not contribute to rural development. By addressing these issues in an area traditionally viewed as being vertically integrated into the global commodity markets, the claims about a new geography of food described in section 3.3.3. can be challenged. However, taking a comparative case study in Italy allows an exploration of the issues facing local food producers in a country assumed to offer strong support to such businesses, as well as examining the contingent nature of local food policy development. Presupposing that supporting a local food economy is automatically easier in countries where a strong local food culture has been essentialised obscures not only the spatial and temporal processes of change, but also changing social or cultural patterns of food consumption.

Consumers are included in this research responding to calls to locate the consumer more centrally as opposed to previous studies which have concentrated on production concerns. In addition, research has tended to ignore consumers' understandings of rural development and in particular strategies to achieve rural development (although some research has identified consumers' motivations for purchasing local food in terms of supporting local farmers it has not specifically considered broader strategies of rural development). These issues are explored with consumers via focus groups discussions. In summary, the core ideas resulting from the literature review and which are taken forward in this research, and to which the research can speak, are as follows:

1. If existing models of policy making are limited, how can the realities of policy making (in the context of local food and rural development) be represented?
2. How can policy makers effectively support local food per se, but also local food as an element of rural development?
3. How can local food contribute to rural development?
4. How do research respondents think about the differences and similarities between urban and rural areas, as well as between different rural areas, and how does this affect how they view different places, people and foods?

Before turning to the empirical material which addresses these issues, I first describe my approach and methods used in the research, as well as giving brief coverage to the results of a postal survey of local food businesses in Chapter 4.

## **CHAPTER 4. METHODS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

I use this chapter to outline the methods that were used to address the research questions and the theoretical underpinnings of these approaches, explain the reasons for adopting these methods and describe the specific research activities undertaken.

Earlier chapters outlined the need for a more nuanced approach to the new geography of food, especially taking into account developments of new and alternative food networks. In particular, the role of policy and policy makers has been identified as a research lacuna which this research will contribute towards. The research questions stem from a thorough review of the local food and rural development literature and were developed as a response to gaps identified. More specifically the research aims to:

1. Examine how and why the idea of promoting a 'local food economy' has become a key aim within rural development policy making.
2. Examine how the term 'local food' is constructed by policy makers, food businesses and consumers.
3. Critically examine the notion of 'effectiveness' as it relates to sustainable rural development policy-making and practice in relation to local food systems.
4. Critically analyse the key factors involved in the success of local food systems, with reference to a bulk commodity producing area in the UK and an Italian region.
5. Develop conceptualisations of the role of consumers and consumption in the emergence of local food economies.

This chapter will begin with a more general discussion of qualitative research methods, before moving to an in-depth discussion of the main methods used in my research. I then describe how I conducted the research and give details of the research participants. The results of the postal survey are presented in section 4.5.2., as the survey formed part of the methods in identifying participants for the next stage of the business research. The final section of the chapter discusses how I dealt with the data once the field research had been conducted.

In terms of epistemology, Herbert (2010: 73) suggests that theoretical approaches in qualitative research come from one of two idealised perspectives: 1) the grounded theory approach (Glaser and



Strauss 1967) whereby theoretical categories emerge from the data (inductively)<sup>58</sup>; and by contrast, 2) a more deductive approach which begins from the theory and works down from a theoretically driven question and then gathers data and conducts analysis to answer it. However, importantly, he acknowledges that these are two opposites and that in reality researchers ‘tack back and forth’ mobilising a theoretical framework and problematising that framework with the data. He argues that this raises two crucial questions:

1. Have we brought the right theoretical questions to our data?
2. Are we maintaining a high-quality conversation between our theory and data?

Grounded theory calls for the suspension of pre-conceived ideas about the way the world works in order for the researcher to approach the data with an open mind so that the life experiences and world views of the participants may be ‘seen’, leading to earlier incarnations of grounded theory being labelled as being close to traditional positivism (Charmaz 2003: 250). In reality this is rather more difficult to achieve as often the research questions and the resultant choice of research methods, questions and probes used through the research are theoretically informed and grounded in the literature to which the research relates. Herbert (2010: 74) suggests that it is better to be self-conscious about the conceptual frames that we carry with us in order to make ‘clear-eyed decisions about what data to seek’ and therefore be in a better position to interrelate theory and empirical observations.

#### **4.2. Qualitative Research Methods**

During the twentieth century human geography saw a wide range of methodological approaches evolve, and in the latter part of the twentieth century qualitative methods came to dominate (Winchester and Rofo 2010: 15), after an earlier emphasis on quantitative research methods. These qualitative research methods have become embedded within geographical research practice, incorporating a wide range of approaches depending on the research context, from participant observation to documentary histories, ethnography and in-depth interviewing (Davies and Dwyer 2007) through to emphases on performance and non-representational approaches (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000).

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<sup>58</sup> Charmaz (2003: 249) defines grounded theory as ‘systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data’.

Within geography, the most popular and widely used methods are oral<sup>59</sup> – interviews, focus groups and so on which make up the ‘backbone’ of qualitative research in human geography (Davies and Dwyer 2007: 257). As my research utilises oral methodologies this chapter concentrates on those. As Gibbs comments:

Language is the most common form of meaningful expression ... [and] not only incorporates the terminology and vocabulary with which we understand the world, use it and transform it, but is also the medium by which we convey that meaning or interpretation to others ... language contains the concepts, categories and ontologies that describe and constitute the world in which we live (Gibbs, 2000: 1).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to appreciate not only material objects but experiences, social organisations, institutions, activities and practices that have been created in human culture and society (Gibbs, 2000: 2). Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3) define qualitative research as:

...a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices...turn the world into a series of representations including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self ... qualitative research involves an interpretive approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers...attempt to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them

I have adopted a case study approach as a research strategy to address the research questions – my two case study areas are the East Riding of Yorkshire in the UK and the Abruzzo region of Italy. Case study research involving more than one spatial context highlights the conduct of social action (Herbert 2010:69), and such qualitative research assists in appreciating the formative role of place and the understandings of those who inhabit that space in how they make sense of their worlds. As such, I have been able to explore in detail the different and contingent ways which policy makers and businesses (but not consumers in Italy) in the two study areas think about local food, rural development and the ways that they work to support these sectors. Institutional variation, social and cultural conditions, local histories and geographies affected the ways in which these were experienced by research participants, as well as participants’ own personal subjectivities and positionalities. The case study areas also highlighted the relationality between them and other parts of the respective countries, as well as between them and other European countries.

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<sup>59</sup> Yet, more recently there has been increasing use of methods which incorporate the visual, amongst other senses, and therefore recognises the important meanings and messages conveyed non-verbally (see Crang 2003 amongst others).

In order to address the research questions, three groups of research participants were included in the research, specifically UK-based policy makers, UK businesses and consumers, in addition to businesses and policy makers in the Abruzzo region of Italy. Issues relating to ‘effective’ policy making were discussed with all of the research groups as it was felt that the designers and users of policies should have the opportunity to contribute to the research outcomes. Qualitative research methods were utilised with all research groups. Table 4 below outlines the central features of qualitative research.

**Table 4. Features of qualitative research**

<i>Seeing through the eyes of..</i>	Importance of the perspectives of the research participants. Recognition of the power imbalances in the research relationship. Awareness of cultural and social differences.
<i>Description</i>	Detailed description and observation of the research setting contributes to understanding and analysis of the setting under study.
<i>Contextualism and holism</i>	Contextual affect is acknowledged. Emphasises the meaning participants’ give to the world.
<i>Process</i>	Interest in the impact of the processes as much as the final outcome, recognition of human and non-human agents.
<i>Flexibility and lack of structure</i>	Research strategy tends to be open and unstructured. Scope for research participants to influence the research questions and direction.
<i>Theory and concepts</i>	A reluctance to impose a priori theoretical frameworks at the outset. The data guides theorisation and conceptualisation.
<i>Rich data outputs</i>	Textured research output that requires distinctive approaches to analysis and interpretation, leading to particular research outputs.

Source: Adapted from Gibbs (2000: 3).

Qualitative research methodologies draw on interpretivism as an alternative to positivism and are based on the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences. Qualitative research methodologies have specific characteristics and emphasise different aspects compared with quantitative methods, but Winchester and Rofo (2010: 16) suggest that if the value-laden and subjective nature of all research is acknowledged then the gap between quantitative and qualitative research is dramatically reduced.

Having briefly considered the nature of qualitative research, the next section will address questions of generalisation, validity and reliability in qualitative research. It suggests that these concepts are

not easily transferred from quantitative research methods to qualitative research methods and that alternative ideas of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability might be more appropriate for dealing with the research results from qualitative studies.

#### **4.3. Reliability and validity in qualitative research – appropriate criteria?**

The quality of qualitative research has been discussed within the research methods literature and focuses on the key differences between qualitative research and quantitative research. The methods of quantitative research are largely drawn from the natural sciences with positivist origins.<sup>60</sup> In contrast qualitative research is less concerned with statistical representation and measurability and more concerned with experiences, meanings and values. It is generally acknowledged that the methods of quantitative research cannot be extrapolated and applied to qualitative research, and that quantitative research's core concerns of generalisation, reliability and validity have different relationships within qualitative research. However, this is not to indicate a lack of concern for academic rigour within qualitative research, but that different ways of achieving and demonstrating rigour are more appropriate to qualitative research. Qualitative research is concerned with specifics rather than representations of general circumstances. Using qualitative research methods allows the researcher to take into account the diversity, difference and contestation that exist in the social world. It is at the level of concepts, categories and explanation where generalisation can really occur in qualitative research.

As with generalisation, reliability, although of significant concern for quantitative researchers is of lesser import for qualitative researchers, who prefer to talk of dependability, authenticity and trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985) of research findings. Qualitative research settings and circumstances are impossible to 'freeze' and make it difficult to achieve reliability in the sense that quantitative researchers use this term. Bryman (2004: 277) observes that most qualitative researchers treat their accounts as one of a number of possible representations of social reality rather than as definitive versions. Feminism and post-structuralism in particular have contributed to ideas that multiple and conflicting realities exist and aim to deliberately give voice to previously ignored 'Others' that have been silenced by hegemonic views of histories and geographies (Winchester and Rofo 2010: 21). Not only are there multiple realities, but a number of other issues can affect the outcomes of qualitative research, including the researcher's theoretical stance (Sayer

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<sup>60</sup> Positivism has its roots in the natural sciences and criteria stipulate what knowledge can be generated – it must be based on phenomena that can be observed, that can be repeated and can be generalised to a greater population (Johnston et al 2000) and which dominated scientific thought, incorporated into geography in particular through the quantitative revolution of the 1950s and 1960s.

and Morgan 1985, quoted in Winchester and Rofe 2010: 22). This positionality of the researcher needs to be recognised and acknowledged within the research.

Herbert (2010: 72) suggests that positionality (or identity of the researcher) has challenged the seeming neutrality and omniscience once accorded the researcher and proposes that an objective researcher set strongly apart from the phenomena under study is impossible. Rather, our ability to empathise and reflect thoughtfully on social experience, and attempt to understand others and tell insightful stories about the world by incorporating theory and our choice of cases for analysis should be seen as strengths (p72-73). Whilst my questioning strategies are available in the appendices, it is unlikely that another researcher would achieve exactly the same results, as the interview participants may respond differently to the same question, depending on a range of circumstances. Indeed, this was evident in my results in that very few respondents mentioned food scares and animal disease in relation to the food system, yet had I conducted my research seven or eight years ago it would have probably been cited more frequently. The positionality of another researcher would also affect the likely results of the interviews, as they would bring different experiences, responses and behaviours to the interview setting. As Visser (2000, 234 quoted in Mandiyanike 2009: 64) rightly pointed out, that positionality and the manner in which one is perceived inevitably influences the knowledge one produces.

My background, of having lived in rural areas, worked with rural communities and within rural economic development policy and practice (sometimes with a particular emphasis on development of local food networks) means that I have my own understandings of the research questions that may differ from those of the interviewees. Whilst some methodological textbooks advise researchers to leave these knowledges and experiences behind in the interview setting, in reality this is difficult to achieve, and I acknowledge that I have co-produced (Crang 2005: 227) the data gained from my interviews – not only from my positionality described here, but by selecting the specific research subject, the questioning approach of the interviews and how I have framed my research to the research participants (in the letter of introduction and my introductions on meeting the participants) (see Rose 1997 for a discussion of these issues). Such subjectivity does not necessarily lead to biased or unrepresentative research, but by recognising the subjectivity and critically reflecting on the role of the researcher as well as the researched can lead to stronger outcomes and a fuller understanding of the lifeworlds of those we research (cf. Dowling 2000).

A more credible approach is offered by Snape and Spencer (2003: 10) who encourage researchers to reflect on their role and on 'situating' their perspective to enable a more reflexive approach to research findings rather than the traditional approach in which the researcher takes an authoritative

‘neutral’ stance, described as an impossibility by some. Dwyer and Davies (2007: 258) note that our methods help enact the real in different situations and go on (p263) to observe that that all methods involve forms of social practice that in complex ways interfere in voicing and patterning the worlds we research. Indeed, Jensen and Glasmeier (2010: 88) quote Rose (1997: 316) who notes succinctly that ‘researcher, researched and research make each other’. Further, Herbert (2010: 69) emphasises how spatial context matters to the conduct of social action, that locations shape how individuals behave (*or perform*) as people’s actions are conditioned by the setting in which they occur – social action is *always* embedded in place (original emphasis). He (2010: 69) asserts that qualitative research can uncover the everyday processes through which groups build their worlds in and through place. He also (2010: 71) notes that the role of space and place cannot be gleaned through a broad survey, but must instead be examined through direct experience with the group in question and through close contact. The need for closeness and direct experience requires a great deal of time and resources, and for this reason qualitative researchers limit their work to a small number of cases.

The role of the researcher in interpreting qualitative research data has been mentioned above, and in response to criticisms of interpretation, Herbert (2010: 71 citing Latour 1987 and Knorr-Cetina 1981) notes that interpretation is central to all scientific practice, no matter how ‘objective’ its practitioners claim to be. He adds that qualitative data can be as useful for theory building as data collected in any other fashion (p72). Care is needed in qualitative analysis to avoid biased analysis as well as accounting for the effect of perspective and bias, as Dey (1993: 222, quoted in Gibbs, 2002) suggests:

We tend to make more of the evidence that confirms our beliefs, and pay less attention to any evidence that contradicts them. This is a particular problem in qualitative analysis, because of the volume and complexity of the data. Because the data are voluminous, we have to be selective – and we can select out the data that doesn’t suit. Because the data are complex, we have to rely more on imagination, insight and intuition – and we can quickly leap to the wrong conclusions.

Triangulation in qualitative research can be seen as part of striving for validity and corroborative evidence (Winchester and Rofe 2010: 21), although Winchester (1999: 63, quoted in Crang 2002) warns that the complementarity between methods may be illusory rather than real. Bradshaw and Stratford (2010: 77) quote Denzin (1978) and Baxter and Eyles (1997) who identified four major types of triangulation: multiple sources; methods; investigators; and theories. Triangulation enables researchers to look at the same problem from different perspectives and by using different research methodologies (Winchester and Rofe 2010: 17) to ensure that results can be reinforced or challenged

from different data sources. Using mixed methods in this research facilitates triangulation to cross-reference and check whether results are comparable across the groups, and if there is variation it offers the scope to find out why.

To overcome issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research, researchers are encouraged to utilise Geertz's (1973) notion of 'thick description', thereby providing a sufficient and detailed description of the research context and the phenomena experienced to allow others to gauge and assess the transferability to another setting.<sup>61</sup> A 'thick' description includes justifying and explaining the methods selected; the process of identifying and selecting participants; setting out how the analysis was conducted; and how the data was interpreted and results reached. One person's explanations are not more intrinsically right than another's – qualitative interviewing allows the interviewer to understand the different perspectives that people have on events, meanings and so on (Rubin and Rubin 1995: 10) – the diversity of views present in qualitative research enables these conflicts and contestations to be taken into account.

#### **4.4. Research Methods**

My research has utilised a range of methods, mostly qualitative but incorporating some quantitative methods too. This section will specifically outline the methods used. The research methods I chose represent, in my view, how the research questions could best be addressed and are also grounded in the research activities others have used to examine similar research questions. The questions concern three different research participant groups (policy-makers, businesses and consumers – within specific regions of the UK and Italy) that rarely come together in a sustained way, so ethnographic methods and participant observation were not appropriate. In contrast, solely relying on discourse analysis of 'grey' policy documents available in the public domain would have resulted in a different research output and would not have shed light on the complexities, messiness and contestations in the production of 'policy'.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews allow participants to speak in their own words and enable an exploration of participants' key issues thereby offering the most informative approach for most aspects of the research. In order to answer the research questions I felt that speaking to policy-makers, understanding their interests and motivations, their backgrounds and knowledges would give me a more insightful view. A similar approach was adopted for the business element of the research to facilitate a greater understanding of how businesses view policy-makers, the local food

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<sup>61</sup> Although Lofland and Lofland (1995: 164-5, quoted in Bryman 2004: 281) warn of becoming too embroiled in 'descriptive excess' which can threaten to overwhelm, thereby inhibiting data analysis.

economy and rural development. Textual analysis of selected secondary material relating to the research ('grey' strategy and policy information, business publicity material and newspaper articles) provides symmetry to the empirical material. A range of approaches were considered for the consumer aspect of the research, from consumer surveys in local food spaces to individual interviews and focus groups. On reflection I decided that a focus group approach would be the least intimidating for individuals and would allow the joint generation of ideas and opinions in an informal and relaxed setting (Kitzinger 1994: 106; Tipping 1998: 152). Table 5 summarises the field research.

**Table 5. Research schedule**

<b>Research Group</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Number of interviews initially proposed</b>	<b>Actual Research Conducted</b>
UK Policy makers	Semi-structured interviews to enable variation of questions / prompts according to the interests / nature of the interviewee and to allow exploration of the research questions.	Addresses research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.	15 selected from local and regional policy makers.	13 in-depth interviews with 14 regional and local policy makers
UK Businesses and food-related organisations	Initial questionnaire to gather key statistics and filter suitability. Followed up with interview where it was indicated that they would be prepared to participate.	Addresses research questions 2 and 4.	Questionnaires with open and closed questions circulated to approximately 100 businesses in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Follow-up in-depth interviews with 15 businesses.	19 in-depth interviews with local food businesses following on from a postal survey of 175 businesses in the East Riding (25% response rate)
UK Consumers	In-depth qualitative interviews with individual consumers.	Addresses research questions 2 and 5.	Between 20 and 25.	3 focus groups with a total of 19 food consumers
<b>Total No. of UK Interviews</b>			<b>Between 50 and 55 plus postal survey.</b>	<b>33 interviewees, postal business survey and 3 focus groups</b>
Italy	Semi-structured interviews to enable variation of questions / prompts according to the interests / nature of the interviewee and to allow exploration of the research questions.	Addresses research questions 1, 2, 3 and 4.	5 interviews with policy makers and 5 businesses.	15 interviews with policy makers and local food businesses

I will briefly discuss the methods that I have used during my research here, before discussing in detail the ways that I conducted the research using these methods.



### ***In-depth interviewing***

In-depth interviews were used as a research methodology with UK policy-makers, businesses and with policy-makers and businesses in Italy. Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds (Rubin and Rubin 1995: 1). In-depth interviews are often described as a form of conversation (Legard *et al* 2003: 138), albeit one with a specific purpose and aim. They are also conversations where interviewers are advised to suspend their opinions (already acknowledged as being difficult to achieve), knowledges and beliefs and to behave in a certain way – such as using certain body language (for example using prompts which can be verbal – follow up questions – or non-verbal – silences, nods, gestures and so on) and certain language to encourage the participant to ‘open up’ to achieve clarification and a depth of answer sufficient to facilitate greater understanding. This makes the research interview much less of a naturalised, everyday setting and one in which the ‘conversation’ is ‘performed’. The artificiality of the research interview, including the responses, has been observed, noting the influence of the sex, age, accent and personality etc of both interviewer and respondent<sup>62</sup> (Burton 2000: 324). The active role of the researcher in the production of data and of meaning, and in taking research participants in directions that they had not previously considered, results in data co-produced by the researcher and researched (Legard *et al* 2003: 139). Semi-structured interviews offer the researcher the flexibility to follow up these new directions and themes not originally included in the interview schedules. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 6) suggest it is normal for qualitative interviews to match what the individual interviewee knows and feels.

While this ‘influencing’ role was previously a concern for researchers looking for objectivity in the validity and stability of the interview data generated, other writers acknowledge the influence of postmodern and post-structuralist thinking on the nature of interviewing and are able to see the interview as meaningful beyond its immediate context (Legard *et al* 2003: 140). For example, Haraway (1988) states that all knowledge is situated and that acknowledging this partiality may perversely lead to more ‘objective’ research (quoted in Rose 1997: 311) and Harding (1987, quoted in Johnston *et al* 2000: 604) posits that acknowledging the role of the researcher in the co-production of the research can lead to more sound analyses than apparently disinterested research which fails to acknowledge its partiality (see also Rose 1997). Postmodern methodologies and research recognise the multiplicities of the social world and allow non-humans into the research process as well as allowing the human (researcher) influence to be seen as positive rather than a constraint. It is arguably only by building a rapport with research participants that researchers are able to develop the trust and confidentiality to allow a fruitful research experience to take place, without this research participants may feel unsupported and even ‘used’ by the researcher.

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<sup>62</sup> See earlier comments on positionality.

### ***Focus group methodologies***

Focus groups are well established as a mainstream method in social research and are widely used (Finch and Lewis 2003: 170). The basic idea of the focus group method is to generate a discussion on pre-selected topics of interest to the researcher among a small group of individuals (Knodel 1995: 8). Finch and Lewis go on to note (2003: 171) that the group context of focus groups creates a process which is in some important respects very different from an in-depth interview. These differences include that the data are generated by interaction between participants and that participants present their own views and experience as well as hearing from other people. This process of hearing, reflecting and reconsidering their position is important as it enables individual responses to become more refined and can generate rich material – Knodel (1995: 8) sees this discussion among the participants as one of the advantages of focus groups. Burgess (2005: 275) asserts how powerful group dynamics can be in creating discursive spaces where individuals can share experiences and explore their different understandings of the world.

Finch and Lewis (2003: 171) suggest that the spontaneous discussions of focus groups may reduce the role and potential influence of the interviewer; they quote Krueger and Casey (2000: 11) who note that ‘the focus group presents a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others – just as they are in real life’, although this may be less likely in cases where participants are unknown to one another. Despite these observations, my experience suggests that the role of the researcher cannot be removed, as the researcher introduces and guides the discussion over the course of the session and this needs acknowledging for focus groups as much as for in-depth interviewing. However, focus groups were seen as more suitable for the consumer research phase, as members of the public may feel intimidated by a one-to-one individual interview, whereas policy-makers and business-people are likely to be more used to that kind of environment. Stroh (2000: 201) notes peoples’ wariness of being asked for their opinions, when, in their opinion, they are not experts, and as such it can be threatening to be asked to ‘chat’ about these issues individually.

Finch and Lewis (2003: 191) point out that although focus groups are typically held with strangers as there is a belief that this facilitates both open questioning and disclosure but that groups with people who already know each other are also common (p192) and can in fact be helpful:

these are, after all, the networks in which people might normally discuss ... the sorts of issues likely to be raised in the research session and the ‘naturally occurring’ group is one of the most important contexts in which ideas are formed and decisions made (Kitzinger and Barbour 1999: 8-9; quoted in Finch and Lewis 2003: 192).

A common criticism of focus groups is that ‘the group’ can exert a pressure on participants to conform to a socially acceptable viewpoint and not to talk about divergent views or experiences (Finch and Lewis 2003: 188). The aim of the moderator is to allow as much relevant discussion as possible to be generated from within the group while at the same time ensuring that the aims of the research area are met (Finch and Lewis 2003: 181). Numbers of participants need to be manageable yet sufficient to allow an active debate, and can range from 4-12 people, with an ideal of 6-8 (Finch and Lewis 2003: 172). Similarly, the number of focus groups to be held is important, and Krueger and Casey (2000: 30) suggest that “the traditional design for a focus group study is to conduct focus groups until you have reached the point of theoretical saturation – the point where you are not gaining new insights”. This is usually after between 3-6 focus groups, although in reality resources will also influence how many can be held (Knodel, 1993), as will access to participants.

### ***Postal Surveys***

Postal surveys, like all data collection methods, have strengths and weaknesses. The primary strengths are the relative ease and speed of administration, low cost and the convenience for respondents (Bryman 2004: 134). Drawbacks include the limited range of answers available to respondents (Valentine 1997b: 110), the inability to probe further on responses, the limited numbers of questions that can be asked, not knowing who completes the survey, the risk of missing data and low response rates (Bryman 2004: 134-135). To overcome some of these disadvantages I followed up the questionnaire survey with an in-depth interview with those businesses willing to take part. Seale (1998, 1999) encourages choosing the appropriate method for answering the research questions pragmatically: the survey provided the context for the subsequent interviews and enabled access to willing participants for the business interview phase, as well giving participants some idea of the research context and my interests. The East Riding of Yorkshire Council, as a policy-making body in the public sector has a greater familiarity with research from a quantitative perspective, preferring data that offers percentages and statistics on trends in order to inform evidence-based policy-making (see Crang 2002: 647).

### ***Textual Analysis***

Whatmore (2003: 89-90, quoted in Crang (2005: 230)) notes ‘the spoken and written word constitute the primary form of ‘data’, whereas the world speaks in many voices through many different types of things that ‘refuse to be reinvented as univocal witnesses’. Bringing in other sources for analysis, such as ‘grey’<sup>63</sup> material, publicity material and media representations provides a richness to data gained through the oral methodologies noted above. Examples of incorporating texts in qualitative

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<sup>63</sup> For debates surrounding the policy relevancy of geography and the use of grey materials see Martin (2001), Burgess (2005), Eden (2005), Dorling and Shaw (2002), Pain (2006) amongst others.

research include Kirwan and Morris (2010), who used ‘texts’ in their focus group research on embeddedness. Enticott (2003) used textual and secondary data sources to understand lay immunologies relating to unpasteurised milk consumption. Many studies have taken policy statements as a point of departure – for example Lowe and Ward (2007) on rural policy in the UK, and Hinchliffe (2001) incorporated grey material in his analysis of the BSE Inquiry in the UK.

### ***Summary***

This section has outlined evolving qualitative research methods in human geography, and I have illustrated some of the concerns that have been raised regarding the role of the researcher in the co-production of knowledge through qualitative research interviewing. I noted that more recent thinking in the social sciences generally sees some of the concerns as strengths, allowing the finer detail of social lives and social worlds to come through in the research. The next sections will specifically detail the research activity of each of the research phases.

## **4.5. THE RESEARCH PHASES**

Prior to any research taking place, my research proposal was submitted to the University of Hull Department’s of Geography’s ethics committee, which was satisfied that the research posed no great risks and that measures had been put in place to protect the confidentiality of participants.

### **4.5.1. UK Policy-Makers Research Phase**

Initially I selected 9 people for interview in the first instance, drawn mainly policy makers working for ERYC with a responsibility for food and / or rural development. I concentrated specifically on those in the Local Food Network Steering Group, a small group of people involved in the embryonic East Riding Local Food Network, drawn mainly from local organisations. Additional policy-making representatives were identified at the regional<sup>64</sup> and local level, based on suggestions from the CASE partner, but also drawing on contacts developed whilst working in a similar field for a neighbouring local authority. This small initial group was selected to allow flexibility in the schedule to involve

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<sup>64</sup> The decision to concentrate on the regional and local level was based the region being an increasingly important category in human geography (see Harvey *et al* 2011). Over the last decade, the region has been seen as important site for ‘doing’ policy, with some (Jones and MacLeod 1999) referring to this as a ‘regional renaissance’ in policy. The region is thus seen as one of the key arenas through which policy is delivered and where governance takes place. New Labour in particular saw the region as an important mechanism for delivering their policy objectives, creating the Regional Development Agencies to implement this. This decision was not taken to reinforce a decline of the nation level state, or to privilege the “city-region” as a spatial-analytical category, as Ward and Jonas (2004: 2134) have suggested some analyses have done, but more a matter of pragmatics.

other institutions in the research based on snowball sampling. Table 6 shows the UK policy interviewees. A letter of introduction, setting out my research aims and requesting their involvement in an in-depth interview was sent out to the policy-makers identified (see Appendix 1). As I was interested in those people specifically involved in rural development and local food policy-making the sampling frame was smaller than if I had been interested in the policy-making process per se or policy-making within a particular organisation / department.

**Table 6. UK Policy-maker interview participants**

<b>Interview Number</b>	<b>Organisational type</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Interview Location</b>	<b>Interview date</b>
1	Local authority	Rural Partnership Officer	Office	17/02/2009
2	Partnership	Chair	Home	17/02/2009
3	Regional development agency	Agricultural support officer (rural policy officer was not able to attend)	Office	24/02/2009
4	Business organisation	Regional Director	Office	26/02/2009
5	Local development agency		Office	05/03/2009
6	Local authority	Rural Partnerships and Programmes Manager	Office	16/03/2009 06/04/2009 07/05/2009
7	Town Council	Clerk	Office	17/03/2009
8	N.A.	Former policy advisor to government and former CEO	Home	20/03/2009
9	Local authority	Food services manager	Office	07/04/2009
10	Partnership	Chair	Home	20/04/2009
11	Local authority	Director of Economic Development	Office	09/06/2009
12	Partnership	Chair	Home	10/11/2009
13	Local authority	Councillors (x2) with responsibilities for rural services	Office	08/12/2009
n.a.	Regional Food Group	Director of Research	Attended offices for scheduled interview in June but participant did not show up and in subsequent conversations declined to be involved.	

In order to address the research aims outlined in the introduction to this chapter, I identified a set of key themes and concepts to explore with participants and drew up an interview schedule. The interview schedule (Appendix 2) was grouped around personal background information, local food in general, policy-making and local food, and policy-making and rural development, before closing with

thanks and a request for suggestions for further interview participants. The specific questions and themes of the interview schedule were not strictly adhered to. This allowed participants to explore and follow their own lines of reasoning, yet most themes were usually covered during the course of the interview.

The interviews with policy makers were intended to provide an in-depth exploration of how the interviewees used ideas of local food in their rural development policy-making. A list of key words / concepts that would trigger prompts to ascertain how interviewees defined and understood these words was included at the bottom of the interview schedule as an aide-memoire during interviews (see Table 7). This list was the same for both policy-makers and businesses, and the same words were translated into Italian for the Italian interviews (see Table 12):

**Table 7. Key words for interview probes**

Alternative, Sustainable, Ethics, Natural, Local, Quality, Traditional / typical, Consumers / consumption, Health
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In practice, few of these words came up aside from ‘local’, ‘consumers’, ‘quality’ and occasionally ‘alternative’.

The interviews were all conducted face-to-face, which enabled multi-method data collection in that the visual clues of the respondent can be responded to, observations can be noted, in effect building up a contextual picture (Burton 2000; 323). They were all recorded on a digital Dictaphone. I kept a research diary (Bryman 2004: 325) and following the interviews, I recorded observations of how the interview went (was the interviewee talkative, cooperative, nervous, their general appearance), the interview setting and general thoughts that occurred during and after the interview. Consent forms were devised (Appendix 3), which each participant was asked to read, setting out the main research aims, the confidentiality of all material, and how the results would be used. All interviewees were happy to complete the form, and records of these have been kept.

#### **4.5.2. Business Research Phase**

This phase had two parts; firstly, a postal survey of local food businesses in the East Riding of Yorkshire was undertaken. This was a means of finding out key characteristics and contextual information of those businesses – brief results will be presented below. Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted with businesses that had indicated a willingness to be interviewed from the postal survey. Each of these parts will be discussed below.

### ***Survey Research Element of Business Research***

The survey was designed with three key aims in mind:

- I. Gaining contextual information about businesses in the East Riding of Yorkshire;
- II. Gathering material that would feed into the design of the in-depth interview stage;
- III. Identifying participants willing to be involved in the in-depth interviews.

In terms of identifying interviewees for the in-depth stage of the research, the original intention was that businesses would be selected on the basis of business size, turnover, type of business and geographical location etc. However, in reality all businesses that indicated a willingness to be involved were contacted as the number of people that were able to be involved was small enough to include everybody.

In terms of the sampling frame for the business survey the starting point was a local food directory compiled by the local authority of businesses operating in the local food sector (Appendix 13). Entry in the local food directory is free to businesses in the area, although entries are based on businesses submitting their own entries, which means that businesses that aren't aware of the publication or who do not submit in time are excluded. The local authority's Food Services department supplied another database, which was a more general collection of all food businesses in the county. Entries in this database had been categorised by sub-sector of the food economy. By reviewing this database I identified categories that I felt were most applicable to the research, for example businesses categorised as being involved in the 'Farm / smallholding', 'Retailer', 'Hotel / pub / guesthouse', and 'Restaurant/Cafe/Snack Bar' were judged to be more relevant than those categorised as fast food, schools, other establishments offering catering such as village halls, social clubs and community centres. Some businesses were removed from this database as it was created in 2004 and so was fairly old; local knowledge of the area was used to identify businesses that were no longer operating although unfortunately four surveys were returned where the business had ceased to operate. There was some overlap between the two databases and duplicates were removed. Local knowledge of the area was used to identify businesses that were promoting themselves as specifically being involved in the local food sector – including local publicity material, and familiarity with the area from living locally.

In addition, other sources of information for the sampling frame included the Yorkshire and Humber regional food group's (YHRFG) food directory (<http://www.deliciouslyorkshire.co.uk/dy/where-to-buy/>), although this contained comparatively few entries for the East Riding of Yorkshire as entry in

the guide is based on membership of the YHRFG which is relatively expensive for smaller businesses. An internet 'farm shop' was located via a Google search (<http://www.theinternetfarmshop.com/> - charge for inclusion of £15 per month) and included more businesses from the East Riding.

Although there are limitations from compiling the business survey sampling frame in this way, it was the only option available as databases of all businesses in the area would have been too unwieldy for the specific area of concern (local food businesses) as well as being costly, and such databases also come with their own limitations. For example I considered using the Yellow Pages but it would have been extremely time consuming, it is limited by businesses' desire to pay for entry and gives relatively little information on the activities of the businesses besides the operating name. Ilbery and Maye (2005: 336) adopted a similar approach and commented that 'while it is possible to question the extent to which all entries in the directories are specialist food businesses; they were included because of their perceived local focus and for not being part of conventional commodity chains.'

As the businesses varied in terms of the nature of their trade, from farmers / growers / primary producers; local food businesses; and hospitality businesses, three surveys were designed that shared some characteristics but that differed subtly to avoid asking irrelevant questions, particularly in terms of asking about membership of organisations and bodies as this would vary for each of the sub-sectors. There were considerably fewer hospitality businesses (20) and local food businesses (51) compared to farmers and growers (106). The surveys and the introductory letter are appended (see Appendices 4, 5, 6 and 7). The surveys were printed professionally to separate the survey from other unsolicited mail. I received 45 surveys back out of a total of 177 circulated, although only 35 contained useable information. Fox *et al* (1988: 477) found that green questionnaires (such as the one I circulated) performed better compared to ones printed on a white background only. The following section presents some of the survey results – while more information was requested on the survey, some questions were predominantly left unanswered, so have not be included here as the information is too patchy.

### ***UK Local Food Business Postal Survey Results***

This section presents some baseline data from the postal survey. The survey was not intended to be statistically representative of all local food businesses in East Yorkshire, but to give a flavour or snapshot of the sector at the time of the research.



**Figure 9. Employee numbers in East Yorkshire businesses**



Figure 9 shows the numbers of people employed by the businesses who responded to the survey. Out of the businesses responding to the survey 21 businesses employed fewer than 5 people. However, I think a number of businesses listed themselves as sole traders when it is likely that family members help out with the business, perhaps not full time, but nonetheless contributing – one respondent indicated on the survey that his response was in this way. In addition, one respondent stated that she was a sole trader, but when I interviewed her she ‘employed’ volunteers through the WWOOFER<sup>65</sup> programme, and another offered ‘care’ to people with mental health problems who worked on the farm. Another farm also required seasonal help, when the nature of the business meant that agency labour was needed. As such, the numbers in the chart may be skewed.

<sup>65</sup> Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms

**Figure 10. Funding received by East Yorkshire food businesses**

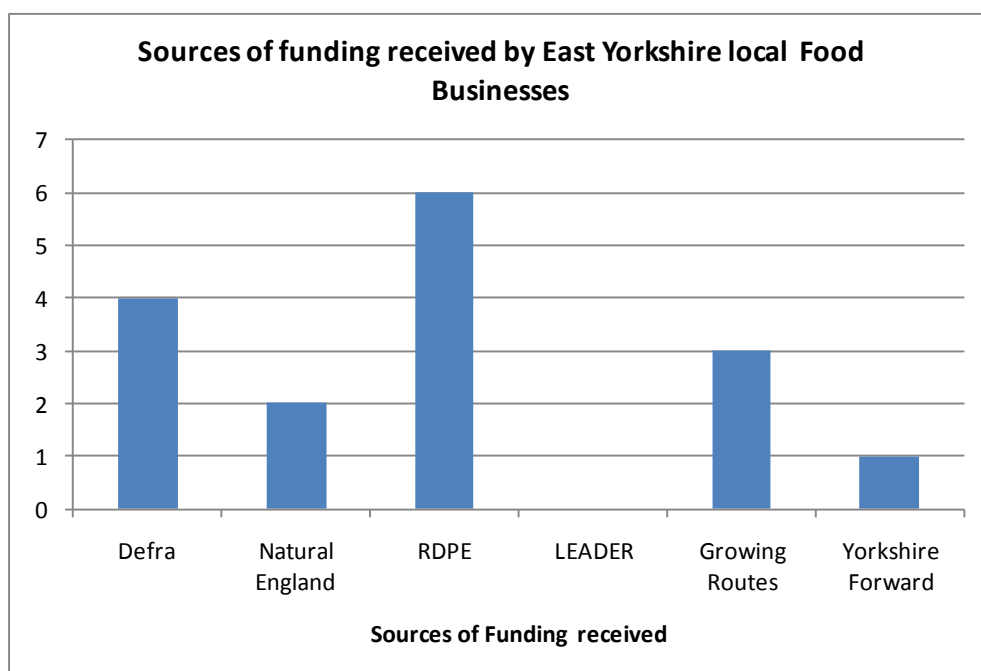


Figure 10 shows the sources of funding that businesses had received in developing their business. Most businesses responding had not received funding. Of those that had, the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) was the most common. Growing Routes was not an option on the survey but three businesses stated that they had received funding from this source. Yorkshire Forward administers the Growing Routes funding programme so it is possible that the business stating funding received from Yorkshire Forward had received the funding from Growing Routes, but it may equally well have been another funding programme. It was striking in the UK, from the postal survey and subsequent interviews, how few businesses had heard of or benefitted from LEADER funding – quite the opposite seemed to be the case in the Abruzzo.

**Figure 11. How long the business has been running**

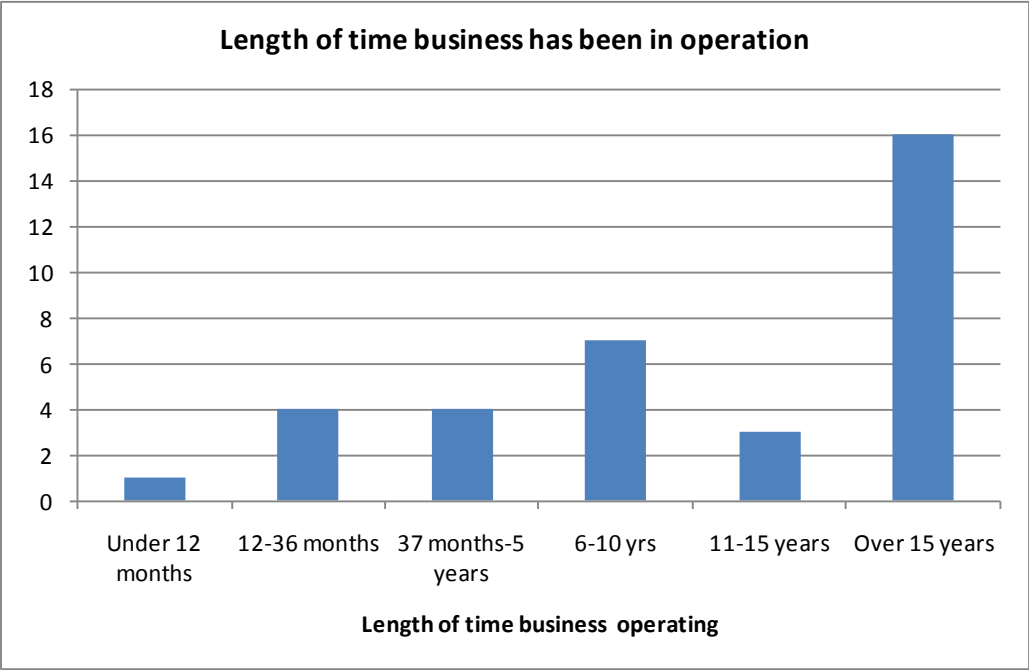


Figure 11 shows how long the businesses had been operating. Of the businesses responding, the majority (16) stated that their business had been operating over 15 years. However, many of the respondents were running ‘multifunctional’ businesses, usually a local food business that represented a diversification from the main activity of farming. As such, it is difficult to disentangle those businesses stating that they had been operating for over 15 years from the perhaps newer diversification activities. This suggests that there are few new entrants to the local food sector in East Yorkshire, perhaps linked to the recent (2008) financial crisis, but also the high cost of entering a market which can require high capital costs associated with land and equipment.

**Figure 12. Geographical places used in product branding**



Figure 12 shows the ways that businesses used local geographical areas to promote their products. Businesses were asked to indicate which geographical areas they used for marketing their products. As can be seen from the chart below, the majority of respondents used the East Riding of Yorkshire (the county) in their marketing. Fewer respondents cited that they used the Yorkshire Coast, primarily because most respondents were based in the Yorkshire Wolds (hence the higher number of respondents indicating that they used this in their promotions). Most respondents ticked more than one option, but despite this the most commonly cited ‘place’ or ‘scale’ used in marketing material was the county level (the East Riding of Yorkshire).

**Summary**

This section illustrating some results from the postal survey shows some core characteristics from the local food sector in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and although not statistically representative the charts indicate some trends which are useful nonetheless. For example, most businesses responding have been operating for over 15 years, operate on a micro-scale, employing little outside labour and predominately associate the identity of their business with the East Riding of Yorkshire. Having presented a brief overview of some of the survey responses, the next section will describe the in-depth research phase with those businesses indicating their willingness to take part.

### ***In-Depth Interview Element of Business Research***

Businesses were asked in the survey if they would be willing to be interviewed and 50% of those who returned surveys agreed to this (22 businesses in total) – see Table 8 for a list of the business interviewees. Unfortunately the representative of one business was not able to take part due to being called up for jury service and another was subsequently unable to take part due to business commitments.<sup>66</sup> I was not able to contact a further two, leaving a total of 18 businesses willing to take part. Another business subsequently took part, giving a total of 19 business interviews. Those respondents that indicated a willingness to take part were contacted either by telephone or email, depending on the details they had provided. Contacting the businesses was a time-consuming task as many were sole traders and often out of the office, and many did not use email. Interviews were arranged to take place as soon as possible so as to maintain momentum from the survey. With one or two exceptions, all the UK business interviews took place in September – October 2009, meaning that the UK business research had happened prior to the research interviews in Italy enabling the identification of key issues to be explored in Italy.

**Table 8. UK business interview participants**

<b>Interview Number</b>	<b>Business type</b>	<b>Interview Location</b>	<b>Interview date</b>
1	Butchers	Butchers shop, Howden	
2	Tea room	Tea room, Bridlington	22 Sept 2009
3	Organic vegetable Box scheme	Hull	22 Sept 2009
4	Meat marketing initiative	Offices, Southburn	24 Sept 2009
5	Butchers	Butchers shop, Hutton Cranswick	24 Sept 2009
6	Organic grower	Home, Nafferton	28 Sept 2009
7	Farm shop	Home, Hutton Cranswick	28 Sept 2009
8	Farm Shop	Home, Kelleythorpe	29 Sept 2009
9	Bed and breakfast	Home, Preston, E. Yorks	29 Sept 2009
10	Hotel	Hotel, Tickton	2 Oct 2009
11	Community organic growers	Office, Great Hatfield	2 Oct 2009
12	Poultry farmer	Office, Leven	6 Oct 2009
13	Organic baker	Bakery, Foston	6 Oct 2009
14	Farmer	Home, Harpham	9 Oct 2009
15	Farmer	Home, South Cave	19 Nov 2009
16	Farmer	Home, Rawcliffe	19 Nov 2009
17	Bed and breakfast	Home, Sewerby	4 Dec 2009
18	Campsite	Home, Rudston	10 Nov 2009
19	Organic farm shop and veg box	Farm shop, Barmston	3 June 2010

<sup>66</sup> I followed up this person repeatedly but was not able to secure an interview.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the businesses at times that suited them, and usually on the business premises (see Appendix 8 for questioning framework). This varied depending on the nature of the business, from interviews with hospitality providers in relatively quiet locations to talking to butchers over the counter in busy shops or with noisy refrigerators operating. Rubin and Rubin (1995: 10) suggest that settings that allow easy communication should be selected. This has not always been possible in my research, as I have met people in work-based settings, which sometimes meant moving between meeting rooms when organisations have pressures on meeting space, or conducting interviews in business premises. Whilst researchers are advised to avoid interruptions to the interview setting (Legard *et al* 2003: 145) this was often beyond my control as many businesses that took part were sole traders and had to keep their business operating; many had chosen to run businesses that allowed them the flexibility to deal with family commitments simultaneously, as such some interviews were unavoidably interrupted. Interviews lasted from around 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Consent forms were used (Appendix 3) (Dunn 2010: 114), which each participant read, setting out the main research aims, the confidentiality of all material, and how the data would be used. All interviewees were happy to sign the form, and records of these have been kept.

#### **4.5.3. Consumer Research**

As mentioned earlier focus groups were seen as the best way to address research questions 2 and 5. Focus groups with consumers have successfully been used in a number of research studies investigating consumer behaviour and alternative / local food networks. For example, Lockie *et al* (2002) used consumer focus groups to explore consumer views on the environment and 'greening' and their purchase and consumption of organic food; Eden *et al* (2008a; 2008b) used focus groups to understand consumers' knowledge of assurance schemes and how they use this information in their food choices; Kirwan (2003) and Seyfang (2006) used focus groups in understanding consumers' motivations for engaging in farmers' markets and organic systems in East Anglia respectively. I have used them in this research to discuss with consumers their shopping habits and understandings of local food and rural development.

Different methods were considered for recruiting participants to take part in the focus groups, from recruiting people at farmers' markets or retail outlets, sending out fliers, and joining pre-existing groups. I tried a number of methods: I contacted the East Riding of Yorkshire Federation of Women's Institutes<sup>67</sup> to see whether local groups would be interested – only one group in the area responded, but this group introduced me to another local group (National Women's Register), who

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<sup>67</sup> The WI has an interest in rural issues and has run campaigns specifically on food, local food, and food waste.

took part in the research. I approached the Countrywoman's Association and they were keen to participate. In addition, two of the three organic box schemes in East Yorkshire sent out a flier (see Appendix 9) in their boxes asking people if they would be interested in taking part in the research. This was successful in the Hull vegetable box scheme but almost totally unsuccessful in the Bridlington and Driffield area box scheme (a smaller scheme). I wrote an article for a parish newsletter, which unfortunately was not included, so this avenue was not explored further with other parish councils.<sup>68</sup>

On the whole, groups relating to local food which might exist in other parts of the country are rare in the East Riding of Yorkshire, making recruitment of consumers involved with projects such as community supported agriculture, community farms or food co-operatives harder. For example, looking at the 'local groups' section of the Soil Association's website, there are no groups in East Yorkshire at all (there are 7 in West Yorkshire; 2 in North Yorkshire; and 2 in South Yorkshire; compared to 27 local Soil Association groups in the South West, for example, meaning that Yorkshire and the Humber is quite low overall). I emailed the two groups listed in York (outside the East Riding of Yorkshire boundary) on the Soil Association's website but without success. Tables 9, 10 and 11 show the participants in the consumer focus groups.

**Table 9. Focus Group 1 (FG1) (names have been changed)**

<b>Location:</b>	Participant house, Willerby (suburb of Hull)	
<b>Participant:</b>		
Nancy	Retired	Cottingham
Joy	Retired	Kirkella
Anthea	Retired	Willerby
Catherine	Working age	Kirkella
Joanne	Retired	Willerby

<sup>68</sup> In particular given the invariable timescales within which parish councils publish their newsletters and my specific research period.

**Table 10. Focus Group 2 (FG2) (names have been changed)**

<b>Location:</b>	Committee Room, Geography Department, University of Hull	
<b>Participant:</b>		
Katie	Working age	Hull
Louise	Working age	Hull
Sarah	Working age	Hull
Edith	Working age	Hull
Ted	Working age	Hull
Dave	Working age	Hull
Jane	Working age	Hull

**Table 11. Focus Group 3 (FG3) (names have been changed)**

<b>Location:</b>	Church Hall, Hornsea	
<b>Participant:</b>		
Dorothy	Working age	Hornsea
Joan	Retired	Hornsea
Kathy	Retired	Hornsea
Susan	Retired	Hornsea
Yvonne	Retired	Hornsea
Linda	Retired	Hornsea
Gillian	Working age	Hornsea

The focus groups were held in the evening to allow participants to attend after work. In terms of venues, one group was held at a participant's house as the group had already arranged to meet there. The second group was held in the Department of Geography as many of the respondents lived near to the university and this was convenient for them. Although I was concerned about holding a focus group within an institutional space, and would have preferred more neutral and comfortable surroundings, it worked well. The final group was held in Hornsea church hall following the Yorkshire Countrywomen's Association's monthly meeting.

The introduction to the focus group sessions emphasised that everyone's point of view was important and should be respected, that both positive and negative comments were helpful, that there were no right and wrong answers, and that challenging and questioning each other in a courteous way was constructive. I tried to restrict my input to the introduction of new themes, and encouraging participants to have their say, with the exception where participants specifically asked for my opinion. Whilst I had a schedule of themes and questions (Appendix 10) that I wanted to cover, the sessions were flexible so as to allow participants to raise issues and explore ideas. In addition to questions around a table, participants were given sheets of flip-chart paper to map their ideas around topics such as current shopping outlets. A new activity was introduced for the second group as the questioning strategy relating to rural development and issues in the local area had not



worked with the first group – a more active approach was taken that asked participants to place ‘sticky dots’ onto posters with ideas written on them, they also had the opportunity to add their own ideas. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to move around while talking to each other about ideas. The general consensus at the end of the focus groups was that the dedicated space to think about these issues had been enjoyable: people enjoyed swapping ideas of good places to access local food and the sessions got them thinking about their shopping habits.

#### **4.5.4. Italian Research Phase**

The second case study was undertaken in the Abruzzo region of Italy. The Italian research phase enabled an interesting comparison to be made between two areas which are both attempting to support and develop local food networks. Although the two areas are very different in many respects (population, geography, politically, size etc.), comparisons may still be made between the two places. Undertaking in-depth, qualitative case study research facilitates the researcher in gleaning detailed knowledge and data about specific places and spaces, to understand how specific phenomena ‘work’, in this case local food and rural development. Choosing places with some similarities but also some differences can be insightful, as it allows for the explaining of the existence and significance of these similarities and differences (Herbert 2010: 75; Ragin 1987). Case studies are particularly useful in highlighting complexity, diversity, uniqueness and historical specificity, thus providing a powerful basis for interpreting cases (Ragin 1989 cited in Verschuren 2003).

Italy provides a particularly interesting focus for the research as it is often assumed in the local food / alternative food networks literature that Italy is a country with strong cultural connections to food and that local food economies are well-supported in the country. Whilst this may be true in parts of Italy, it has been instructive in my study to learn of the difficulties experienced by local food producers in the Abruzzo region. Other examples of research exist between countries that at first glance appear to be considerably different, for example Salzman *et al* (2010) research in Sweden and Australia. Bryman (2004: 53) quotes Hantrais (1996) on cross-cultural or cross-national research, who suggests that such research occurs:

when individuals or teams set out to examine particular issues or phenomena in two or more countries with the express intention of comparing their manifestations in different socio-cultural settings (institutions, customs, traditions, value systems, life styles, language, thought patterns) using the same research instruments either to carry out secondary analysis of national data or to conduct new empirical work. The aim may be to seek explanations for

similarities or differences or to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts

The Abruzzo area in Italy where the research was based had been incorporated into the research based on a relationship that had been developed over a number of years through prior research in the area (e.g. see Holloway *et al* 2006) as well as the University of Hull geography department's annual undergraduate fieldtrips to the area. I was able to attend two of these fieldtrips prior to undertaking my own research and had, as such, developed a familiarity with both the area and a key research contact in the area ('Alessia'<sup>69</sup> – see below). Additionally, the East Riding of Yorkshire and the Abruzzo region are both part of the European Union's LEADER rural development programme and are each involved in comparable processes of rural development. This section will outline the research in Italy.

Alessia (as introduced above) was a key contact due to her centrality in local food and rural development policy and delivery in the case study area – she is a relatively high-profile person locally, and within organic farming in Italy. Professionally she is involved as a Director in delivering the LEADER programme (LEADER II, LEADER Plus and the current successor programme), running her agronomy consultancy as well as being personally involved in running an organic farming agriturismo in the village of Anversa degli Abruzzi. By relying on a local person for my introduction to research participants my sampling frame for the Italian aspect of the research was limited to those that Alessia recommended, and there may have been other equally suitable candidates available that had not worked with Alessia, accessed LEADER funding, or were not known to Alessia. However, working in Italy is culturally different to the UK in that a '*recommendation*' is often needed to access both people and resources – I feel that had I written emails and letters from the UK prior to being in the field I would have had a much lower success rate in accessing willing participants and the time involved in the field would have greatly increased. The need to have a '*recommendation*' was something that came up repeatedly in my interviews with local people and I quickly realised that Alessia was giving me her '*recommendation*' which opened up the research opportunities. The sanction of gatekeepers (those in a position to 'permit' access for the purpose of interviewing (Miller and Bell 2005: 55)) such as Alessia are sometimes needed to access certain groups of research participants, many examples are available where research participants are seen as vulnerable (victims of domestic violence, children or hospital patients for example) and can have positive benefits (access to participants that would otherwise not have been accessible) and also drawbacks such as Miller's (1998) example of her use of a friendship network to identify participants in her study of motherhood, which had implications for confidentiality).

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<sup>69</sup> Name changed.

Before embarking on the PhD research I had no prior knowledge of Italy or the Italian language, and have learnt Italian through the University of Hull's Department of Modern Languages to facilitate my research (extra time and funding was allocated to enable this, although to become fluent in a previously unknown language in three months is ambitious, unless living in the country). Whilst my knowledge of the language has developed rapidly, a translator was used for 9 of the interviews, as I felt that using a translator would assist with specific terms and result in a greater quality of data (see Smith (Smith, F. 2003) for a thorough discussion of the use of translators in overseas research). Although I was able to understand much of what was being said, it was helpful to have the time and space to digest the material with the support of a translator. Bryman (2004: 53) comments that the translation of research results needs to be sensitive to national and cultural contexts, but that such work offers scope in appreciating how social science findings are invariably culturally specific.

The translator was known to me as she had provided Italian translation for the undergraduate fieldtrips mentioned above and had a good knowledge of both the geographical area and the research subject. With regards to using a translator in research, specific issues may arise including the fluency of the research interview so as not to put off the research participants, not causing cultural offence by either using a phrase that has a different meaning in another country or mispronouncing words. Using a translator overcame some of these concerns, yet presented others. The same interview format and questions were used for the Italian research phase, but due to my language limitations and going through the translator to pose questions, which takes time in itself, the Italian interviews did not allow me to explore issues and responses in the same level of detail as the interviews that I undertook in the UK. Whilst this was frustrating, I have still been able to cover the majority of the core issues as they relate to the interview schedule. One of the main frustrations during the interviews was of the limited *in situ* translation that was offered to me following what was sometimes a long dialogue in Italian.

In addition, it was not possible to use exactly the same format as Italian language and political structures do not exactly mirror UK ones, as such the questions had to be tailored so that they would be understood in an Italian context (I drafted my research schedules for the policy makers and businesses into Italian before leaving the UK and the translator refined these – see Appendices 11 and 12). Policy-making as a 'professional' activity is not as evident in Italian local government as in the UK. The structures of local government differ from the UK too, especially in mountainous areas where there are administrative bodies known as Mountain Communities which add a further layer of administration. Therefore interviewing officers from organisations exactly equivalent to those in the UK was not possible, and local advice was sought to identify the most appropriate officers to speak to. Whilst key issues from the UK research were born in mind to pursue through the Italian research

phase, in practice different issues were raised by the respondents during the interview which seemed to be relevant to engage with, for example issues of cooperation and partnership working, knowledge of policy-making and funding programmes, and issues of geographical marginality. I tried to identify similar key words in the Italian interviews as I had in the UK (Table 7), as Table 12 shows.

**Table 12. Le parole importanti per la ricerca italiana (Important words for the Italian research)**

Alternativa, Locale, Consumatori, Traduzione, Naturale, Etica, Qualità, Sostenibile, Benessere / sana
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‘Typical’ (prodotti tipici), rather than local food (cibo locale), came up in the Italian interviews, as this is a more culturally-specific way that Italians describe what is called ‘local’ food in the UK.

In addition to these issues, the use of a translator adds another person’s interpretation of the research. Aitken (2010: 46) recounts his experiences in Tijuana, where his translators gradually took over the interview – he comments on how little he understands, as basic Spanish lessons years earlier did not prepare him for the intensity of the research interview – this loss of involvement in the direction of the interview can be frustrating and isolating. Whilst this was not a particular problem there were one or two occasions where what I wanted to ask was put to the participant in a way that did not relay my original intention and had to be clarified. Despite this, I was able to conduct 15 interviews with local people, as shown in Tables 13 and 14, which exceeded my original plans of conducting a smaller scale study consisting of 5 interviews in Italy.

**Table 13. Italian business interviewees**

Interview Number	Business type	Interview Location	Interview date
1	Multifunctional farm – preserves, farming, education	Home / business premises	20 Oct 2009
2	Honey producer	Shop	20 Oct 2009
3	Honey producer	Community apple festival	24 Oct 2009
4	Apple producer	Community apple festival	24 Oct 2009
5	Forest fruits – jams and preserves	Shop	22 Oct 2009
6	Cheese producer	Farm / dairy	23 Oct 2009
7	Agriturismo – accommodation, restaurant, cheese production, farming	Agriturismo	22 Oct 2009
8	Agriturismo – accommodation, restaurant, cheese production, farming	Office	21 Oct 2009
9	Wine producer	Business premises	27 Oct 2009

I was unable to interview 2 businesses that had been suggested whilst in Italy as my time in the country coincided with the olive harvest, which was the main activity of these two businesses.

**Table 14. Italian policy interviewees**

Interview Number	Organisational type	Job Title	Interview Location	Interview date
1	LEADER delivery body	Director	Offices	21 Oct 2009
2	Development agency	Agricultural development officer	Offices	21 Oct 2009
3	Development agency	Business development officer – olives	Offices	21 Oct 2009
4	Farmers' Union	Regional director	Offices	29 Oct 2009
5	National Park Authority	National Park officers x 2	Offices	26 Oct 2009
6	Consultancy	Agronomist	Offices	23 Oct 2009

Interview settings in Italy varied from office settings to being in a dairy whilst cheese was being made to standing in shops and people's kitchens. These various settings impacted on the concentration of interviewer, interviewee and translator as well as to the ambient noise on the recording, thus also affecting my ability to transcribe the original conversations. The interviews in Italy went very well, and most participants were really interested, had a good knowledge of local food and rural development and were flattered to be part of a study from an overseas university – some have asked to be kept apprised of the research progress.

#### **4.6. DEALING WITH THE DATA**

##### ***Transcription***

All interviews (UK and Italy) were recorded using a digital Dictaphone – all research participants were asked their permission prior to the recording taking place and all were happy to be recorded. The Dictaphone worked successfully for all but one interview, where notes were taken in place of the recording (battery failure rather than refusal). Using a Dictaphone to record the interviews ensured that the interviewees' thoughts and comments were captured in their own language. A full and verbatim transcription of all the English language interviews has been conducted. Knodel (1993: 50) suggests that "the accuracy of the interpretive analysis is...enhanced if the analysts are intimately involved with the actual data collection"; the data collection, [the majority of the] transcription<sup>70</sup> and analysis were all undertaken by the same researcher.

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<sup>70</sup> A professional transcriber helped with 10 hours of policy maker interviews, six audio files in total.

The Italian interviews have been fully transcribed – I originally intended to do a partial transcription of the Italian interviews, but my [lack of] Italian skills have required a full transcription to be carried out as otherwise I was not able to remember what had been discussed in earlier parts of the interview. The transcription of the Italian interviews has been more difficult than anticipated. In places it is difficult to hear the research participant due to the translator talking over them to relay to me what was being said. Also, some research participants spoke extremely quickly at times. To complement the transcriptions of the Italian interviews, full and comprehensive notes were taken during the Italian interviews that have enabled the identification of themes to be followed up through the transcription and analysis. The original Italian quotes have been included in the analysis section to show both the original use of language in the field context and how I have translated and interpreted this in English. However, the Italian research material has sometimes only been included in English – there are two reasons for this. Firstly, some participants were keen to demonstrate their knowledge and proficiency in speaking English. Secondly, the noise during some interviews has meant that I have only been able to clearly hear the English being spoken, or I have had to rely on the notes I made at the time (which I wrote predominantly in English) as I have not been able to make sense of the audio recordings. As such, it needs to be acknowledged that the Italian material has been subject to a number of ‘translations’, including the original questioning schedule being translated into Italian (firstly by me, and then refined by the translator), during the interviews, and once again during my transcription, analysis and translation.

### ***Nvivo***

Upon completion of the transcription of each interview paper copies were printed out and were read through initially to further identify possible codes (some initial ideas emerged during transcription, notes of these ideas were kept) and avenues for exploration. Nvivo was subsequently used to assist with the management of code generation and for ease of retrieval of information relating to particular codes. Nvivo is a computer software package specifically designed to assist with the analysis of large quantities of qualitative research data. Using Nvivo allows the repeated examination of transcripts with relative ease, as well as having the ability to generate simple codes (free nodes) and more complex, hierarchical codes (tree nodes); Nvivo (and other similar computer software packages) enable the researcher to quickly pull out information from numerous interview transcripts and other material relating to a particular code and it is for this particular reason that a computer programme was chosen over and above a paper-based system.

As Miles and Huberman (1994: 57) suggest, coding is part of the process of organising the data and using a system such as Nvivo allows the researcher to categorise the various ‘chunks’ (words,

phrases, paragraphs) so that they can be quickly found, pulled out and clustered together to help with the final analysis.

Whilst Nvivo offers qualitative researchers many benefits, there are, however, limitations and pitfalls in using Nvivo. For example, by highlighting segments of the interview transcripts the material becomes detached from the broader narrative, so it can be necessary in some circumstances to combine Nvivo analysis with a more physical analysis by simply re-reading of transcripts continually. The initial process of coding was largely descriptive, using terms used by the participants themselves (in vivo codes) as well as identifying themes that had been noted as being of interest from reading the academic and policy literatures. However, additional themes that had not been identified from the literature or that offered a different inflection of material covered in the literature have also been identified through the coding process.

### ***Coding and Analysis***

Coding is the process of identifying and organising themes within the data, a way of making sense of the data (Cope 2010). My coding of the interview material began whilst transcribing the audio files – ideas came to me whilst re-listening to the interviews, both from what was said by participants and how their comments linked to the literature. Although Grounded Theory suggests that researchers should allow the data to speak for itself and to leave preconceived ideas out of the analysis, I do not see how this can be possible or even desirable. By being familiar with the literature and theory on local food and rural development (Chapter 3), in addition to the policy and strategy framework (Chapter 2) I have been able to see how my research data link to, or challenge, existing ideas in the literature (for example on the policy making process – see Chapter 5) and how discourses have been adapted and negotiated by the research participants in their lived experiences (for example the strong rural discourse in English history and imagination and the impact on rural development and local food policy making – see Chapter 6). I have, therefore, taken a partly inductive and partly deductive approach to analysing my interview data. This approach to coding is described by Cope (2010: 285) as a ‘recursive juggling act’.

As Cope (2010: 283) suggests, being open to new and unexpected codes can sometimes generate the most important insights. This was my experience in coding my data, in particular regarding the strength of geographical comparisons and the use of concepts like rural idylls to assign particular activities to particular places.

#### **4.7. Methods Conclusion**

This chapter started by providing an overview of the evolution of qualitative research methods in the social sciences and geography more specifically. The strengths and weaknesses of a qualitative approach were outlined before I introduced the research methods that I utilised to explore the research questions. The research methods have been introduced in some detail, in conjunction with the theoretical underpinnings of these methods. I have described in detail the decisions that I made in setting about doing the research, and how I approached research participants. The research participants for each phase of the research have been tabulated, with key characteristics listed. I have described my approach to dealing with the large amount of data produced by interviewing 14 UK policy makers, 19 UK businesses, conducting 3 consumer focus groups, and 6 Italian policy maker interviews and 9 Italian business interviews (involving a total of 70 people in addition to myself).

The following two chapters will present a discussion of the empirical material. The first of the empirical chapters will concentrate on policy making and the complexities of ‘doing’ policy making as outlined by the research participants themselves. The subsequent empirical chapter focuses on the impact of the geographical imagination (adding to, and challenging, in particular the concept of rural idyll(s)) on the ‘doing’ of policy and the ways that local food growing, producing and consuming are thought about in the research areas. As already noted in this chapter, the Italian empirical material is not intended to provide a direct comparison to the UK research. It provides an interesting contrast to the UK research. As a result of undertaking fewer interviews with policy makers and businesses in Italy, and not being able to speak to Italian consumers, I have less interview material from the Italian research and as such the empirical chapters have a greater quantity of material from the UK. However, qualitative research is not concerned with numbers and measurement, so I think therefore that the Italian research data provides an interesting and illuminating contrast that works well with the main body of research from East Yorkshire.

I did not set out to analyse the research results with a specific theme in mind, so as such the empirical chapters that follow have been as a result of the conversations with the research participants. The title of the thesis is directly related to policy making, but the analysis highlighted the complex and messy ways that people engage with, and make sense of, worlds of policy making. The first analysis chapter, Chapter 5, specifically concerns the messiness and flux associated with the ways that the research respondents described their experiences of, and opinions on, local food and rural development policy fields. It became clear that in addition to the complexities of policy making *per se*, dealing with rural development and local food added a further layer of opacity, as these were seen to be concepts that were difficult to grasp and define (although, obviously, policy makers in



other fields may make similar claims). Also, the specificity of the case study areas led to people thinking things about these areas that might not apply to other, perhaps different, areas. This will be taken up in detail in Chapter 6, which deals with the places and spaces of local food and rural development and how these varied between the two case study areas. One theme that became clear in the research in both countries was that contrasts and comparisons between each of the case study areas and notions of other (rural) areas as being more idyllic influenced what they thought about the suitability of local food economies and what sort of food production could and should take place in respective places. I will now turn to those worlds of policy making in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5. THE SITUATEDNESS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL FOOD POLICY- MAKING**

### **5.1. Introduction**

As detailed in Chapter 3, scant reference is made within the local food and rural development literature to the role of policy making. While the literature on the relocalisation of agri-food has burgeoned (Marsden 2010b) in the last ten years, what is less well understood or recognised is the role of policy and policy making concerning the relocalisation of food and rural development. As such it represents an understudied area, albeit specific policies or programmes may receive attention (e.g. Food 2030 – see Marsden 2010a, or the Rural Enterprise Scheme – see Watts *et al* 2009). Studies of rural policy in Britain are few in number (Woods 2008: 8). This may be as a result of rural studies not having a coherent identity (Winter 1996: 7) and that conceptual and methodological advancements in political science have not been adopted. Winter ascribes the inapproachability and seeming inapplicability of political sciences to disciplines such as geography, leading to little interdisciplinarity in this area. But also, as Woods (2005: 130) observes, rural policy is ‘a very elusive and enigmatic entity’.

I want to use this chapter to contribute towards the ideas in Chapter 3 of policy making as a disordered and messy set of processes, characterised by those people working in policy and the ways that they think about and understand key terms and ideas, and how these are refracted through particular local spaces, resulting in contingent and relational thinking and policies. This chapter will discuss policy making as it relates to rural development and local food, highlighting the complexities that exist and how this creates a confusing and nebulous system for policy makers as well as those ‘outside’ the official policy making machinery.

I suggest that the models (Figures 5 and 6 in Chapter 3) depicting the policy making process do not adequately represent the realities of engaging with policy making for the people that I have spoken to, and that in fact the term ‘*the* policy making process’ should be replaced with a more accurate description to incorporate multiplicity and messiness. Lindblom’s (1959, 1965, 1979, quoted in Winter 1996: 10) portrayal of policy making is more realistic as he is critical of the concept of a rational and logical policy making process. Instead he suggests that policy makers muddle through in response to the pressures brought to bear upon them, and that any semblance of rationality is likely as a result of *post-hoc* reworking. My empirical material suggests that policy-making is considerably less structured and much more *ad hoc*, as

suggested by Lindblom (op.cit.). Whilst this chapter is not intended to be a discussion of the various theories that have evolved to explain political structures and processes, the alternative model I have developed at the end of this chapter (Figure 15) is an attempt to represent the more chaotic realities explored in my research material. My diagram evolved from analysing this empirical material and represents the disordered ways that various people and organisations are involved in local food and rural development policy making, and the internal and external events that affect that. The overall aim of the chapter is not intended to be a study of the detail of specific policies, nor of the policy process *per se*, but an insight into how local and regional rural development policy makers think about the role of food and the complexities of 'making' policy in that context.

Drawing on original empirical material, this chapter will show that one core person with the passion and commitment is often critical to the success of policies, in following an idea through and encouraging excitement and enthusiasm. New ideas and concepts in policy-making are fluid, appearing and disappearing often without a clearly identifiable reason ('policy transfer' and 'policy leaching'). These concepts will be explored using LEADER as an example of policy transfer, and the Defra Rural Pathfinder programme to demonstrate policy leaching. Policy leaching is less clear cut as some ideas become obfuscated for apparently no reason. For example the national Rural Pathfinder programme of innovating for local government rural service delivery occupied a high profile position in Defra for several years before quietly dropping off the agenda. In thinking about this, one interview participant made the following observation in response to being asked whether they felt that Defra had benefited from the Pathfinder initiative. Her response is indicative of the complexity and less-than-straightforward context of policy making and bears semblance to Phillips' (2004) notion of 'stuttering'<sup>71</sup> over the meaning of the matter in question:

You know so...some things are isn't it [sic]? Time just moves on, I think that's...that's something that struck me recently one of the...one of the reasons that it takes...OK yeah society progresses we hope in the right direction. But you sometimes think its two steps forward one step back and you sometimes think you know why is it still like this? Why are we still making these mistakes and...I think one of the reasons is that...we don't continue to build on success. You don't continue to build on success and move forward...something will...be let collapse, or made collapse, or...not always but...and then they go right back here...not quite as far back and they start again.

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<sup>71</sup> Although Phillips' (2004) notion of stuttering related directly to the meaning of 'rural' it applies equally well to the discussion of policy making.

And...so...yeah I mean I think again that's often to do with personalities and people's individual...you know what's driving them, what's their motivation and... you know what are they bothered about. And...and I think that's just how the world is really. (UK policy maker 006)

The observation takes in the centrality of motivated people to policy making, but also indicates a resigned acceptance of the realities of policy-making, that sometimes good ideas are let go inexplicably and that progress is not as straight-forward as the models discussed earlier might suggest, and that the 'two steps forward, one step back' approach is an ineluctable characteristic of policy making.

Throughout my research, actually talking about policy was quite difficult, as it became clear that different people had varying, and sometimes conflicting, ideas of what 'policy' actually was. With the exception of some research participants in Italy, this was the case with all the research groups. Although this chapter deals specifically with policy-making, the empirical material is drawn not only from the research with policy-makers, but also from the business and consumer research as this also sheds light on the intricacies of policy making. By talking to policy makers about local food and rural development policy making, it is possible to both gain an insight into the complexities of policy making but also into how concepts such as local food and rural development are negotiated and contested.

These complexities relate to the actual processes of policy making (section 5.2) but also geographical and conceptual complexities (section 5.7). In addition, the empirical data suggests that it can often be one particular person that plays a core role in driving forward new ideas and concepts within rural development and local food policy making, and can be solely responsible for navigating the constantly changing policy landscape. The fluidity of the policy landscape in local food and rural development is revealed in conversations with policy makers, leading to yet further possibilities for confusion.

The role of people on the ground who are involved in delivering policies and programmes is also explored; in particular I consider the role of practitioners who interpret and implement particular policies in ways that might diverge from the original intentions of the policy entrepreneur. The last section details how the physical geography of the two case study areas have historically informed the types of activities that are perceived to take place there, the role this historicity plays in current rural development and local food activity, and how this leads to further complexity. Although the two areas (East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo, Italy) are

geographically very diverse, people interviewed in each mentioned similar points in terms of comparisons with other areas that they perceived as being more 'successful'. The geographical imagination of rural areas and what types of activities (including food production) were appropriate for such areas has been used by policy makers to inform their policy (Ward (2006) has utilised geographical imaginations of urban areas to examine urban policy making). The nature of rural development as an amorphous and fuzzy concept was seen by some respondents to make their work harder to relate to.

Using the ideas presented by Woods (2008) and Ward (2008) regarding the Labour government's discourses relating to the modernisation of policy and policy making, I will show the pervasiveness of the modernisation discourse and the impacts on rural development and local food policy making that have endured for more than ten years, and still affect local and regional level policy-making knowledge practices.

In his edited book on rural policy since New Labour were elected in 1997, Woods (2008) suggests that in addition to changes in rural policy, still more influential were the changes to the policy *process*, based on the principles of modernising the policy process. For government officials the key problems were a lack of joined up governance, partnership working, evidence based policy making, learning from experience and other areas, and stakeholder consultation (Cabinet Office 1999, quoted in Greer 2008: 149). Simultaneous to modernising the policy process, Ward (2008) suggests that Labour worked to dismantle the idea of the 'rural' as separate to 'urban' in policy terms, with regional development agencies taking responsibility for economic delivery in rural areas, from the Rural Development Commission. Goodwin (2008: 53) highlights the Prime Minister's (Tony Blair) comments from a letter regarding the reorganisation of the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Service that 'the overall challenges facing our urban and rural communities are, for the most part, very similar'. New Labour employed a political rhetoric of 'one nation' which served to downplay urban-rural differences and highlight common solutions and problems (Woods 2008: 6), and policy processes such as 'rural proofing' suggested the existence of one 'rural' that could be identified and monitored in a predictable way (Woods 2006: 592).

The New Labour government sought to redefine what rural areas were, and commissioned the Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) research into rural economies, which stated that 'when statistics<sup>72</sup> are aggregated, rural economies appear similar to their urban counterparts in many

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<sup>72</sup> Many rural policy practitioners continue to question the use of standardised statistics to 'measure' rurality.

ways' and that 'for both urban and rural economies, policies with a national sweep...have a much greater impact on economic health than any specific urban or rural-tailored initiative' (PIU 1999: 5, quoted in Woods 2008: 15). By trying to redefine the 'rural' the government symbolised a political (re)-representation of rural as not being dissimilar to urban, attempting to minimise urban-rural differences. In addition, concentrating on rural *economies* both emphasises the government's commitment to a discourse of innovation but also allows rural and urban areas to be seen as similar. Ward (2002) suggests how the malleability of the category of 'rural' allows for contrasting claims about rural representation. The Conservative party positioned Labour as representing urban interests only, in response to which Labour emphasised its 'one nation' credentials (Ward 2002: 171).

Whilst this was a political strategy from Labour to legitimise their rural credentials, the broader discourse of urban and rural similarity has prevailed in rural policy and the discourses introduced by New Labour continue to reflect ideas and what people are happy to say or not. So, despite the slipperiness of the policy landscape, certain themes can be seen to have persisted in the minds of the policy makers involved in my research and empirical material will be used to illustrate this throughout this chapter.

Firstly the chapter will deal with the realities of 'doing' policy as described by the research participants, including the ways that they think about, make, get involved in and know about policy processes. Next the chapter will illustrate how often one particular person is critical to policy processes and that they can be instrumental in working through ideas. Section 5.4 of this chapter will demonstrate the complexities and fluidity of working within a constantly changing policy landscape and how this affects those involved. Following on from ideas of a dynamic policy landscape I explore how new ideas are brought into policy and how some ideas 'escape' from policy processes in policy transfer and what I have termed 'policy leaching' (although political scientists have conceptualised policy transfer as a process of sharing ideas, little has been said about how some ideas are lost, or cease to apply and this is what I mean by 'policy leaching'). The idea of complexity within policy making is then further investigated through processes of implementation but also the added complexity of working in specific geographical areas and with concepts of rural development which themselves resist easy definition. The outcome of these discussions with policy makers, businesses and consumers in the UK and Italy is a new way of thinking about policy as a fluid and messy assemblage of people and things working together. Therefore the culmination of this chapter is an alternative diagram as a counterpoint to those introduced at the start of Chapter 3.

I will now introduce the empirical material and specifically explore the experiences of policy making for the people I have spoken to, and how these are much less clear-cut than the models in Chapter 3 suggest.

## **5.2. Local food and rural development policy making realities**

What does policy mean? What is a policy? Policies can be formally written, but may also be unwritten in general attitudes or ways of doing things (something that I have termed '*a moral economy of policy*' to indicate the codes and conventions that perhaps guide how policy makers 'operate'), as outlined in Chapter 3. Spicker (2006: 26) stresses that policy is not only about the issues that are formally decided on and set down, but that values, beliefs and approaches emerge in some organisations and services that affect what happens locally. Birkland (2005: 17) suggests that both evidence and emotion have important roles to play in policy making and that sometimes emotion gets the upper hand, countering the argument of a rational and logical process devoid of subjectivity. This local level practice can itself be adopted by national level policy-makers, sharing so-called best practice to inform what happens elsewhere (this might be strategic as a result of local level pilot projects or a more *ad hoc* process). Policies can be vague and ambiguous or they can be quite tightly defined. Policies can be set out in formalised documents or they can develop from meetings, memoranda and notes (see Krueger and Gibbs 2010). In addition, funding programmes can set policy informally by outlining what can and cannot be funded, and these decisions often correspond with, or complement, policies developed by others. Policy can also be what is not done (Birkland 2005: 17), for by excluding certain themes from a policy, decision or priority, people and places can be written out and therefore ineligible for the benefits that the policy is intended to deliver. This is not an exhaustive list of issues concerning policy making, but illustrates the complexities associated with policy making. This section will explore these issues as they directly relate to the research participants. Specifically, this section will examine how the research participants talked about knowing policy and writing policy, with the inherent complexities involved in 'doing' local food and rural development policy.

### ***Talking about policy***

As mentioned earlier, actually talking about policy was quite difficult, for example, when asked directly had they had any involvement in policy making, most businesses said no or interpreted 'policy' in a wide range of ways from legislation and regulation to grant applications and attending training events. It often emerged that those stating no involvement in policy had actually had some involvement in such processes but that they hadn't categorised it as 'policy-

making'. The following respondent, a farmer running a farm shop, responded 'no' to the question about involvement in policy processes, yet in a discussion related to the view of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) out of his window he articulated the following:

Interviewer: So you have management plans and things like that?

Respondent: Oh God, they don't know what they're talking about half the time

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: They'll just, er, I can show you bits of the river at this end that are equally as pretty as this, and then they come up with this management plan for the reinstatement of the, of the headwaters of the River Hull, you know if it ain't broke why fix it and I've been to one or two meetings, cos I'm involved in, a) because I own bits of river and b) I'm involved in the fishing club locally, and so we go along to these bloody meetings with the Environmental [sic] Agency and there was, last two we went to there was a dozen of them ... with this strategy that they've been coming up with and you know they've got English Nature<sup>73</sup>, all the Environmental [sic] Agency officers there and what did they do? They got consultants in from Durham University, no, not Durham University, from Durham and it cost £60,000 to do a survey, why can't they do it themselves? They come out with this plan and I've got at least two other copies of the thing that's been done over the years and nothing's been done because of it, they come up with these bloody plans and it's, I won't say it's a university thesis, it's probably an A-level geography thesis – it's pathetic! (East Yorkshire Farm Shop 008)

Whilst drawing on examples of policy making from another area of his life, this respondent suggests a general distrust in the role of policy makers. He argued that they don't know what they are doing, that they spend money on consultants who, in his opinion, do not know what they are doing either, as well as a concern that the published report leads to no new activity. The combined results are documents that, he thinks, are not worthy of consideration. The interviewee also suggests that policy makers 'come up with ideas' without necessarily having a rationale for why these ideas are pursued. Nevertheless, despite the claim that he had no involvement, he seemingly did input into policy making processes.

So, where do ideas for policies come from? Sometimes there can be a key event that triggers

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<sup>73</sup> Now Natural England following the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006.



interest in certain policy objectives (for example foot and mouth disease has been seen as instigating a shift in rural policy in the UK), whereas other policy objectives can be much less precise and evolve over time.<sup>74</sup> What is clear, though, is that at certain points in time, certain themes are in favour whilst others are not, and that this influences what is pursued on the ground and at the local level of policy making, as these quotes from local level policy makers suggest:

it's very much based on what, what the East Riding's opportunities and needs are, rather than what comes down from the top, I mean what we try and do at that point is match our opportunities and needs to what's currently in favour at that time with the other level at the other end, erm, so really just sort of some East Riding-wide consultation rather than top-down (Y&H policy maker 001)

Despite twice saying that the process is not 'top-down', this policy maker asserts the need to match local needs to national priorities, as a means of justifying their approach, suggesting perhaps less autonomy at the local level than she would ideally like.

You are never going to get implementation of anything if it's not...consistent with [regional strategies]...you know as you know so...um...so that was...that sort of connection (Y&H policy maker 006)

Both of these policy makers emphasise the need to link in with strategies and what's in favour at a particular point in time, from the local level to the regional level, and the regional level to the national and European levels. Keeping in line with what is in favour may lead to some policies being regarded as 'effective' or popular, as dissonant voices don't want to be seen as 'stepping out of line', as the following policy maker suggests with regard to LEADER:

Respondent: And actually on certainly the [LEADER Partnership] I have been involved in making sure that they've got the right person...not necessarily my members, but at least somebody who thinks on a slightly sort of...higher plane! [Laughter] This is awful! I'm really embarrassed that you're taping it! But um...

Interviewer: No. It's really interesting because everybody does just tend to say oh LEADER's great and...

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<sup>74</sup> Section 5.5 below on policy transfer and policy leaching will consider this in more detail.

Respondent: Yes, but it's...the difference is that it's a bit sort of unfashionable to say it.  
(Y&H policy maker 004)

LEADER and the specific approach it promotes for implementing rural development are 'in favour', especially with the EU, and so objecting to this is regarded by policy makers as being unfashionable and unacceptable. 'Making' policy, from creating an original idea or utilising ideas currently in favour is a complex and chaotic process (Birkland 2005: 3), and many of the respondents I spoke to were keen to point out that it is a process that requires certain knowledges, both of which will be discussed in more detail below.

### ***'Doing' Policy***

Policy is most often perceived as something done by officials, whether in local government or national government or other bodies. Yet, in addition to this, it has been suggested that activities on the ground (implementation / delivery) are a way of influencing and changing policy, in that actions and events are seen as being able to challenge current ideas so that new concepts can emerge and become incorporated (Ray 1999). A whole body of research and literature has grown around ideas of implementation and the influence it has on policy outcomes (see Barrett 2004; Palumbo and Callista 1990 xiii). For instance, by demonstrating that people like and use farmers' markets and food fairs, ideas of how and where people shop can be confirmed or contested. This quote, from a local level policy maker who is also involved in direct delivery (organising food events), demonstrates this:

Because I think when you go about...you will get it said about policy, right at the beginning, and a lot of the things that we do around these events is really promoting local food and sometimes that's the thing that changes the policy. You can make more...if you've got an influence over, if you can influence other people in what's going on, that's a way in which you can say but the people want this, this is what people are wanting to do and that's the way you can try and get more funding in for...for me...policy for me is trying to continue the [event] each year, and to do that we've got to get better (Y&H policy maker 007)

This comment on changing policy through activities is in marked contrast to the dominant theme of policy and delivery being separated from one another, which Lord Haskins suggested was a cornerstone of good government, along with devolution, in his *Modernising Rural*

Delivery Review (2003: 15).<sup>75</sup> This is a theme which has continued to influence thinking on rural policy since 2003.<sup>76</sup> So, despite government rhetoric that policy development and policy delivery should be kept separate, people on the ground have a different perspective on their role and the influence that they can exert over policy development. Funding programmes and grant-making bodies can also be viewed as creating and driving policy in addition to actions on the ground, thereby combining policy development and policy delivery, adding another dimension to what policy might involve. One business mentioned that they had started using and promoting local food directly in response to a stipulation attached to a grant they received to develop tourist accommodation:

Interviewer: did you start doing the meals because you enjoy cooking or had people asked for this?

Respondent: Well I started doing meals cos when we had the first grant we had to show that we supported locally foods, even then

Interviewer: That was one of the criteria?

Respondent: Yes that was one of the things

Interviewer: And that grant was from Yorkshire Forward again?

Respondent: Yes, Defra, it was a Defra grant and we had to demonstrate that and we had to think of a way of doing that, I mean I do enjoy cooking, so erm I said to [my husband] you know I can just put together this sort of menu...and then I source it all locally, so the fish comes from Filey and erm you know I have a good local butchers, and er most of the vegetables are from our vegetable garden, all the fruit's from our vegetable garden, erm so that's nice, people like that and they like the idea that er you know we've grown the apples or the raspberries or whatever it is that er is going into it (East Yorkshire Bed and Breakfast 017)

In this comment, the respondent outlines how the policies of the funding programme directly

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<sup>75</sup> A discourse which strongly influenced policy thinking and led to the abolition of the Countryside Agency, a body heavily criticised for its joint policy and delivery functions.

<sup>76</sup> Although this rhetoric might be set to change with the Coalition government's announcement that the Commission for Rural Communities and other rural quangos will be abolished with some functions, including a 'strengthened rural policy unit' being taken back into Defra nationally. (Defra 29 June 2010: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/news/2010/06/29/agencies-shake-up/>)

influenced the activities of their business, but also touches on the confusion surrounding which body is actually providing the business support – in response to the question regarding where the money came from the interviewee conflates Yorkshire Forward (the regional development agency for Yorkshire and the Humber) with Defra (Government department). She also suggests that by incorporating their own home-grown foods into the meals that tourists may purchase, that customers are glimpsing a snapshot of, and buying into, the rural idyll and ‘the good life’, something which will be explored in the next chapter.

Contrasting with East Yorkshire, research participants in the Abruzzo had much clearer ideas about what policy was, and how the local level (la provincia) linked all the way up to the European Union via Regional Government and ‘Mountain Communities’ (comunità montana) and national level government structures, even though the connections and relations between each level were recognised to be unsatisfactory. The following quote from a National Park (Parco Nazionale della Majella) Local Produce Officer demonstrates the multiple roles of organisations relating to local food, and that a lack of clarity between them can affect the approach taken:

Perchè c'è un po' di, di non chiarezza tra le direttive comunitaria e le leggi nazionali italiane, quindi adesso siamo un po' in cui parchi nazionali stanno aspettando il parere del ministero un chiarimento e dire quale saranno, i modi per concedere questo marchio produttore, quali requisiti perchè sì è perchè no un produttore cui ha il marchio o più di no, quindi siamo ancora di decisione, c'è una grande discussione al livello europeo, sul il ruolo dei marchi nei parchi stanno provando adesso diverse soluzioni in Francia, Italia, Germania, su come poterle in qualche maniera, um, trovare un modo di dire, mentre insieme di leggi della nazione, suoi i parchi con quelle europee perchè stanno si scontrano con nel IGP, le DOP, e questo no quest'una DOP, non è una DOP, è un'altra cosa, ma il IGP e la DOP hanno delle legittimità chiare definite, e marchi di parchi non hanno questa ancora non è molto chiaro (Abruzzo policy maker 005)

Because there isn't clarity between European Union Community Directives and the national Italian rules, therefore we are now part of those national parks waiting, the national ministry is unclear about the ways to grant these marques to the producers, which criteria are allowable and which aren't, which producers can be awarded the marque and those that can't, therefore we are waiting for the decision. There has been a great discussion at the European level, about the rules of these Park marques which offer diverse solutions to local situations, in France, Germany, Italy, things in this

manner, whilst together the associations of the national parks of Europe, because this is clashing with the PDO, the PGI, but this is not a PDO, nor a PGI, it's something else, but the PGI and the PDO have legitimacy and clear definition, and the national park marque doesn't have this yet and therefore it isn't very clear (Abruzzo policy maker 005)

The policy makers I interviewed at the National Park Authority saw the use of a local branding scheme as a useful way to support local producers (not just food) but have come up against difficulties due to the existence of other 'branding' schemes like the PDO and PGI. Fonte (2010) describes a National Park branding scheme in Calabria, Italy which experienced difficulties due to a clash between the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture. Fonte (p156) notes that the Ministry of Agriculture contests these Marques (marchio) because of the varying criteria applied by the different national parks in Italy and the lack of a nationalised control structure and the potential for confusion between these marques and those of the EU. Although Parrott *et al* (2002: 246) note the PDO and PGI regulations were not originally intended as a quality mark *per se*, but were designed to protect the specific methods or places of production from standardisation, they can often be assumed to represent a quality status. National Park Authorities add another layer of governance and this quote demonstrates the problems that can be encountered in negotiating policies – as Cosgrove (2006: 71) puts it, a mosaic of overlapping administrative autonomies.

### ***Making Policy***

Although the development of formal policies and strategies can occur in a number of ways, it often falls to one person who leads. This can sometimes entail working in partnership with others, but often involves forging ahead in isolation to create a full document that others then comment on. This individual approach to policy development can be the result of time pressures (for example writing rural delivery plans to meet external deadlines), but it also builds on ideas of policy making as complex and difficult and as an activity for people with certain qualifications and experiences. One policy maker observed that 'um...I mean....again this is my personal view is that...policy and strategy development is challenging' (Y&H policy maker 006) and went on to elaborate '...my personal view again is that I don't believe there are that many people who are capable of doing it you know, even if you look at this organisation and I think you know [a colleague] would agree with this because he's said it to me that there are very few people who can actually write strategies and policies, bids, bidding documents, you know'. When asked about how policies come into being, what the process for developing a policy might be, it emerged that despite the rhetoric of partnership working and

ownership of strategies, often one organisation and usually one core person was responsible.

Um...in terms of probably who our key partners are on this, it's difficult to...it's a really difficult one to answer is this because...I suppose if I'm honest my experience over time has been that 90% of the stuff we have written. (Y&H policy maker 006)

Similar examples were cited in some of the Italian interviews. For example in talking about the rural development plan for the region's LEADER programme, it was highlighted that the Local Action Group had talked about the strengths of the area, but that writing the detail of the plan was left to those seen as policy makers:

[i membri del GAL]...porteranno essere i punti di forza del nostro territorio, è chiaro che i vari soci della gruppo hanno nominato dei tecnici huh...e quindi stiamo state nominati, io per la parte agricola, ed alimentare, ed ambientale, e quest'altro tecnico Gregorio che si occupa soprattutto di turismo...e quindi ecco [lui] rappresentavo...turistica della nostro gruppo ed io la parte agrialimentare rurale, e quindi ecco insieme abbiamo scritto questo piano sviluppo locale (Italian policy maker 001)

The members of the LAG<sup>77</sup> decided what the strengths of our area were, but they nominated us as technical officers [to write the document] and I was nominated to write about agriculture, food and environment, and the other technical officer was nominated to write about tourism. Therefore Gregorio represented tourism for the group and I rural food producers, and together we wrote the local rural development plan. (author's translation)

Further examples of stimulating greater involvement from partner organisations were given, for example a past employee was described as 'determined everybody else was going to write pieces and he did get quite a lot of people to write pieces to be honest with you, *he did!* He did quite well, um...but...you know that's not been the normal way in which we have done it really.' (Y&H policy maker 006). This quote expresses surprise that a policy maker would work in this way and might even have success in so doing. However, the general picture is of knowledgeable individuals writing policy statements and then receiving comments and input on the proposed statement

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<sup>77</sup> Local Action Group – the partnerships established to oversee the running of the LEADER programme locally. Gruppo Azione Locale in Italian (GAL).

but I think that it's probably more or less the same, we send it out to the partners, we might get one or two views back, and we incorporate them and we send it out within the [organisation] to whoever. You know we may get one or two views back then we incorporate them but it's...its fairly low level. (Y&H policy maker 006)

And in being pushed further on this relationship and how it worked, the respondent observed

I mean it could always be better, you know as well as I do that there are always people who you think why haven't they commented? But they haven't commented because 1. they don't own it and 2. they are busy doing other things. You know they want to have it and they'll support it but they just don't find the time because it's not actually their baby you know, although it is! (Y&H policy maker 006 – emphasis added)

Whilst striving to adhere to the partnership rhetoric, policies and strategies are presented here in terms of being a particular person's 'baby', perhaps suggesting that the local level commitment to partnership working may not be as comprehensive as imagined or intended by national policy makers. This policy maker suggests that as a result of not having direct involvement in the preparation, partners do not feel like they 'own' the documents. Involvement in policy processes varies for numerous reasons, even for those closely engaged in such processes.

### ***Involvement in policy***

By not being involved, whether as a result of not having the time or not being linked into the right networks or communities, influence over the direction of policies can be elusive. Businesses and others not directly involved in rural development policy networks and partnerships were often cynical about why certain things happened and how the processes worked. Sometimes even those who were involved in positions of authority at the most local level (such as a parish council) felt alienated from decision-making processes, because such decision makers were seen as being geographically remote from the local level. One business described the relationship between the parish and county council in relation to planning issues in the village:

Interviewer:...does your husband feel that things are listened to...

Respondent: He does in the parish council, but what happens is, what he finds is that the parish council is the, the parish council'll disagree about some building or something like that but parish councils don't at the bottom have any say, they come to

a decision, they sort of say no we are against it, it goes to Beverley<sup>78</sup> and Beverley immediately pass it! (Laughs) You know I think in fact they've worked out a principle of, they work the opposite way around, if [parish] fail it, er pass it, Beverley'll probably fail it, but you know it seems to work like, but they don't, Beverley Council doesn't really seem to take a great deal of notice of the parish councils, that's, you know it's a shame. (East Yorkshire Producer 012)

This respondent suggests that instead of listening to comments from the local community, the county council takes a diametric approach in dealing with local planning issues. In Italy, a number of respondents were concerned with what they perceived to be an unnecessary level of bureaucracy, as one wine-making business describes (she wanted to do the interview in English, so the comment is reproduced exactly as she put it):

Yes, yeah because it is impossible to do now together because in agriculture we have a lot of trouble er with erm with comunità europea (EU), and we have a lot of bureaucracy and for this reason I spend a lot of time for keeping my, to keep...er yes because in erm in comunità (EU) there is a lot of laws that in another word there aren't, we must er for, plant vineyard we must have a permission for er removal of the vineyard we must have a permission, to produce the wine we must have a permission! For this reason we have a lot of paperwork and I don't know if someone reads it! What we write! (Italian business 009)

She describes the number of forms that need to be completed for processes within the business that she perhaps feels do not require such intervention – she went on to say how a local agricultural development agency had been essential in helping them navigate these rules and policies. Such policies are viewed as being 'imposed' on businesses and farmers. In another example of 'bureaucracy' in discussing the involvement with policy makers and policy processes many businesses expressed frustration that they weren't listened to, or were only asked so that policy makers could tick a box and say that consultation had taken place. The example below resulted from an off-topic discussion with a local farmer and farm shop owner during the interview:

Interviewer: So do they ask for your opinions and experience when you have the meetings?

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<sup>78</sup> Beverley is the county town where the unitary authority is based, and many people I spoke to called East Riding of Yorkshire Council by a more colloquial 'Beverley Council'.



Respondent: Yeah and then ignore it!

Interviewer: They ignore it?

Respondent: Yeah,

Interviewer: You don't really feel like they're paying any heed to what you and the others are saying?

Respondent: No, no, they're coming up with some crazy idea of, they, huh, a lot of the river is very beautiful, natural – no it ain't, it's man-made and it's been man-made for the last two or three hundred years, and somebody said it wants putting back to nature, alright, well the whole of Holderness will be flooded, they're seriously thinking of turning the pumps off! (East Yorkshire Farm Shop 008)

In comparison, one policy maker in Italy suggested that businesses were almost dissuaded from participating and that despite their efforts to be involved, not much had been achieved:

Interviewer: so businesses don't feel that they have much involvement or influence over policy making processes?

Appellata: no, noi anche con nel associazione regionale produttore, con tutte ne sede, cattive che abbiamo mezzo in piedi proprio per i vere maggiore peso contrattuale, ufficialmente. Anche perche quando timove sempre di considera non è come rompicavale... però io dico quando gli sta sono alti ci manteniamo in forma (Italian policy maker 006)

No, we also work with the regional producers association, with all of the members. Even though in our efforts to improve those communications it's very difficult for us to actually get anywhere. Any effort to try and build that bridge, they see as a troublemaker and a pain in the neck. You keep yourself busy and fit trying to jump over them, the hurdles get higher and we get fitter! (author's translation)

As mentioned earlier, many respondents stated that they had had no participation in policy making processes. Often they had been involved but hadn't classified meetings and other activities as being 'policy making'. Business interviewees consistently said they knew little

about, or had no involvement in, policy making processes. However, in unrelated conversations they exhibited detailed knowledge of those very processes. Speaking to one producer about the current state of farming and how difficult it was for new entrants, she talked freely about planning policies, settlement status, and the allocation of land for housing, thereby demonstrating detailed knowledge of the complexities of the planning system. She linked this to a general feeling that farming was something that was not acceptable in some locations, that people liked the idea of farming as long as it was not in proximity to them:

Respondent: nowadays you just can't afford to buy the land and that nowadays, if you can get hold of it, and round here there's not much erm, not really, I mean they're more trying to take it off you than offer you it, I mean it's like all this erm, all these fields are all actually allocated for building...

Interviewer: So did you get any say in whether it was allocated?

Respondent: No! I mean it's part of this erm village plans that they do for years now, [the village] is classed as what they call a Selected Settlement, sort of the outskirts of Beverley and people commute from [the village] to Beverley to work, and [the village] to Hull to work, and it is, it is absolutely massive now is [the village], it's huge, there's so many housing estates and we did farm in the village and the council eventually got that they didn't make, the village was getting more built up and they didn't like a farm in the middle of the village and erm so they approached us and oh this is like 25 years ago, would we be prepared to move outside, sell up in the village, er sell the farm in the village and move if they'd give us planning permission to build a new unit out of the village, and erm because they didn't want farming, livestock in the middle of the village, down the main street sort of thing (laughs)

Interviewer: You feel that that comes from the government, that they don't want farming?

Respondent: No, you're encouraged to get out of it [farming], you know to sell it for building, diverse (sic) into holiday flats and I mean caravan sites, log cabins we've got hundreds around here (laughs, and sounds stressed)...but there may be a time when you may be driven out of the village cos we're just too close now you know sort of, it's strange, they don't really want farming

Interviewer: People moving in or the planners?

Respondent: Planners, everybody, I think sort of, the government nowadays, you know, I think farms, farms are alright but they should be out of sight and not getting in anybody's way (laughs) you know we are the only farm left in [the village] as such that's farming, whereas you know years ago there was sort of something like 20 little farms, there was 2 or 3 cow farms, there was you know everything was supplied in [the village] itself, and now there is just nothing (East Yorkshire Producer 012)

The combined processes of planning policies and urban – rural migration are attributed with changing the nature of the village, and shifting its character from a farming village to a commuter village, with the attendant processes of urbanising rural space so that farms and farmers are felt to be out of place (re-urbanity, or rurbanity, see Woods 2009 and Lacour and Puissant 2007). The interviewee refers to the diversification policies of the Thatcher government, a discourse which has endured as the respondent indicates a continuing need for farms to diversify (a point made by Woods (2008: 257)). Cloke (1992) outlines the processes of the Thatcher government that produced a new marketplace rural economy and also intensified conflicts between production and consumption interests in the countryside. In terms of the planning policies that applied to the respondent's land, she claimed she had not been involved in the decisions to allocate the land for housing. She felt that policy was something decided by 'the council' (the county unitary authority) and which travelled in one direction only (top-down). Others had attempted to get involved in policy making. Ways of 'getting involved' in rural development and local food policy making operate at many scales, from writing a letter, attending meetings and events to campaigning and lobbying, although these entail varying levels of commitment and result in differing degrees of success. In discussing flooding, one farmer had written to the Environment Agency but he said:

...I knew they wouldn't take any notice, I said about dredging the rivers erm and you know not er cos it's valuable farm land and people rely on it for their livings and told 'em all that and they, they didn't take a bit of notice, they wrote back, they wrote back but they said they couldn't say, you know that was definitely not on you know dredging the rivers, I mean even if they took a bit more river and made the rivers wider and took a bit of farmland that way it would be better than flooding large area of good land wouldn't it? (East Yorkshire farmer 016)

This highlights not only the differences between scientific and lay knowledge in flood management, but also the frustrations experienced in trying to get involved in policy making. It also illustrates the tensions that exist between food security and the likelihood of increased flooding on some land. However, from the policy maker perspective, one regional policy maker in Italy observed that working with lots of little businesses is complicated and difficult to manage (Italian policy maker 004). Another respondent felt that they had had more success in influencing policy outcomes through their campaigning work:

... the campaigning kept GM out of the country for 10 years, and if the campaigning hadn't been there I'm really sure that you know we [the UK] would have been very different by now, so I do feel that, in some ways that gives me a lot of hope, erm, but erm yeah, it's, it's whether the sort of whole political machinery can grind, grind itself to moving in the right direction (East Yorkshire Grower 006)

It should be noted however, that this level of commitment and involvement would not be possible for many small businesses. Indeed, the following quote aptly demonstrates that for many businesses getting involved in policy and policy making processes is not something that they would wish to do, based on pre-conceived ideas of what policy making might involve (rightly or wrongly):

I don't think most of the time they're offering anything, it's just like you go to anything that the council are involved in and it's just full of jargon and it's full of loads of paperwork and I don't want to do that, I do paperwork all the time and most of it appertaining to them and the government so erm I don't want to do it in the little bit of social time that I get (East Yorkshire Business 005)

This respondent hints at the off-putting nature of jargon and the time-consuming character of getting involved, which is seen as being incompatible with the time pressures of running a business. Being involved in policy does not necessarily mean that one 'knows' about policy, the ways that people know about policy (including those involved in policy making directly) are explored in the next section.

### ***Knowing Policy***

Despite the government rhetoric of joint working and engagement, for many it is not an attractive proposition. The external view of policy making varies, with some viewing it as boring and inaccessible ('full of jargon'), or as something that is not open to ordinary people.

Not all actors have equal access to policy making, whether as a result of being geographically isolated or of not knowing how to get involved, and even for those who might be involved, not all actors have equal powers and resources to influence the direction of policies. Policy making is presented by some policy makers as something that is difficult and can only be undertaken by certain people with the requisite skills and knowledge, as one policy maker illustrated during an interview, saying ‘and you know, so...these things, particularly when it comes to policy and strategy, that’s why I say it’s challenging and hard, it takes years of experience, and knowledge, and practice to write effective strategies’ (Y&H policy maker 006). Policy-making is presented as something for which one has a natural talent (either inherently, or developed through time served and hard work) and that it requires a long time (‘years’) to develop the skills and knowledge. Some people are seen as not being able to develop these skills, for example some people are pigeonholed as ‘policy’ or ‘project’ people and the transition between the two is difficult to transcend, as this policy maker explained:

...but I don’t...and I said this openly, I don’t believe you could take somebody say who had been delivering a project and give them two half days training on how to write a policy....And expect they can do it. I think that’s a fallacy really. (Y&H policy maker 006)

I think it’s a fairly rare skill to be frank with you. Um...and...I mean I think it’s a skill I have reasonable ability at, partly because of my [professional] background. There are others in my team who have it, but there are certain ones who don’t have it. (Y&H policy maker 006)

As mentioned earlier, Haskin’s Modernising Rural Delivery (MRD) Review<sup>79</sup> in 2003 pushed forward the idea of separating policy development from delivery of services as these actions were thought to be incompatible. It is not only organisations that are regarded as *policy* or *delivery*, individual people can be given those labels too.

When asked about ‘policy’ during interviewing, businesses and even some people who might be classified as a policy maker were unclear about what ‘policy’ actually was. Some people declared no knowledge of anything related to policy; others interpreted policy as legislation and regulation, whereas others had more sophisticated knowledge and understandings of policy. Even those who might be considered policy makers, because of where they work or the type of work they do, can be vague about the policy making processes within their

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<sup>79</sup> Ward (2008) has described the Haskins’ report as ‘vandalism’ of rural policy.

organisation. As one person put it in response to that question '[nervous laughter] argh, I don't know...but for me in our team we have that, that mantra about you know rural places being the place to live and work and do enterprise, and so um, a lot of what I would do would be to devise um projects or programmes that I think fits that bill... Basically. And um, enterprise is a key thing that we're, that the organisation is very interested in and wants more of...Um...so...and you know enterprise, competitiveness, all that sort of thing makes for a good um...economy. So that's you know what we are building on, we want those sorts of things happening in rural areas.' (Y&H policy maker 003). This comment highlights more than just not being clear about how policy is formed – the strength of the neoliberal approach initiated under Thatcherism (Woods 2008: 258) can be clearly identified as a strong feature of rural policy for this organisation, as it is for others. As outlined in the literature review, a strong discourse of enterprise and competitiveness can be identified in policies relating not only to 'rural' and agriculture but also city regions and sustainable development (Krueger and Gibbs 2010; Ward 2006).

In the relationships between business and policy makers, and between policy makers and other stakeholders such as members of boards, trustees or local authority members there is a desire to work with people who can be categorised as having the 'right' knowledge and who know how to behave in certain situations so that layers of knowledge and etiquette build up, with each knowing how to behave and relate to one another (as stated at the beginning of the chapter, this might be conceptualised as a '*moral economy of policy*'). As one policy maker commented on their relationships with elected members within his organisation:

[he] used to farm...and you can really have an informed conversation with him. He's [responsible for] sustainable rural issues. There's another one who covers this kind of area...local economic development... It's important that [they] understand the differences between the role of a [member / trustee] and the role of an officer – these are all good guys who understand that difference but when [they] start to try and get involved in detailed level work it's a nightmare. I can say to these [people] if it's an officer role and not theirs. (Y&H policy maker 011)

The same policy maker commented on another positive working relationship which worked as a result of the civil servant in question possessing directly relevant local authority experience as 'he's a retired civil servant and understands how to run a council as he was chief exec at Cornwall, that's very rare for a civil servant. He's been a great advocate and supporter' (Y&H policy maker 011). Those who do not seem to possess this knowledge are viewed with

caution. This view is not restricted to business perceptions of policy makers; policy makers at different spatial scales were viewed with suspicion by other policy makers. In particular, respondents working at local and regional level had a great suspicion of national level civil servants, for example one policy maker who had experience of working in rural development with national government pointed out that '[I] was always deeply suspicious that these civil servants could...they would say yes to recommendations and then cover it all up with so much sort of guff that you could never be absolutely sure whether anything had fundamentally changed.' (UK policy maker 008). Marquand (2004: 12-13) suggests that suspicions of civil service and ministerial decisions may be well-founded, as he demonstrates using the BSE crisis and government policies regarding the danger to humans from infected meat.

Yet despite policy makers emphasising the need to have the 'right' skills and knowledge to develop policies and strategies, there is a perception from the business respondents that policy makers do not know enough about their sector:

...they don't know anything about our trade, those people that are, are writing those rules, are writing the books and writing the laws, don't know anything about slaughtering, don't know anything about butchering, and the same rules are probably applying to bakers and people that do something completely different and the same rules are applying but you can't, it's not a general it's not a general thing... (East Yorkshire Butcher 005)

In addition to not being well-versed in the appropriate business sector (such as butchering or baking), many of the businesses involved in this research felt that policy makers do not speak to the business sectors when developing these policies. Whether this perception is accurate or not it results in a cycle whereby policies continually fail to represent business desires:

but they never ask you, they never ask what you think, they never say you know it would mebbe be sensible to do this, they just go to Brussels or wherever, they go and half a dozen idiots sit round a table discuss [sic] what we're gonna do for the next year and we go oh yeah that's brilliant, that'll give us half a billion quid to waste on some more crap legislation (East Yorkshire Butcher 005)

And another farmer commented that '...and the people that are running it, well, you know, huh – you know who's getting jobs at Defra? Certainly aren't anything to do with agriculture, so they have little or no clue when you speak to them as laymen, you know what's going on'

(East Yorkshire Producer 014) – further indicating the dissatisfaction felt by businesses in relation to policy makers, in particular the lack of knowledge and experience relating to the specific sector. In Italy, one policy maker (who also owned an organic farm and private sector consultancy business) described her frustration at local policy makers, who she saw as being unmotivated and inefficient, and for whom receiving a salary each month was automatic, rather than motivating them to perform well:

Appellata: Quindi mentre ci sono anche tanti persone stipendiate dalle regione, dall'organizzazione professionale ecc. ecc. tutte insieme non viesca ne fare...lavora. Perchè sì, io sì come al'azienda quindi sono ma molta tenta i bisogni d'imprenditori...e quindi, uh, mentre invece un funzionario della regione non interessa

Intervistric: so policy makers at the regional level, are they interested, do they come and want to find out more about what's going on locally?

Appellata: raramente, il funzionari io dico fin tanto la fine di mese lo stipendio arriva comunque, non se ne frega no! (Italian policy maker 006)

Respondent: Therefore, there are always lot of people who get paid by the region, in professional organisations etc, etc, all together they don't do much work. Because so, I have my own business and represent the needs of entrepreneurs...and therefore, uh, whereas instead the staff at the region aren't interested (I am)

Interviewer: so policy makers at the regional level, are they interested, do they come and want to find out more about what's going on locally?

Respondent: Rarely, the staff get their salary at the end of each month and really they don't give a damn! (author's translation)

The same policy maker went on to describe a general culture which she perceived amongst public sector workers of not wanting to seem too keen, as to appear keen was to attract too much attention and criticism from colleagues. Policy makers were described as wanting to take the easiest route possible, to not have to do extra work – she said that these views were common amongst local businesses.



Having illustrated the different ways that a variety of actors think about, and are involved in, policy making and policy making processes this section has begun to identify the specific knowledges and skills that policy makers see themselves as having and how these knowledgeable people can be central to policy making. The next section will further develop the idea of key individuals in policy making, their influence over what is developed into policy, and how they enact policy, drawing in people, ideas and resources to pursue the objectives which they are passionate about. As Krueger and Gibbs (2010: 823, quoting Gonzalez and Healey (2004: 2058)) put it, the relationship between institutions and actors is not a one-way process, actors are shaped by 'their institutional inheritance and help shape it, in mutually constitutive and generative processes'.

### **5.3. 'Animateurs' and 'Fiery Spirits'<sup>80</sup> – the role of passionate people**

'Trigger' events can and do initiate policy changes as happened with foot and mouth disease and Haskins' modernising rural delivery review. However, in my research I have found that in many instances a principal individual is responsible for leading changes in policy (others have found similar examples, see Little *et al* 2011; Kingdon 1995). In particular these people possess characteristic passion, drive and vision for the policies and ideas that they promote and implement. Bevir and Rhodes (2006, quoted in Krueger and Gibbs 2010) develop the concept of 'beliefs' helps to explain this – they argue that their concept of 'beliefs' enables researchers to explore and explain action and / or outcomes by giving analytical priority to how individuals in positions of concern construct their world, 'including the ways they understand their location, the norms that affect them and their interests' (Bevir and Rhodes 2006: 6).<sup>81</sup> Many interview respondents were keen to emphasise that it was the characteristics of particular people that made the difference, rather than who they worked for or their specific remit.

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<sup>80</sup> The Carnegie UK Trust Commission for Rural Development developed a Rural Manifesto in 2009, and at the launch of that document ([http://www.youtube.com/user/fieryspirits#p/a/u/2/\\_bXqyXhixrc](http://www.youtube.com/user/fieryspirits#p/a/u/2/_bXqyXhixrc)), the Director of the Programme, Kate Braithwaite, talked about the 'fiery spirits' in rural communities without whom nothing happens and that communities where things happen all have a 'fiery spirit at the heart of it'. These people are responsible for getting things done in rural communities 'in spite of bureaucracies and unhelpful funding streams and all the rest' and that the lessons to be learnt from the document are relevant for communities everywhere. This idea of a central activist is similar to the ideas that have been presented to me in my research about enthusiastic and passionate policy makers.

<sup>81</sup> The concept of beliefs is part of a broader analytical framework of interpretive institutionalism. Beliefs are situated within 'traditions' – the social context in which actors exercise their reason and acts, actors are situated agents in traditions. Traditions are constantly being remade and re-interpreted. 'Dilemmas' arise for an individual or group when a new idea stands in opposition to existing beliefs or practices and so forces a reconsideration of the existing beliefs and associated traditions (Bevir and Rhodes 2006: 9, quoted in Krueger and Gibbs 2010).

And you know I mean what I haven't said in all of this but I firmly, firmly, firmly believe is that... you know so many things are down to personalities. (Y&H policy maker 006)

In many cases, people were often bringing their own personal interests into their work, and themes such as local food were pursued as a result of this personal interest. The role of these core people confirms in many ways Kingdon's (1995) writing about policy entrepreneurs who are present in the workings of government and policy making, waiting to examine the nature of particular problems as they emerge and to offer solutions to policy makers when they are developing policies.

In the Abruzzo a number of businesses attributed their own success to the help received from one rural development practitioner with a passion and intimate knowledge of local food and rural development, as one farmer and cheese producer said:

Yes, we've got a great relationship with her, she's very, she's a very good person. She's a good person with a nice nature and she understands the sector, it's different to compared to working with people who don't understand the sector. She knows because she does it. She has her degree in agronomy, she works with the GAL, 5 years as the GAL Director, so she has a lot of experience. She's right in the thick of it...Associations aren't worth that much really, they're not agronomists like [her].  
(Abruzzo organic farmer and cheese producer)

The comment from this Abruzzo dairy farmer describes the policy maker concerned as a nice person, but also that she knows the sector through personal experience and is therefore in a more authoritative position to support other local food businesses. She was compared to other policy makers who aren't qualified agronomists and who were therefore of less value to 'real' farmers. In this particular instance, the complexity and multiplicity of the roles performed even by individual policy makers can be highlighted. The person in question is a Director for the local LEADER programme, runs an agronomy consultancy business and is also the part-owner of a local organic agriturismo business. Therefore, the policy-maker being described is simultaneously a policy maker, implementer and deliverer, whilst also being a recipient of such policies and implementation via her businesses. Such multiple roles performed by one individual can make the roles harder to disentangle from one another, and definition of terms such as 'policy maker' can be difficult. Such positionality is unlikely to be limited to this individual described above, for instance, the new Director of the Soil Association, Helen Browning, is also an organic farmer. The person that was described as

being central to the local food network in the Abruzzo was also the person that had helped facilitate my research in the area, so there may be an issue of people feeling that it was their responsibility to speak highly of her. The policy maker concerned also described herself as being critical in helping the Abruzzese businesses access wider policy networks, and suggested that she helped to shed light on such information:

Quindi, ecco io cui per esempio rappresento un po', un faro (Italian policy maker 009)

Therefore, in this instance, I, for example, represent a bit, a lighthouse (for these people) (author's translation)

Many of the policy makers that I spoke to were passionate about local food, whether they were motivated by the impact of food production on the landscape of the local area, the perceived benefits to health or environment, or they enjoyed cooking at home, they could justify the promotion of local food in their work.

I am particularly um...interested in local food. I try to get more people to sort of think about where they're purchasing their food from so... (Y&H policy maker 005)

Um...but of course local food has always been quite dear to my heart and it just seemed that um...that [LEADER] was a programme that would help support it. (Y&H policy maker 006)

Uh...from the research and my own personal love of local food and passion for cooking I knew that there were lots of local producers in the area (Y&H policy maker 007)

All of these comments indicate a more-than-professional commitment to local food, with local food being positioned as 'dear to my heart' and 'a personal love'. Another farmer that I spoke to who attends farmers' markets pointed out how the initiative to set up a farmers' market locally had come from within the community, rather than the local authority. It was one person in particular who wanted to pursue the idea, despite, he suggested, a lack of conviction from others locally:

you know I think the [local authority] likes to laud it but they did little to set it up actually, it was all an initiative by one councillor in particular who's retired now and he

was very keen, and er in the beginning it was obviously new you know and I was pretty keen and I wondered how long it would last and er been going 8 years now I think.  
(East Yorkshire farmer 015)

This farmer is critical of the local authority that he sees as taking credit retrospectively whereas in his view it was a local councillor who had the vision to see it through. So far, I have illustrated the intricate and multifarious ways that people are involved in and understand processes of making policy. Respondents have suggested that frequently one person is involved in making sense of the dynamic and complicated processes of policy making and in actually making things work. However, this is not to essentialise ideas that people occupying so-called powerful positions are the ones possessing the spirit and drive to take things forward – the passionate individual described here can be found in any type of organisation, or even outwith formal organisations in community groups and so on. In addition to these ‘animateurs’, local food is presented as being a subject and thing about which people can be enthusiastic about. The next section will demonstrate how people talked about this.

### ***Food and Passion***

Through the fervour and enthusiasm for local food, these impassioned people make things like farmers’ markets, food events and funding programmes happen. Unsurprisingly, business respondents also talked about a passion for good quality food, perhaps underlying their choice of business.

but I do have a passion for good quality food (East Yorkshire local food tourism business 002)

well er I mean it’s a passion of ours first and foremost, erm to lo-, the local so local produce, local staff, local tradesmen so you know if we’re gonna buy anything if we, we first and foremost will look and try and find somebody who does it locally (East Yorkshire local food tourism business 010)

Local food appears to be an emotive subject for the respondents and something that it is easy to be passionate about and committed to – local food engenders a sense of enthusiasm in people that might not be the case with a different product or service. For many people, food per se is something that they enjoy talking about<sup>82</sup>, local food in particular seems to get most

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<sup>82</sup> In general discussions with friends, relatives and other people I have come across a great amount of enthusiasm and interest in local food, and many people are quick to point out the linkages to landscape,

people interested and they are happy to talk about their ideas about it. In Italy, one policy maker explained that it was her interest in olives in particular that led to her promoting olive oils from the region – this interest was something which she already had, but had also grown by being closely involved in the work. Kingdon (1995) notes that it is *interesting concepts* such as local food that policy makers are more inclined to adopt. Food available through more conventional channels such as supermarkets does not invoke the same reaction and is presented as easy and something that anyone can do, as opposed to local food being something special which requires going the ‘extra mile’ for (these ideas of specialness and effort are discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

but erm we believe the local side is the more passionate, that people should you know get out their baskets and go to markets, go down their local high street and erm you don’t spend as much money (East Yorkshire business 013)

so I think that you know it does come down a lot of the time to individuals erm that are involved in these sort of organisations erm and the will of, of even down to local chefs that are gonna, are prepared to go the extra mile to, to make sure that, that produce is er sourced locally erm (UK policy maker 013)

For these respondents, passion and going the extra mile are seen as intrinsic qualities required for using local produce. The idea of using baskets for high street shopping conjures up images of the 1950s housewife doing her daily shopping at independent stores is in stark contrast to more contemporaneous images of hurried and stressful shopping trips around the supermarket once a week or once a month. The idea of passion and desire for local food is not something that has gone unnoticed by policy makers, as figure 13 illustrates.

**Figure 13. Front cover of a brochure promoting local food as part of an initiative by North Yorkshire County Council** (source: <http://www.northyorkshirelocalfood.co.uk/>)



The front cover of the brochure (Figure 13) published by North Yorkshire County Council as part of an initiative to reconnect urban consumers with locally produced food asks people to ‘*fall in love with local food*’ – intimating an emotional response and connection with local food, continuing the theme of ‘connection’ as a policy goal.

In Italy, the passion for local food (‘*prodotti tipici*’) was often linked to a pride in, and commitment to, the local area. In addition, the links between culture and history, and the stories and tales that are told about traditions in the area and which have led to the unique conditions of the area. For example, an agriturismo farmer described the links between the transhumance agriculture and the types of plants (e.g. speciality beans) that had evolved and the related products. *Fagioli di Vacenne*, an ancient bean variety, and Gentian root wine were examples given (Italian farmer 007). Another policy maker in Italy (Italian policy maker 002) had evidence of trade in the Abruzzo of such ‘heritage’ breeds of plants from the sixteenth century.

For some of the respondents, it wasn't just a passion for local food, but a general positive outlook that involved giving their all towards their work, as one policy maker asserted 'anything I do, I do 150% and I try and...I think I do have some sort of a degree of vision really that...so my vision for how this might happen...and really we just...we just built from there.' (UK policy maker 006) and that 'um...we [the rural team] were always proactive in...happy to do things and happy to contribute'.

These people argue (in describing themselves or their colleagues) that they possess some kind of vision that they follow determinedly in order to achieve a goal that they believe in. Many 'officials' (policy makers for example) are viewed negatively by businesses and the general public, for being bureaucratic or unhelpful, but some 'officials' are able to transcend this officialdom by being approachable, enthusiastic and visionary. In these cases, the organisations they work for cease to be of importance, but it is their individual characteristics that make them more successful than another person might be in the same role. Speaking to a local policy maker about local food, she demonstrates this view in relation to a colleague in another organisation and then her own approach to working with producers and other organisations:

I mean I think [she] has been very good actually at...because she's quite passionate about, about the local food and I think she's been quite good at pushing it forward um...and she's got quite a following really. Um...and that...part of...I know it's... you know when officers change that makes a difference...

you know...you've got to have the enthusiasm to get people going and want them to be there and that...you know and...I know you are talking to me about policy, but all this...all these activities around sort of operational activity it, it, well it kind of creates policy doesn't it? It sort of goes forward to actually create the policy. (Y&H policy maker 007)

And as mentioned above regarding the separation of delivery from policy, the national level rhetoric does not necessarily change practitioners' behaviour, as this quote reinforces.

These people (fiery spirits or policy entrepreneurs) become more important than the policy or programme that they are involved in delivering and can be seen to embody the work themselves. This was the experience of some businesses in Italy too. One farmer with an agriturismo and educational centre had found that it was more about 'finding nice and helpful

people rather than who they worked for' (Italian farm business 007). This woman explained that without finding the right people her business would not have succeeded, and that even different branches of the same organisation could offer different advice. For example, she had had to use a branch of an agricultural support organisation that was much further away than her local branch as they were more helpful. Back in East Yorkshire, the delivery of funding programmes to support food and rural development businesses, the funding was viewed as coming from a particular *person* rather than from the funding programme or organisation. For example, one local business activist commented 'she erm came to see us when we first wanted to do our summer market and we've actually had funding from [her]' (East Yorkshire tourism business 002), and thereby leaving out any organisational links and directly attributing the funding to the individual officer.

One respondent commented that a particularly innovative programme which she had been involved in came about as a result of the vision of one person (and the availability of funding), and that sister organisations in other parts of the region without such visionary people were less convincing in comparison:

I mean I think Business Link...I think Business Link in South Yorkshire was exceptional because it had somebody with vision and it had this extra funding to play with. Business Link across the region is very patchy. (UK policy maker 004)

Funding programmes like LEADER specifically incorporate the idea of people as catalysts to change in the employment of 'animateurs' to deliver programme activity. Animateurs<sup>83</sup> work with communities by providing support and advice to local people, businesses and groups to enable them to participate in developing projects to meet local needs. Their role is to help these actors identify key problems and opportunities, articulate their concerns, and formulate appropriate solutions. Through arousing enthusiasm and interest, and imparting particular skills and resources, the participatory practices that animateurs seek to promote can be sustained beyond the life of an individual project, and thus have longer term benefits for an area (Lowe *et al* 1998). Ray (undated: 64) suggests that the animateurs of the LEADER programme can be seen as active agents, reacting to, and learning from, the dynamics of the institutional context. He suggests that even more crucially, they were cognisant, reflexive individuals who sought, however subtly, to influence the nature of the intervention in their

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<sup>83</sup> LEADER specifically calls these workers 'animateurs', their role is similar to community development workers or project officers.



locality. Although LEADER animateurs<sup>84</sup> don't necessarily directly 'make' policy, they have a key role in translating (and remaking) policy into action on the ground, and may even inform policy through their actions (see Lovell 2009 on the role of translating practical work on low carbon housing into government policy).

### ***'Counterproductive' Individuals***

In contrast to the positive experiences associated with some people, working with less enthusiastic people may provoke less positive feelings and may have an impact on subsequent relationships. The clashes between people can compromise businesses and projects; one policy maker who also works within the agricultural industry (further illustrating the arbitrary and artificial separation between policy and delivery) observed that in developing a collaborative project between farmers there was:

a bloody clash between one of my growers and this er person and it blew the whole thing apart! Blew it apart, just like that – boomp! Blew it apart and there was nothing I could do about it, and we've lost that business, now would be trading ten million quid, and we've lost it all because two people! (UK policy maker 002)

Working with others can be challenging, and personalities can be as negative as they can be positive. Impressions of people can affect how the organisation, as well as the individual, is viewed and potential collaboration may be affected as a result. One small business commented graphically on the way that a support organisation that was trying to promote local food businesses had come across to him:

they came across to me as a bunch of fat, ruddy-faced Conservative, Countryside Alliance<sup>85</sup> wankers! (laughs) To put it mildly. (East Yorkshire local food business 003)

My research suggests that individual policy makers can have a huge impact on actions taken, how that is perceived and this in turn reflects back on the overall organisation. Spicker (2006: 25) also notes the scope that officials have to influence policy making and suggests two reasons why this would occur – some want to build their own empire, and others want an easy life. Both of these indicate a negative approach to agenda influencing and the personal motivations of policy makers, not allowing room for more committed individuals working

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<sup>84</sup> The LEADER programme distinguishes between those who deliver the programme (the 'animateurs') and those who have a strategic oversight in making the policy and managing the administration of the programme.

<sup>85</sup> A non-governmental organisation in the UK aligned to private rural landowners.

altruistically. The empirical material here suggests that policy makers consider themselves less selfishly inclined, passionate about issues such as local food and work tirelessly to that end (even if businesses don't see it this way). Spicker (op. cit, p25) quotes Anthony and Young (1984) who list a number of 'ploys' that policy makers utilise to *get their own way*, and whilst this may be the case in some instances I would suggest that more philanthropic approaches may also exist alongside.

People who would not ordinarily be classed as policy makers also campaign for policy change, for example, with the rise of chefs as celebrities, there is the potential for influences beyond the realm of cooking. The recent campaigns of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver have aimed to change food policy regarding school meals, animal welfare, EU fishing policy and so on. They have access to greater resources (including television airtime) and have more weight to achieve their intentions than others and concentrate on hard-hitting agendas, but nonetheless target changes in policy that have an effect at varying scales of the policy-making landscape. For example, in the Big Fish Fight (2011) programmes on Channel 4, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall lobbied the European Union to change the policy on fishing which facilitates discarding good healthy fish, prompting a direct response from the UK Fisheries Minister, Richard Benyon, on the issue. The impact of celebrity chefs can be seen more locally too, for example in relation to being asked about whether local food was seen as a priority with the organisation, the policy maker explained:

Erm, I think it's always been recognised as a priority within the rural development section...we have a lot of agricultural land and a lot of opportunity for, for local produce and because of our tourism sector we also have a lot of opportunity for marketing that produce so I think [my team] have understood those dynamics fairly early on in the game, erm and I think maybe only in the last 3 or so years as the local agenda nationally has become, er people have been more aware of the local food agenda nationally, have we sort of been able to sell the message internally and it to be recognised and understood at a corporate level and I think it really is the Jamie Olivers and the Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstalls that have enabled us to, to break into some of that corporate agenda (Y&H policy maker 001)

For this policy maker, the national profile-raising work of celebrity chefs and others is accredited with enabling the message about local food to be heard within policy making organisations at a local level, moving awareness of local food agendas beyond dedicated teams to the corporate level.

The idea of one core person being critical to the policy making and implementation has been explored in this section. Working with a certain level of commitment and motivation these individuals, operating at a variety of levels from local communities to the national level celebrity chef, have an influential role on the direction of policy. The individual has been shown to often hold greater significance than the organisation they work for, with the organisation being substituted with the name or role of the individual in particular by businesses. The role of such individuals was evidenced in both East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo. The loss of such a person, for a myriad of reasons, could be damaging to the effectiveness and success of a policy or programme. The next section will consider the effect of changes within the policy making terrain that exacerbate the complexities, and as will be shown below, the effect of individuals is important here too.

#### **5.4. Changing policy landscapes**

“constant change, everything changes yeah I mean you know... so you get this total confusion going on because politicians are busy” (UK policy maker 002)

The constantly changing policy making ‘landscape’ adds a layer of complexity and confusion. These changes encompass structural changes such as organisations changing their names, their purpose, reforming into new bodies or complete abolishment, in addition to key members of staff leaving and policies themselves change as new concepts and priorities emerge. These changes can cause confusion and frustration for policy makers themselves, not to mention for businesses and members of the public.

Policy makers are aware of the impacts of such opaqueness and fluidity. For example the representative of a local economic development body suggested that ‘...the producers have been very much...erm well they’ve had support and then it’s gone, and then it’s back again, and I think it’s that continuity that the [organisation] needs to guarantee almost, is that this is the voice for local producers... It’s this stop/start I think that damages... (Y&H policy maker 005) and went on to assert that ‘...it’s very important that you get continuity and that people see it for more than a sort of two or three year lifespan.’ The reference to short time periods in this quote is indicative of short-term funding programmes, political cycles and initiatives as well as changes in personnel. This can be perceived as damaging, people lose interest when the confusion becomes overbearing. In relation to the turnover of staff, it is not necessarily that a particular post was seen as being critical, but that the person occupying the post embodied the characteristics to make the right things happen. Similar experiences were

reported in Italy, for example one policy maker (002) mentioned how the local council was generally supportive of their work but the lack of a continuous relationship with the council meant that it was difficult to take projects forward. Changes in physical landscapes also brought about changes to the policy landscape, as one local food producer in the village of Scanno (005) discussed regarding the April 2009 earthquake in L'Aquila which had worsened already poor working relations between policy institutes and local businesses.

### ***Policies of Confusion***

The changing of organisational structures is regarded by some businesses as being a waste of time and money, and an exercise in keeping people in jobs. The following quote from a farmer in relation to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which saw the Countryside Agency become the Commission for Rural Communities and English Nature become Natural England demonstrates this:

Respondent: That side of them, Natural England they weren't content with English Nature they had to change everything, so the same people have got the same jobs

Interviewer: but a different name?

Respondent: Yeah. It's erm, oh so much wasted money, it's ridiculous... (East Yorkshire Farm Shop 008)

Some policy makers are sympathetic to this view, observing that 'the greatest danger of all this you go down this track, we've been going down this track now for three or four years with the Labour government of course and then next election, decides to chuck it all out so they have a new idea and start it all over again, so the stability is one of the great problems in doing any of this stuff is that politicians only work in short term visions, they don't work in long term strategies so you get this continual waste of effort and energy as you change the damn things round and that really is quite wasteful, it's a major waste' (Y&H policy maker 002 – emphasis added). Many rural development programmes are linked to political cycles or funding programmes, so that just as the effects are beginning to be felt, everything changes. As an illustration, the Making Local Food Work (MLFW) scheme, funded by the Big Lottery Fund, is a five-year programme of support for the local food projects – the Countryside Agency's Eat the View initiative was a similar example. Yet for many businesses in this research this type of support should be ongoing rather than piecemeal, thus challenging the principle of pump-

priming such initiatives so that they will become self-sustaining, public sector bodies subscribe strongly to.

Some reorganisations occur as a result of external influences to the policy process, highlighted most clearly with the national changes from MAFF to Defra in 2001 following the BSE and foot and mouth crises, and the resultant changes coming out of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as this policy maker with experience of working at the national level implies:

I think DEFRA was under a bit of widespread criticism generally, it had been invented as a department and there was a lot of questions about whether the department was organised properly and foot and mouth was part of it, but not particularly...it wasn't much a part of it, it was mainly to do with the big um...quangos like what was then English Nature, what was the Countryside Agency, um...all the levy boards, um...the rural payments side all that. (Y&H policy maker 008)

Continuing on the subject of Defra and policy confusion, part of the reorganisation of MAFF into Defra was intended to deal with the inefficiencies and sprawling mass of MAFF to create a more streamlined, efficient department – Defra (Lowe and Ward 2007). Yet as one policy maker closely involved in delivering a Defra rural development programme describes 'because one of the things at the beginning of the [programme] that DEFRA held their hands up and said we have all this money going all over the place and we don't know where it's going. We don't know what it's doing and we don't know what it is, and they put up a diagram. I've never seen anything like it in terms of the web of...and they by their own admission said we haven't really got a clue what's going on!' (Y&H policy maker 006). Thereby suggesting that the organisational reshuffle had failed to overcome some of the wooliness and chaos inherited from MAFF (see Wilkinson 2011).

Regulation can be viewed as 'policy' and can cause additional confusion, for example, in Italy, some confusion may arise for both producers and consumers in relation to the certification of organic produce. One local business described a situation where organic certification was carried out by private companies (who work with the Ministry of Agriculture but remain separate), some of which specialise in larger companies while others work primarily with smaller businesses, and there are discernible differences between them (Italian local food business 005), suggesting that organic produce may differ subtly (or not) depending on the certifying body (Raynolds *et al* 2007). The same business owner suggested that local produce

could be further exploited in the region if there was greater commitment from the local authorities, but that at the moment there were too many organisations with responsibilities that were fractured and inconsistent which meant it was difficult to work through the 'knots' of bureaucracy.

***Natural chaos – intrinsic disorganisation?***

Following a comment that their 2007-2013 LEADER programme had not yet started, one Italian policy maker suggested that the disorganisation of the Abruzzo regional government was intrinsic and not necessarily related to the earthquake that affected the city of L'Aquila in 2009:

la regione Abruzzo piuttosto terremotata anche indipendentemente disorganizzato dal.... in novembre sei avuto il, le nuove elezione regionale quindi cambiato la governe regionale della sinistra torna della destra quindi stanno cambiando molto regole, e quindi stiamo scondando ritardo davvero incredibile per che siamo solo tre regione in Italia che ancora non sono partite (Italian policy maker 001)

The Abruzzo region (regional government) is quite disorganised regardless of the recent earthquake. In November we had the regional elections and the regional government turned from the left to the right and therefore many regulations changed. And therefore [in relation to the start of the LEADER programme] we are incredibly late and one of only three regions in Italy that have not yet started (author's translation)

Many regional governments in Italy were seen as being more organised, whereas the Abruzzo region was presented as being particularly disorganised. For one Abruzzo business, this slowness to implement the programme was frustrating, something which she felt she would not experience if her business was located in another region:

Intervistric: In terms of you, you mentioned the PSR (Piano Sviluppo Rurale – Rural Development Plan), have you had any money through anything like that or LEADER...

Appellata: Erm I participate in the PSR to put irrigation in vineyard and to buy a little part of machine to vineyard but I don't know for the irrigation if I've been successful yet, I am waiting, for this reason I am very sorry because this PSR start 2007-2013 ma! We spent the money, a lot of money because we have ci siamo prenotati (we

registered our interest), we have a booking in 2007, but I don't know when the money, if the money, will come through. And we are sorry because in another region it would be different.

Intervistric: Was it quite hard to apply for the money?

Appellata: Oh, it's difficult to, because the bureaucracy, a lot of forms, a lot of things I think that no people (sic) read!

LEADER is specifically intended to be a programme which encourages innovation and experimentation, and associated with that is the intention to be relatively easy to access the funding and support. However, this Italian business-owner describes experiences which are at odds with this. For her, the bureaucracy in getting the rural development plan ready to deliver was not compatible with the needs of her business, and so she had had to implement her plans and was hoping that the money would come through eventually.<sup>86</sup> Some organisations possess inherent complexity within them as a result of the breadth of the ranges of services they are responsible for (local authorities in particular) or by their very size, as this quote from a policy maker demonstrates:

...then we started to look at which elements of the local authority would erm would be using local produce so that would maybe be around social services with care homes and etc, and obviously schools and there again we come into governance issues because schools and some care homes have individual governance so they have their own sort of procurement methodologies within those as well so you have to get down to each different tier really to work out how you can best tackle those... (Y&H policy maker 001)

Public procurement is often cited as a way that public sector organisations can support and stimulate local food economies (see Sonnino 2009 and Morgan 2008), yet some organisations are not keeping abreast of such developments. The frequent changing of organisational names can be difficult for some to keep abreast of. One policy maker stumbled over the right name for what used to be known as the tourist board: '...involved with VHEY<sup>87</sup>, which is our...area tourism partnership...is that the right word for them at the moment? Yeah DMO,

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<sup>86</sup> Many funding programmes only fund projects where the work has not yet taken place, which can prove difficult for private sector bodies working to different timescales.

<sup>87</sup> Visit Hull and East Yorkshire (VHEY) the destination marketing organisation for the sub-region.

destination management organisation in the area tourism, well we know (laugh) what we're talking about don't we?' (Y&H policy maker 001)

It is not only organisations that change their names, but programmes for delivering grants and funding are also subject to change, for example the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2000-2006 became the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) for the period 2007-2013, which sometimes is also referred to as the Rural Development Programme (dropping the 'England') which is the same name as the programme delivered by the Rural Development Commission during the 1980s and 1990s. Not surprisingly this leads to confusion, especially where acronyms are used, as one policy maker highlights in discussing a programme of farm support:

Respondent:...It's what we call, it's a programme called FREP, I can never ever remember, Farm Resource Efficiency Programme.

Interviewer: OK.

Respondent: That's it! [Laughter] (Y&H policy maker 003)

And another confused the acronyms relating to the European Union's policy on protecting regional foods<sup>88</sup>, the acronyms are easy to muddle up: 'we can't...we are still talking about you know...PG, PDF or...no that's something else!' (Y&H policy maker 004). In addition to the multitude of acronyms, as highlighted here, the actual language of policy-making can be complex and exclusionary, adopting its own specific vocabulary, as will be illustrated below with reference to a 'new geographical vocabulary'. Business respondents also indicated a level of confusion as regards policy making bodies, although this was not necessarily as a result of changing frameworks and organisations, but in relation to not *needing* to know the detail of which body is involved, just where they can get help:

We're just er, I've been in touch with erm, Yorkshire, no not Yorkshire Forward, Deliciously...? (East Yorkshire Farm shop 007)

The farmer below knows the specific person, but not who they work for:

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<sup>88</sup> Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) all stem from the European regulation 2081/1992.



yes, it's through meetings with them we got a good chap and we, he came up with ideas and erm it's sort of through them or was it through FARMA...I forget whether... not sure whether it's through the food group or FARMA that we do that (East Yorkshire Farm Shop 008)

And another farmer knew that the funding they had received had been critical, but the split between capital and revenue funding<sup>89</sup> meant that she was unsure which organisation has provided which:

We got a grant from Growing Routes, and we got another grant from Yorkshire Forward, one was for towards capital costs and the other was towards training and advertising...I can't remember which was which, I think the Growing Routes one was for capital costs, and the Yorkshire Forward was for the other. (East Yorkshire Producer 019)

These businesses had successfully negotiated support for their work, and had acknowledged in many cases that the support was critical to moving their businesses forward. Despite this, they couldn't always recall the source of the support. For some businesses even accessing help and support seemed out of their reach. For some this was due to the funding not supporting what they want to do:

You know, there's a new Yorkshire Forward grant just come out, £3000 for, what the hell did they describe it as? Oh, it's a grant we can use to erm do, cholesterol tests of our lamb, to do erm oh all sorts of things, to do focus groups and everything else, so it's come out of Yorkshire Forward, and the people that are going to do all this testing for yer is DeliciouslyYorkshire! It's only going round and round to keep them all in bloody jobs! (East Yorkshire producer 014)

This farmer emphasised not only that he couldn't get funding for something that would have been of more use but also what he sees as the self-supporting nature of some public sector bodies. On other occasions the funding criteria are seen to exclude the same farmer due to an emphasis on business expansion:

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<sup>89</sup> Capital and revenue are important splits in funding for funding bodies, which limit what the funding can be spent on. Revenue tends to relate to training and jobs, whereas capital funding is for 'things' like buildings and equipment.

because we are genuine producers who probably can't expand, probably can't do any more, we are completely forgotten about, which is crackers when we are the ones who technically, you think it's all about, yeah, the genuine producer is the one who you know go for a grant to create more jobs, we can't do it, we can't create more jobs, yeah (East Yorkshire producer 014)

For many who described themselves as 'true' or 'authentic' local producers there was seen to be a threshold beyond which they would compromise their localness in the name of business growth, thus creating a tension between remaining local or growing the business. Comments such as these concur with Murdoch *et al's* (2002) observation that local producers must combine embeddedness and disembeddedness in rather complicated ways.

In the Italian research phase, a number of respondents mentioned the need for a '*raccomandazione*' (or recommendation) in order to access funds or advance in one's business (e.g. Italian local food business 005). Whilst this doesn't relate specifically to organisational chaos or a complexity of different terms and jargon as such, it was reported as stifling certain people and businesses from progressing. This clientelism was also reported by one policy maker as impacting on the application of policies and programmes from the European level in the Italian context (Italian policy maker 005), as the people 'controlling' the policies interpreted them in a way that would benefit their friends or people who would vote for them in the next election.

### ***A New Geographical Vocabulary***

The changing landscape of rural development and local food policies is uneven across the country and occurs at varying spatial levels, as initiatives, organisations and funding varies by region in response to the shifting nature of state institutions, political strategies and the scales at which these operate (Pemberton and Goodwin 2008). A whole vocabulary of scale-related terms exists and frequent changes of terminology are not uncommon. Recent terms include sub-national, sub-regional, city regions and so on. Speaking to the following policy maker, working in economic development and talking about the development of workspace for local food businesses, it was easy to confuse the regional name with the sub-regional name, indicating a spatial mismatch that makes delivery and evaluation that much harder:

...we looked to Yorkshire Forward for some funding and undertook a feasibility study and it was identified that there was demand with the Yorkshire and Humber area...sorry the Hull and East Riding area... (Y&H policy maker 005)

Some strategies can have more than one term applied to them, for example the Hull and Humber Ports City Region,<sup>90</sup> operates at a city region level and the city region covers parts of the sub-region as well as numerous local authority administrative areas. And whilst initiatives like the city region might be sub-regional, other initiatives and partnerships that feed into the city region partnership are not:

there is still this agenda to do with...at local authority level to do with local strategic partnerships, local area agreements, which weren't sub regional. (Y&H policy maker 006)

And as with the point made earlier about certain policy themes being in favour at given times, the same can be said of spatial terminologies. As one spatial level comes to be seen as more important, other levels can be written out. The following quote, from a policy maker who regularly works at a range of levels locally, sub-regionally and regionally, shows that organisations start to prioritise:

what actually happened, as the sub regional agenda strengthened you found that representatives from regional bodies were only prepared to come down to sub regional level um...so some of the people like Natural England, or the old Countryside Agency who would have sat on [the county level] rural partnership were sort of saying well we can't afford to come to both, and really we can only afford to engage at the sub regional [Humber<sup>91</sup>] level. So they would take the seats on the sub regional partnership (Y&H policy maker 006)

Equally, terms can embody different meanings for different people, dependent on their own spatial level (see Harvey *et al* 2011 for a discussion). For example in a national level review, 'local' was positioned as regional, whereas to many people 'local' would be county level or below as this comment from a local level policy maker emphasises:

...he [Haskins] also made an awful big, big play of devolving delivery down to the local level because the local level knows the local area best. And what I think happened, either deliberately or otherwise, was that, was that...what I think happened, was that if you were sitting in Westminster then local to you was the regions... And I think there

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<sup>90</sup> Ward and Lowe (2007) have written about the impacts of the increasing policy emphasis on urban / city areas and the potential for 'writing out the rural'.

<sup>91</sup> The Humber sub-region covers urban and rural areas, and includes 3 unitary authorities and one city council, north and south of the river Humber.

was a muddle at the end of the day. I think what Lord Haskins meant was devolving it down to the local level to local authority levels...Where I think it went wrong as I say either deliberately or otherwise was that...um...it...local was interpreted as the regional level. (Y&H policy maker 006)

Some spatial levels are viewed as being better than others for certain types of policy making and delivery, especially rural policy, and that some countries are better than others at dealing with this, as one policy maker commented:

But at...on local issues there is a big void; [the UK government] don't really know how to do it. The Local Government Association they do sort of consult with..., but the Local Government Association would say that an awful lot of it is lip service consultation. And uh...so the policy making is pretty ragged um...most countries deal with rural stuff particularly, overwhelmingly at local level, that's the right way to do it, we don't. (UK policy maker 008)

The changing vocabulary and terminologies associated with rural development is not limited to geographical scales, but can also be seen in organisational name changes, funding programmes, associated targets and outcomes, all of which become abbreviated to acronyms which might not necessarily be easily demarcated. Specific terminologies for managing such policies and programmes can be quite specific, for example in monitoring performance against targets and performance indicators 'balanced scorecards' have now become 'dashboards', perhaps resulting in language that can be exclusionary.

Thinking about how the various levels that policy operates at is not easy. During one interview, a local level public sector policy maker started explaining a model of rural development policy relationships that had been outlined in response to delivering a programme of activity on the ground locally. They outlined how this related to policies and implementation at varying scales, from local and sub-regional, to regional, national and European and the relationships between these bodies. It was represented on paper as a neat, linear process, but in verbally describing the detail of the paper-based model it became increasingly clear that the reality was complicated and disordered, illustrating the non-linearity of policy-making in practice. As mentioned at the start of the chapter, this is another example where defining and describing something that at first seemed straightforward, but translating it verbally becomes more complicated and difficult, with the result being a 'stuttering' (Phillips 2004) over the concept (policy relationships here). She started by outlining how the different

scales related to one another, from counties and regions to the supranational level (European Community), and the partnerships and organisations, policies and strategies operating at each scale, which sometimes overlap or contradict one another:

This local rural activity that was where you connected with the LSPs<sup>92</sup> and LAAs<sup>93</sup> on this side of the river. So...if you like that's European, that's most grassroots, that's East Yorkshire at the top, Northern Lincolnshire at the bottom but both the same, with their own mechanisms for feeding into the LAAs and LSPs. And in the middle here, you had your...your... um...strategic delivery mechanism, the connection between the policy bit...yeah...European...so think about it as linear, from European to grassroots, North Lincolnshire, no that's the East Riding, North Lincolnshire, so you've got your European national rural policies and strategies there, regional and rural policy strategy and delivery frameworks there, so that if you like is where you capture the high level thinking. OK...

And that in addition the more grassroots groups like market towns and community groups need to be incorporated:

...and at this end you've got your...the agreed areas, spheres of influence, target issues, investment programme, agreed local delivery, Leader Approach, because of course [the] LEADER approach is very high profile. That's rural erm...market towns and community partnerships, voluntary, private sector, quality parish and town councils so that's where that was all captured and through here it goes into a local rural development strategy and that could be like a Leader development plan really...

Thereby illustrating that how different spatial scales relate to, and work with, one another is complicated and that each level can have separate rural development policies, strategies and partnerships (for example the European Union's LEADER Programme or the Countryside Agency's Market Towns Initiative) makes the process even more opaque. The importance and popularity of the LEADER approach to rural development is rearticulated here. And that bringing all this together into a coherent structure is quite difficult to articulate and navigate:

...and it's a two-pronged thing, that captures...that captures all of this local stuff and it feeds it through...through the East Riding Rural Partnership into...ultimately into this

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<sup>92</sup> Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

<sup>93</sup> Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

and the same on the other side, but it also links into LSPs, LAAs and this middle bit here is the sub regional rural...sorry no that's...yeah...that's...that's the higher level stuff. This is where you capture the higher level stuff, sub regional rural board, in line with regional rural framework and practices, and it commissions investment...And that case is supported by this locally fed stuff, and then here you have...if you like ... strategic delivery which isn't the actual doing but it's to make sure that the doing is joined up and sustainable. (Y&H policy maker 006)

The complexity of this strategic map of relationships and responsibilities relating to rural development policy became apparent in her description, which she suggested initially was 'linear' but seems far from linear in the detail. The messiness and ambiguity of the model suggests that the neat policy making models introduced at the start of this chapter are not adequate to deal with the experiences of the policy makers involved in my research.

It is not therefore just changes in the policy-making landscape but also the very nature of some organisations which makes untangling who does what a complex and time-consuming task. The constant, or seemingly constant, changes affect whether particular concepts are in favour or not leaving people feeling confused and frustrated, including those already involved in policy making and those not. The complexity and messiness of local food and rural development policy making in the two case study areas has been demonstrated from discussions with both policy makers and businesses. The next section will address the complexity of where rural development policy ideas emerge from and how they can sometimes get lost within the constant movement back and forth between different scales of policy making and between different partners.

### **5.5. Policy Transfer, Embeddedness and Leaching**

Policy transfer, emulation and lesson-drawing all refer to processes in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place (Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 344). Political science literatures discuss 'policy transfer theory' and suggest that it is a distinct and separate contribution to the study of the policy process (Hill 2005: 88). Hill goes on to observe that a great deal of effort is put into policy transfer as national policy makers cast around to see what occurs elsewhere when designing their own policies. For example, Lovell (2009) highlights the UK government's desire to replicate policy success in one locality to the national level with reference to low carbon

housing. Hill (2005) asserts that policy transfer is indisputable, but that it leaves questions about how decisions are made to accept or reject ideas from elsewhere. Marsden (2009) notes that the process of sharing best practice between different areas cannot be assumed to be unproblematic. Instead, ideas from other areas might perhaps provide some initial building blocks from which to develop ideas rather than being copied exactly. Spicker (2006: 24) describes the process of setting policy agendas in the UK national government, and suggests that even where Committees (Parliamentary select committees for example) are involved in making the rules, the importance of the executive (government or the civil service) cannot be understated, as they often control the agenda and implementation of policies. He suggests (p25) that some ideas and policies may never reach implementation at all as a result of a 'pocket veto' in which policies fall without any opposition at all. However, I want to examine not the policies that never become, but the ones that do reach implementation but which then later evaporate or diminish – I have termed this 'policy leaching' to indicate how themes and ideas can leach out of the policy making imagination and almost disappear without explanation. In addition, the next section will look at the role of interpretation of policy at different spatial scales and how this can affect the actual outcomes of those particular policies.

### ***Sharing best practice – policy transfer***

The process of policy transfer, like the so-called process of policy making, is also assumed to be a singular process that is tangible and definable. Ward (2006) specifically discusses the transfer of policies relating to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Ward (2006) adopts Peck's (2003) notion of 'policy in motion'<sup>94</sup> to examine the transfer (or translation – see Rose 1999) of BIDs from the US policy context to that of the UK. Whilst the BID policy is not relevant to rural development and local food, the broader underlying theme is that of neoliberalism – he talks specifically about the neoliberalisation of urban spaces but also of the ways that officials involved in policy making have adopted a more entrepreneurial approach to their work. This entrepreneurial discourse stems from the New Labour government's twin policy frameworks of the Urban and Rural White Papers (HMSO 2000), but continues the trend from the Thatcher government towards neoliberalism and enterprise as policy discourses, as set out in Chapter 2. Thus policy transfer can be both spatial and temporal.

In rural development in the UK, organisations like the Countryside Agency and latterly the Commission for Rural Communities made the sharing of best practice a key concept in policy

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<sup>94</sup> Peck's (2003) thesis of policy in motion could be taken to mean the various incarnations of a policy, from the original idea to implementation and through to review and the changes associated with those phases (i.e. that policy is in a constant mode of becoming), but it could also refer to the movement of policies from one area / theme / country to another (policy transfer).

circles. Regular reports commenting on what has worked in other places and how it could be shared with other areas were produced, for example around community shops, rural transport, parish planning and so on. The Making Local Food Work programme has produced a series of guides citing case studies of what others have done in establishing local food projects such as community food shops to highlight how others can learn from (and replicate) them. The production of toolkits and other guides are commonplace too, and SUSTAIN and the Soil Association have produced such documents for local food projects in the UK, such as the recently released toolkit for Community Supported Agriculture schemes (Soil Association 2010). Certain partnerships and organisations work specifically to achieve this:

the er my function at the [partnership] is to spread that good practice around other places and to make sure that [how one area did it] can be taken on the Leeds City Region, to the er Sheffield City Region and say look you need to build this [rural] hinterland connection in lads, in the system...that's what we are there for. (Y&H policy maker 002)

The LEADER programme specifically encourages the sharing of best practice through dedicated 'observatories' established to facilitate such sharing. The role of case studies can be instrumental for policy makers to help spread awareness of both their policies and the intended modes of operation. This can be a problematic process, and may even stifle new ways of doing things unless the case studies are seen as illustrative rather than prescriptive. In Italy, one policy maker talked about how case studies had been used to promote multifunctionality as a concept to Italian farmers:

Appellata: sì, multifunzionalità, sì, questo è fondamentale, sì

Intervistric: è il livello europeo il principale promotore per questa idea?

Appellata: diciamo che, erm, esistono della realtà più o meno avanzate al livello europeo, e quindi quando all'inizio poco, mo, sembrare soltanto case studio comunque modelli, poi per il piano diventano parte integrate di modelli di sviluppo...perche la comunità europea ha una, diciamo un'osservatoria cos tante su...poi diventano anche si striducono

Respondent: yes, multifunctionality, yes, this is fundamental, yes.

Interviewer: has the impetus come from the EU?



Respondent: we say that, erm, in reality, more or less, coming from the European level, and at the outset there only seemed to be case studies and models, bit by bit these ideas become integrated into the model of development in the Plan... so from case studies they become part of the, if they worked properly they can become the model to follow. The European community has a, we say an observatory to advise on these things, best practice. (author's translation)

This example shows how policy makers can circulate ideas about best practice by setting up observatories and other bodies to specifically promote case studies and the sharing of best practice. This approach is a core part of the LEADER programme, but this policy maker above also suggests that the EU's commitment to multifunctionality has also been promoted across Member States.

### ***Examples of Policy Transfer***

Farmers' markets can be seen to exemplify policy transfer. In 1997 a Local Agenda 21 (LA21) officer working for Bath and North East Somerset Council read an article on farmers' markets in the USA and followed this up with the author, leading to the successful establishment of a farmers' market in Bath in 1997 (Kirwan 2003: 33). For many people, farmers' markets are one of the most visible symbols of alternative or local food networks, and have received significant press coverage (Kirwan 2003). During my own research, several people mentioned ideas that had been 'transferred' from the European Union or the national UK government down to the more local level (policy transfer can be a two-way process as governments and other organisations learn from innovative grassroots activities<sup>95</sup>). These ideas may be entirely new to policy *per se* as a result of academic research, or new to the area that they have 'transferred' to by sharing practices with other countries, or even both, as is the case with 'clusters' as a model of economic development. The policy maker below responded to a question about whether local food was a priority for her organisation with a reference to clusters:

five...five years ago I think. As a council it obviously always supported its food industry, but there was a move towards concentrating on clusters. (Y&H policy maker 005)

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<sup>95</sup> The innovations studies literature draws on the development of innovative work at a grassroots and niche level and how this influences (or not) the broader regime – see Smith (Smith, A. 2003 and 2006) for examples relating to organic food.

Policy transfer can occur as a result of funding programmes, like the European Union's LEADER programme which specifically promotes the transfer of ideas from one programme area to another, through 'transnational cooperation' projects, which can be between areas in one country or between different nations. However, the LEADER programme is based on applying a blanket approach (the LEADER method) to rural development in many parts of the European Union encouraging certain ways of working, including knowledge transfer between areas. There is, therefore, a tension between applying a top-down universal approach which encourages innovation and experimentation at the grass-roots level, and in encouraging the sharing of best practice from other areas when experimentation adapted to local conditions is promoted. Some areas are better equipped to deal with this approach of flexibility, innovation and experimentation than others. An Italian policy maker with experience of LEADER in the L'Aquila province of the Abruzzo region suggested that although the programme was a good tool for supporting local food projects, many people in that area were not ready for the idea of cooperation, that it was premature for that area:

io vede LEADER, sì, è un'ottimo strumento e forse è prematuro per la cooperazione locale, tanti non sono ancora preparati per utilizzare al meglio anche lo strumento cooperazione (Italian policy maker 001)

I see LEADER, yes, as an excellent tool, and perhaps it is premature in terms of local cooperation, as very many are not yet ready to make the most of these instruments of cooperation (author's translation)

As a result some areas are not able to work with partner organisations in other LEADER areas to transfer knowledge, while some areas are well suited to it, perhaps due to previous experience of such programmes (Pèrez 2000).

The idea of 'clusters' as a way of promoting business growth, interaction and partnership began to be promoted through funding programmes like the Regional Development Agency's Single Programme, which led to implementation on the ground, as demonstrated by the economic development policy maker above. Clusters as a model of economic development were influenced by the successes of Silicon Valley and Wall Street (Porter 1998: 78). Porter also suggests that broadly 'clusters represent a new way of thinking about location, challenging much of the conventional wisdom about how companies should be configured, how institutions such as universities can contribute to competitive success and how governments can promote economic development and prosperity'. Writing twelve years ago,

Porter (1998) specifically recommended that governments incorporate ideas of clustering into their economic development policies to increase innovation, growth and competitiveness. Whilst there are academic critics of the cluster approach (see for example Storper 1997) this has not thwarted the political uptake of the concept. The EU's food protection schemes, referred to earlier, contribute to ideas of clustering, as companies are granted special status for producing a certain product in a certain area, such as Champagne in France or the Rhubarb Triangle in Yorkshire, leading to clusters of particular types of products in a specific area. These schemes have been described as a form of local territorial protectionism designed to prevent specialist and place specific products becoming generic (Ilbery *et al* 2002), a position not lost on the following policy maker:

they are a mixed...a mixed blessing and I got...I used to get really tetchy about...because we supported the Melton Mowbray pork pie campaign for example, well actually I don't, I didn't think it was quite sort focussed enough to justify its...um...like you know the West Yorkshire Rhubarb people are doing it but actually that's going to...if they work with that then I mean...what might benefit the West Yorkshire triangle...might actually be a disadvantage to a perfectly legitimate rhubarb producer, you know ten miles outside their triangle sort of thing. (UK policy maker 004)

In Italy, although the country is often cited as having a concentration of PDO and PGI designations, their existence is uneven throughout the country. In my research in the Abruzzo, a number of policy makers referred to the resources needed to attain such status. These resources were often beyond the reach of small producers, despite their products being of at least comparable, if not superior, quality, and as one policy maker said getting such a marque is not a magic wand to guarantee success (Italian policy maker 003). In fact, Bowen and De Master's (2011) research into these marques found that in some instances (for example the Polish Oscypek cheese) the codification process necessary to achieve PDO status has fundamentally changed the content and the processes of producing the cheese in favour of scaling up production to achieve greater market share, so that the original diverse systems of producing the cheese were marginalised.

New directions in policy and thinking can also transpire from changing political situations. For example, food security<sup>96</sup> has recently emerged as a priority and was not on the radar five years

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<sup>96</sup> Although generally from the research data food security was mentioned by very few people, it is something that is currently receiving academic interest and policy interest (for example a session called

ago. Food security has risen up the political agenda in response to a combination of events, during 2007/08 that led to food shortages and riots in some countries such as Haiti (Smith and Edwards 2008; The Ecologist 2008). One respondent highlighted the rapidity with which food security had become a political priority:

The [organisation], er I was going to say we were formed in 1907 and we had our centenary in 2007 and we were at that centenary talking about food security, and um David Milliband who was the minister [of Defra] then sort of said don't talk rubbish, you know it's not an issue. And sort of...twelve months later it's started to be discussed in political circles so we were feeling rather superior that we were up on the food security issues ahead of DEFRA. (UK policy maker 004)

As a term, food security means different things to different people, and can be interpreted in a variety of ways, leading to further confusion.<sup>97</sup> One respondent outlined the divergent ways that food security is being interpreted:

I mean I think that the erm, Hilary Benn has been talking about food security at the Oxford Farming Conference and one or two other places and I think...I think there's erm his view of food security and you know the average British farmer's view of food security and what he's talking about is different. I think Hilary Benn was talking about making sure that we can still import you know green beans from Kenya or something. And I think when we talk about food security we're thinking hang on these green beans can be grown here and people have got to accept an element of seasonality and that they've got to eat parsnips and turnips and cabbage in the winter, you know they can't have green beans all the year round. (laughs) (Y&H policy maker 004)

In addition to these interpretations, Kneafsey (2010) also reported interpretations linked to terrorism and security of supply. On occasions, national policies are not keeping pace with changes on the ground and the identification of new priorities, for example the way that food production and food security have rapidly risen up the agenda, having knock-on effects for policies that were already in gestation with relation to flooding, as illustrated by one regional policy maker:

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Food Security at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference in 2010 and specifically a paper presented by Kneafsey ('Consumer perceptions of 'food security': perspectives from the UK' and recent reports from Chatham House (2009) and the Royal Society (2009))

<sup>97</sup> This is not only an issue with food security, but a range of other concepts such as 'sustainable development' are open to varying interpretations.

And you know we will...we are having to deal with the Water Framework Directive and um...the whole nitrates thing. We are dealing with um...the Environment Agency and you know this, the flooding in East Yorkshire, it's very topical. Um...you know...you have to feel a bit sorry for the Environment Agency because you know there's some bright young graduate is sitting in their office in Leeds writing this...this plan for East Yorkshire which ticks all the boxes in theory but didn't actually sort of engage in it in any sort of practical way. Um...and you know um...five years ago when the skeletons for these things were drawn up nobody cared a damn about food production. (Y&H policy maker 004)

This highlights not only the speed of change but also the concept of policy makers as being distant and out of touch with experiences locally, in addition to a common perception of bureaucracy and tick box exercises sometimes viewed as symptomatic of policy-makers and bureaucrats, views that can obviously be found amongst policy makers as well as businesses. Another respondent also referred to the Environment Agency's policies on flood management 'but the er Environment Agency now not always letting, if fields are flooded they're not always letting farmers pump you know cos they're saving Castleford and Leeds you see.' (East Yorkshire producer 016). Both of these quotes demonstrate the contentions and unintended consequences that surround policy, in this instance between flood management and food production and rural land versus urban land. Despite some policy priorities emerging and changing rapidly, others, once formulated, can have a lasting prominence, and the next section will address this.

### ***Policy Embeddedness***

Once proposed, however, some ideas established in policy can take root and remain instrumental in future thinking about developments. The discourse of farm diversification stemming from the Thatcher government in the 1980s remained influential in funding programmes such as the Rural Development Commission's Rural Development Programme into the 2000s, and UK policy statements for example the PPS7 on Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (HMSO 2004), which states that farm diversification should be encouraged by planning authorities. Two respondents suggested that it was this discourse of diversification that prompted new directions for their farms:

when I was thinking about starting it, erm, er it was in the Thatcher years and she was shouting we should all diversify – if you can't make money out of farming, diversify, and er anyway I put planning in for a farm shop and they told me you could only sell

what you produced on the farm. Which, that was no good to me, cos nobody's gonna come and buy a bottle of milk and nothing else like, they wouldn't put a shop up for a bottle of milk. (East Yorkshire Farm shop 007)

When farming got that it was on a, very dodgy, money, it was going down, your profits were going down – you had to look elsewhere to diversify. Well a lot of people went into holiday cottages and things like that, you know, but we started off with something like a hundred geese, me and my husband for a trial run one year, we just sort of started with a 100, I think the next year we had 250 and after that it just sort of snowballed, went up and up (East Yorkshire Producer 012)

For the first respondent above, the discord between national level policy on farm diversification and the local level interpretation of the policy caused difficulties in executing it on the ground. The diversification schemes that these farmers discuss here have subsequently become their main business, but, importantly, they have continued to farm and to maintain a connection to farming (see Evans *et al* 2002 on diversification and farming).

Another concept that the EU has used to protect regional foods are the PDOs, PGIs and TSGs mentioned earlier, which are based on a broader adoption of the French system of Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) (Ilbery *et al* 2005: 118). The transfer and translation of these marques has evolved in conjunction with other policies and directives to produce some unintended as well as intended consequences, as this next section will show. For example, many smaller businesses find that the resources required to go through the process of applying for such a label are prohibitive. A policy maker in Italy suggested that no businesses in the local area had applied for PDO or PGI due to the need for a critical mass of companies and the high cost of applying (Italian policy maker 003), despite countries like Italy and France generally being seen as having great numbers of such designations (Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000: 319). Another Italian policy maker reiterated the point:

Appellata: ...perchè anche la denominazione d'origine protetta (DOP) ha bisogno di una massa critica, c'è di un grosso quantitativo [di produttore], perche comunque costosa, ci voglio un consorzio di tote, come la parmeggiano reggiano'

Intervistricce: quindi non è efficace?

Appellata: non, sempre un operazione commerciale si serve per proteggere magari

prodotti di qualità ma di ampia scala, come parmeggiano reggiano ecco un proprio un tipico esempio...mai la, la piccola produzione si qual tutelare soltanto con prodotto tipico, c'è con i riconoscimento della specificità locale, proprio local food importante proprio (Abruzzo policy maker 001)

Respondent: ... also because the protected denomination of origin (PDO) needs a critical mass, a large quantity [of producers], because it is very expensive and you need a wealthy consortium like parmesan (parmigiano reggiano)

Interviewer: so it's not an effective policy approach?

Respondent: No, it is usually a commercial operation producing quality products that are protected, where they can scale up their operation, parmesan would be a typical example...but the, the small producers who need protection for typical products, who need the local recognition, local food is really important (author's translation)

As well as PDO and PGI being difficult for small producers to attain, other European laws have also affected small producers, for example the processing of foods threatened the survival of foods produced in a traditional way, for example using milk that had not been pasteurised, and therefore requiring innovative local level responses:

per spiegati quando sciorono le normative sulla, sulla erm sulla comunità, della comunità europea sui prodotti agrialimentari non lo sicurezza agrialimentare er praticamente obbligatorio pastorizzare latte, obbligatorio tante cose...prodotto tradizionale non si fanno. Allora scatto l'emergenza prodotto tipico, e quindi tutti gli stati membri trovaro non accordo che poteva essere utile creare gli atlante di prodotti tipici per ogni regione... e quindi quest'atlante dei prodotti tipici d'Abruzzo, dove c'è un formaggio, un canestrato, fatto mano, ok l'aglio rosso di Sulmona, lo zafferano, e carciofi, ecc. ecc. e questo ha consentito ecco di lavorare ancora ma ne tradizionale altrimenti sarebbero spadizi tutti no? (Italian policy maker 001)

We see this when we look at the regulations of the European Community on agricultural products they don't safeguard foods – you are practically obliged to pasteurise milk and obliged to do many other things, traditional products can't do this. This created a problem for the emergence of typical products (local foods), all the member states could not agree, and therefore to overcome this and offer typical

products some protection regions in Italy produce an atlas of local foods, showcasing products from the area, such the cheeses made by hand [produced in a particular way, placed in baskets that give the surface a banded structure], saffron, red garlic and artichokes of the Abruzzo, because if we don't protect these traditions they will be lost. (author's translation)

In Italy, these regional atlases of typical products have provided a way for smaller producers to overcome the European legislation to protect local products, as when products are listed in the atlases as having special qualities they can be exempted from the EC laws. By identifying a loophole in the legislation, Italian regions have been able to protect local level food and farming businesses that are seen as important in Italian food and farming culture in spite of supranational (EU) level policy. However, it is the products themselves, rather than individual producers, that are listed in these atlases so they cannot be used by individual businesses for marketing. Another policy maker in Italy working specifically with olive oil producers in the Sulmona area stated that having a European PGI or PDO did not necessarily equate to a higher quality product, and that some smaller producers were making excellent products but could not afford, time or money, to apply for such status

With regard to European legislation, some consumers<sup>98</sup> were aware of the impacts that changing legislation could have on local food producers, with specific reference being made to the rules surrounding abattoirs and slaughterhouses:

Well Charters' meat is their, I don't think, I think they buy from local sources, cos he used to have a slaughterhouse there, and it was all, and then it got EU rulings sort of everybody, so erm all that, he said that he would upgrade his slaughterhouse if all the other butchers would agree to send their you know their animals to him to slaughter so that it would pay its way, but I don't know if that still works... (FG3)

Taking such a blanket approach to legislation can cause complications and friction at the national or regional level. Having looked at the ways that some policies transferred (or translated) across spaces and boundaries, the next section will take what I have called 'policy leaching' – the loss of policy initiatives or ideas, from policy realms, which can occur either before, during or after implementation.

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<sup>98</sup> Although some consumers did talk about policy, it was not something that most of the consumers were comfortable talking about. The next chapter will explore consumers' view more thoroughly.



### ***Policy Leaching***

In contrast to how new ideas enter the policy arena, it is interesting to consider how some ideas become obscured from view, despite apparent successes and commitment to the ideas. During the research interviews it became clear that some ideas and concepts were being lost without people really knowing why – it may be that a core person moves on, or that another policy direction gains greater political weight, but there also seemed to be instances of good ideas just disappearing inexplicably. I have termed this ‘policy leaching’, and several examples demonstrate how people linked into policy communities were unclear as to why something didn’t continue or was lost from view. Not only do policy themes and ideas get lost, but I also came across examples of more structural losses in the form of committees and organisations responsible for rural development and local food policy making disappearing. For example, talking to a prominent local rural development ambassador about his involvement in the COSIRA<sup>99</sup> organisation

Yes I mean er I was asked to be the last Chairman of COSIRA from within about six months in 1988 it then packed up and reverted to being the Rural Development Commission erm I don’t know why, it was a parliamentary decision so er erm anyway I don’t know why it happened (laughs) (Y&H policy maker 012)

And another policy maker was hazy regarding the reasons for a change in the structure of a local development partnership, suggesting reasons for the loss from a government initiative to the loss of an officer, but that either way the result was a change in the partnership structure and subsequent policy:

also although we got those working groups set up to start delivering something happened and for the life of me I can’t remember what, but there will have been some government initiative or somebody will have left here and I’m not... you know but things changed. And...all but the agriculture group disappeared and re-emerged in...or you know you might lose the chair because he had decided he had enough, you know? (Y&H policy maker 006)

Even with examples of structural changes like the loss of a committee or organisation, it could also be down to one person, as in the case described here by a Y&H policy maker where the motivations of a key stakeholder changed and that affected the whole direction of the Rural Pathfinder’s legacy:

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<sup>99</sup> Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas.

I think...well I think it's like a lot of things you see, you...there's...so much in life is um...so much in life is about personalities, individuals, and I think [he] without...without a shadow of a doubt thought DEFRA have benefited and wanted to keep that linkage going and one of the recommendations in the...report was that that linkage with local authorities through some sort of...family or network or something should be kept going. Now when he went and the personnel changes during [the programme] were quite massive...and just one girl in the end, but she...she wrote around I would say...six months ago now about this national network asking for sort of names etc. And then I think it just died a death, I don't know what happened to it.... So...I think what I'm saying is its...I mean it's like anywhere you know? Things changed with personalities. (Y&H policy maker 006)

The loss of the core person driving the policy initiative meant that the overall impetus for the programme was also lost, and without his drive the programme collapsed. The end of funding programmes and projects can mean the loss of the progress that was made during the scheme, as the momentum is lost without the financial and human resources to drive it forward. One policy maker recalled an externally funded programme that she saw as being particularly effective and innovative in getting farmers to work together:

Well because they...they got them interested in something that was directly relevant to them like spraying and fertilisers, and crop management, because initially these people just saw themselves as ploughers and sowers you know farmers.... And then because you had got them together and you can spend time with them you can then start talking to them about contracts, and marketing, and all those other things which actually you know...aren't...the highest priority for the farmer.... ...but...there isn't the resource to replicate it... that was...that was a programme that finished last year...that sort of thing could never happen again. (Y&H policy maker 004)

Despite UK farmers perhaps seeing themselves primarily as farmers and growers a number of Italian respondents were clear that farming had become more business-like and programmes of diversification meant that farmers were now running multi-faceted businesses, incorporating education, growing, retailing, and hospitality. Although many funding programmes incorporate a discourse of sustainability meaning that work started should be able to continue after the closure of the programme, this often is difficult to maintain without the people or resources. Funding programmes can also be seen as campaigns to change behaviour, as they fund activities that have been deemed to be beneficial and engender a

switch in behaviour as businesses and groups follow the funding. The Countryside Agency's 'Eat the View' campaign (stemming from the RWP 2000) promoted the link between eating local food and the way the landscape looks and the farming economy, whilst also encouraging food festivals and other projects to connect people to local food, reinforcing the commitment to a discourse of (re)connection. In discussing a particular campaign that encouraged people to buy local food and to ask for it when they eat out, one policy maker suggested that there should be a continual cycle of campaign ideas (that ideas should be purposefully leached to make way for new ideas and initiatives), that their role was to start off new ideas and get the momentum going but then to move on to the next thing:

...I mean it was, there has just been this great groundswell of opinion, interestingly...and we are carrying on with it as one of our campaigns just because it...it has worked so well. But...my...I mean my view actually...in staff discussions on it was that we should let it go because um... you know there was....the ball was rolling and what we should do is think about what the next ball that needs a push is. Because the [organisation] is actually quite small and we have not got the resources so...and we can talk about this but we can't...you know it was in terms of head office, it was one...one tenth probably of one person's time. And there wasn't a whole little department sitting around thinking what shall we do. Um...and so...I mean I think that one of the things that [we are] good at is initiating things, and raising profiles. (Y&H policy maker 004)

As this particular campaign has support it has endured, perhaps indicating again the significance of local food and how it engenders enthusiasm in people in ways that other topics might not. Policy ideas, such as asking for local food, would therefore be lost due to the need to keep pushing new ideas as the organisation does not have the resources to keep promoting multiple campaigns which might dilute the message, although in terms of knowing whether a policy has succeeded the same policy maker observes:

I suppose [the campaign] was successful because people started to talk about it and use the phrase, and...so they picked up on it and reported back. Um...sometimes you never know really. (Y&H policy maker 004)

The importance of particular people is again emphasised with respect to policy leaching and transfer, illustrating the fundamental role of some people and how the way that they do things can have a profound effect on the outcomes of a programme or policy, and how ideas can

seemingly evaporate for unknown reasons. The changes that policies can go through, from initial formation, to regional adaptation and on to local delivery can produce significant variations in outcomes, intended or otherwise. The next section will address this shift from macro level down to micro level interpretations (and various stages in between) and the impact that implementation can have.

## **5.6. Complexities of Interpretation and Implementation**

The effects of interpretation and implementation on the original intentions of a policy, however designed, have come under scrutiny from political scientists. Spicker (2006: 19) notes that if policies have to pass through a series of stages, and are altered at each stage, what comes out may look very different from what happened at the start. For example, Lipsky (1980) referred to the (re-)formation of policy by local level officers in contact with the public as 'street level bureaucracy'<sup>100</sup> and the term was adapted by Lowe and Ward (1997) to describe officers delivering agri-environment schemes as 'field level bureaucracy'. The role of implementers has been well reported in the analysis of agri-environmental schemes in the UK (Morris 2006; Wilson *et al* 1999; Hart and Wilson, 1998). Palumbo and Callista (1990: xi) suggest that earlier observers assumed that whatever implementation was, it had to be both conceptually and empirically separated from policy formation (rather like Haskins' MRD premise), it was assumed that policy makers were able to dictate what they wanted and implementers would execute this. They noted that policies were viewed as givens to be implemented whatever flaws the policies themselves might possess (p. xi). In their book on implementation they argue for its place in policy making to be more central and to show its relationship to the other policy processes (i.e., design, problem definition, formulation, evaluation). Subsequent research indicates that policy outcomes are not only shaped by the implementation process itself, but, in some instances, were actually determined by it (p. xiii), as highlighted by Lovell (2009) in relation to low carbon housing.

Implementation is also considered by Ray (1999) who describes the role of the 'reflexive' practitioner in rural development, assigning a more active role to the people who deliver policies and programmes on the ground, what he calls locality-based professionals and how they translate policy into action on the ground. He argues that with the rise of endogenous approaches to socio-economic (rural) development, the interpretative influence of local

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<sup>100</sup> This concept has found truck in the policy literatures and has recently celebrated a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010. Lipsky (1980: xii) originally outlined the role of the 'street level bureaucrat' as 'the decisions of the street level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with the uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out'.

professionals is critical and that these people are driven by the beliefs and personal biographies they bring to their work. This bears strong correlation to the argument above that these people bring their own interests and passions to work, which drives their activities. Ray has also argued (undated: 63) that in a sense, the European Commission was devolving some responsibility for the design and implementation of rural development in the LEADER areas by enabling these localities to design their own local rural development strategies to implement innovative rural development projects, but also encouraging the sharing of experience leading to cross-fertilisation of ideas between areas rather than totally unique rural development strategies. However, some areas are better suited to these processes than some others, who are less used to such development processes.

From a business perspective in particular, planning policies can be a particularly problematic in encouraging or hindering economic development. This is especially so in rural areas where the post-war planning framework has created a framework that prioritises agriculture above other developments (Curry and Owens 2009). The role of local level planning professionals in interpreting national level guidance can make a great difference in what is able to happen locally, and can result in conflict between local level policies and national level ones. One local government policy maker described the conflicts that can arise in such circumstances:

We had a spectacular falling out with MAFF / GOYH<sup>101</sup>, but they got over it...we wanted to create employment on grade 2 agricultural land...we clashed as they didn't agree with this. It went to a planning inspector who went with us. If the land was in agricultural use it would only employ one or two people but with our employment scheme we could be looking at up to 800 jobs! MAFF didn't like it that the inspector went with us, but the employment benefits were clear. The economic benefits far outweighed the agricultural ones. (Y&H policy maker 011)

Experiences such as these illuminate the ways in which the post-war policy framework is less compatible with the contemporary usage of the countryside; specifically that agricultural primacy has been eclipsed by the prioritisation of job creation and economic growth. These comments also suggest that the enterprise discourse is so embedded that economic development and job creation can outweigh other concerns (such as agricultural production).

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<sup>101</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF)/Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber (GOYH).

### ***Navigating complexity***

For local food businesses, the issue of signage was of particular concern, and the planning restrictions on this are difficult to navigate for small local food businesses. One local food business described the difficulties encountered during their decision to expand their business and how a lack of clear advice on signage was immensely frustrating:

We don't qualify for a brown sign<sup>102</sup> cos we're not a tourist attraction, I spoke to somebody in planning before we ever started ... we decided there was no point doing it unless we could get signage on the main road, erm, so I spoke to somebody in planning and was told 'oh yeah no that sounds wonderful, there shouldn't be a problem, shouldn't have any problems at all getting signage' ...when I knew we were a couple of months off opening I rang planning again and asked them to send me a form for brown tourist signs and as I'm filling in the form I sort of get half way down the first sheet and I thought, when it's asking to tick which criteria you fall into, I didn't fall into any of them and when I rang up the lady that answered the phone couldn't understand why I'd been given the advice that we would get signage cos there was no way we ever would!...[the] planning enforcement officer one day came in...he was really nice, and he was really human but he said 'I've got issues with the campsite putting signs on the main road, so he said I've had to tell the pub to take theirs down from the road and he said I'm coming to tell you that you'll have to take yours down', and I said 'so how are we supposed to run a business that nobody can see from the main road without signage?', and he said 'well have you got land running down to the main road?' so I said 'yes', 'well why don't you just stick a sign in there?', and I said 'well because I've been told that we can't', 'oh you can' he said 'as long as it's this big by this big' and he gave me the measurements and the phone number of somebody to speak to so I rang this chap who said 'oh yes that's right as long as the lettering's not above a certain size and as long as the board's not above a certain size you can put them in' – wonderful! I said that's all I wanted. (East Yorkshire farm business 019)

Not only are the regulations complicated (size of letters and size of signs) but getting the right person who can give helpful advice is seen as being difficult – in much the same way as the passionate person outlined in this chapter is crucial to policy success, the 'wrong' person can be a deterrent to progress by blocking access to the right information. The farmer concerned

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<sup>102</sup> Brown signs are used in the UK to indicate tourist attractions. There are criteria governing the 'award' of brown signs, and usually the local council manages the scheme. They are viewed as prestigious by local businesses as they indicate a certain size of business and can assist in attracting more visitors / customers.

was surprised that a planning officer 'was really human' after her previous experiences. The way that organisations such as local authorities interpret what is meant by 'sustainable communities', for example, in setting their policies for development in rural areas can effect what happens in those communities – such as house building, business developments, change of use permissions and so on. In thinking about how this interpretation and implementation has effect locally, one policy maker commented in relation to the campaigning activities of their organisation that:

...the problem is because you know...you try and get the policy statements altered at a national level because when they feed down to local people tighten it up and then you know...tighten it up and so you are still getting a fossilised countryside, where actually we think its...it needs...you know to change and adapt gently. And so you know [the council's] definition of a sustainable village had to have you know...practically a secondary school, you know it had to have a primary school, and a shop of some sort, and a bus service. Well you know that means that lots of villages are just going to be left to die (Y&H policy maker 004)

'The policy'<sup>103</sup> as interpreted by the local authority in question means, in the opinion of this policy maker, that villages with fewer services are less likely to be able to grow and develop, as service provision forms part of the definition of a sustainable community, leading to a chicken and egg situation of no services, no growth / no growth, no services. Taking a particular view on the services required for a village to constitute a 'sustainable village' meant that, in this interviewees' opinion, some villages would not be able to thrive by being denied development opportunities.

One policy maker described the tension that arises from being both a regionally representative partnership and one expected to meet national level priorities as well. The interviewee suggested that there was some negotiation involved in meeting the needs of both 'ends':

I er we invited the minister along to talk about this, great initiative which was going on so we get used a bit by them to er to er try and disperse (sic) their policies yeah, but we resist of course!...er we it er we screen it out on the way down, we're not a propaganda machine for them [the government], we are, we er I mean we have to behave...but obviously you have to be involved in government things (Y&H policy maker 002)

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<sup>103</sup> Referring to Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (HMSO 2004).

He suggested that they had to carefully manage the political elements of the partnership to not be seen as an arms-length government political partnership in order to remain faithful to the regional partners.

This section has looked specifically at the complexities associated with policy making, and in particular how the processes of interpretation and implementation by the people involved at a range of different levels refracts the original policy intention in a myriad of ways. Although this refers specifically to food and rural development, it could be argued that many of the points raised relate to broader spheres of policy. The next section will address the influence of the specificities of the local geographic area, as well as the conceptual fluidity of 'rural development' and how these jointly add further layers of complexity to an already complex system.

### **5.7. Geographical and Conceptual Complexity and Specificity**

The case study areas of East Yorkshire and the L'Aquila province in the Abruzzo region both possess spatial characteristics that delineate them from other areas. I will show below that the way that these areas have been seen in the past and how they are viewed now affects what type of policy and what type of rural (economic) development is seen as being appropriate for such localities. Many of the policy makers and businesses that I spoke to were aware of the 'nature' of their area (in their opinion), an awareness that was situated in comparisons with other areas that were in some way seen as more suitable for certain types of activity or policy. In addition to the geographical reflexivity, the concept of rural development is contingent in rural development policy making. Policy makers possess views about what certain areas have to offer in terms of local food, and these are exchanged and embedded in discussions with other policy makers in setting priorities, policies and so on. By looking at what the policy makers I interviewed thought about East Yorkshire and the L'Aquila province, I reveal how an area's potential for local food is perceived and how this affects the policies stemming from those policy makers.

#### ***Geographical Complexity***

In East Yorkshire, a particular kind of agriculture is seen as being part of the heritage and identity of the area and this influences the way that policy makers think about the area and the types of policy that emerge from their thinking. Whilst agriculture in the Abruzzo is more varied due to the terrain (differences between mountain and valley), agriculture still strongly shapes the identity of the area, and people are working to preserve the heritage and



traditions.

The notion of agriculture as a sector that needs to be supported is embedded within local attitudes, as one policy maker noted 'we, er, still have quite a heavy reliance on agriculture in the ER, so erm this is about supporting a number of sectors really, so we obviously have our agricultural sector which needs as much support as it can get' (Y&H policy maker 001), suggesting the acceptance of agriculture as an industry which should be supported by the state – a view not necessarily shared by all. However, the particular type of agriculture is seen as not being conducive to a strong identity as the agriculture of other areas such as Cumbria or Devon, as one policy maker commented 'I don't think...the East Riding has got lots and lots of pretty villages and nice places to live but I don't think they have the sort of...um...strong local identity that you certainly get everywhere in Cumbria.' (Y&H policy maker 008).

### ***To be rural or not?***

Despite East Yorkshire being a county that is predominantly rural, it is regarded as an area that has not traditionally been seen as rural by both regional organisations and national ones. Two policy makers commented on this perception:

But certainly Humberside<sup>104</sup> and then the East Riding were not high on national agendas or regional agendas in terms of rural and rural issues, in this part of the world it was very much North Yorkshire who were seen as the lead there and across the country places like Devon, Cornwall, Lincolnshire, Cumbria, North Yorkshire... (Y&H policy maker 006)

...North Yorkshire which was always considered along with Lincolnshire in the North as being really rural and the East Riding not because of the connection with Hull... (Y&H policy maker 012)

So, areas like Cumbria and Devon were perceived as being 'more' rural and as having strong senses of identity – these are the same areas that have tended to be the foci for academic studies on the new geographies of 'alternative' food in the UK. Policy makers within East Yorkshire suggest that they have had to work harder to raise the profile of the area in being recognised as 'rural'. The entrenched view of how 'rural' East Yorkshire is has influenced the types of activities that could legitimately take place there. In talking about whether local food

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<sup>104</sup> The East Riding of Yorkshire was previously part of Humberside County Council, but local government reorganisation in 1996 reinstated the East Riding of Yorkshire, now a unitary authority.

was a priority for an East Yorkshire based organisation the interviewee commented that ‘...we were always very cross that the North Riding<sup>105</sup> tried to pretend there was only local food and cheeses produced in the North Riding...’ (UK policy maker 012) indicating that local food wasn’t seen as a legitimate activity for areas like East Yorkshire which had not traditionally been associated with local food.

Having published a local food directory of producers and businesses within the local food sector of East Yorkshire, many people were surprised to find the variety of produce on offer, again in comparison to North Yorkshire: ‘...that leaflet, which was actually launched last year, and to everybody’s astonishment it was amazing just what is made in the East Riding, and is overlooked because the image and everybody’s thought process goes straight to the North Riding doesn’t it?’ (Y&H policy maker 012). Beverley Food Festival also offers a ‘shop-window’ on the diversity of produce available in East Yorkshire, to the surprise of some people.

And for one local farm-based tourism business, the area had changed in her perception as a result of initiatives like the local food directory, which had highlighted for her the number of businesses that exist locally. This had challenged her perception that East Yorkshire was only producing corn:

I think, I think locally they’ve done a good job round here for sort of highlighting that you know this county, I think I’ve been educated because if you’d have said to me 15 years ago what does this county produce, this particular area, I would have said well we’re just corn barons really, or minor barons, you know there wasn’t a lot of diversity (East Yorkshire tourism business 017)

This amazement was shared by the consumers I spoke to – amazement at the variety of food available locally, but also an equal amazement that they had never seen the Food Directory nor knew of its existence. So, although policy makers were attempting to construct a discourse of local food in East Yorkshire, it was not reaching consumers, who expressed their irritation at not being aware of such publications, as the following discussion shows:

Joanne: But you know like your leaflet, that one for the local one, now where is that distributed – is it in your local libraries, or doctor’s surgeries...?

Interviewer: hmmm yes libraries but not sure about doctor’s surgeries

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<sup>105</sup> Which now broadly corresponds to the county of North Yorkshire.

Joy: I haven't seen it in schools either

Nancy: I have never seen it!

Catherine: No I haven't seen it

Joanne: You see you look at this and you think well I've never heard of any of these, oh any of these places...

Joy: Are they local? How local?

Joanne: Erm, right this is Drifffield, Beverley...You see I think it would be very, very useful if you could find out where you can get this – I'm looking at this thinking oh I'd love a copy of this – where?

Joy: Well exactly I'd like to know.

Joanne: I mean even this local farmers' markets because I know at Dunswell and it's all very well saying the last Saturday in the you know month or something but on the whole we'd like to see the dates

Catherine: Does it tell you the farmers' market, which, which date in the month?

Joanne: Yes!

Joy: It's daft if you've got them and we're sat here saying we've never seen it before, where do we get it from. Even if you had a pile of them, even in Grains (local health food shop) for example... (FG1)

Unless policy-makers and the end-users (consumers in this instance) also 'connect' then the initiatives won't be successful, and the process of knowledge construction will remain fractured.

### ***Geographical Imaginations of Food Production***

So, popular images of East Yorkshire suggested little of interest as regards local food production, with North Yorkshire being seen as the repository of local food in the region.

Further confirming the image of East Yorkshire and whether 'local' food can be produced in area long seen as a productivist agricultural stronghold, one local policy maker observed that:

Um...I know there have been some difficulties trying to change the perception of producers across the other areas of Yorkshire and Humber about what the East Riding can offer... It's the distances between is...I think local food has that perception of being produced in the Dales or the hills, where you can see the animals, or the products growing. I think the East Riding tends to be sort of...not seen as a traditional local food area. (Y&H policy maker 005)

The image of East Yorkshire as a bulk commodity producer is regarded as vitally important for food security by one policy maker. In response to a question on what potential she sees for areas like East Yorkshire in developing a local food economy expresses that:

I think um, I think the, the national and regional level answer to your question is heaps, I mean unlimited, er but actually I think the East Yorkshire question is much harder. Oh, because you've got all those great, great farmers, you've got a really sort of first class farming area, but they are producing mainly commodity products, um, and there aren't the visitors there, there aren't the population centres and everything else to support them doing a lot different. I mean there are small cases where it would work but actually at the end of the day we need somebody to produce bog standard milling wheat to go off to be made into biscuits with our coffee! Or the bread we have as toast sort of...everyday.... So, um, there is a limit to how much sort of special...specialist sort of flour making or leading specialist bread and things there is, but there is a great mass of people who just want cheap white sliced bread. And...against that the quality of the land and the ability of the farmers in East Yorkshire means that what they are doing is really important, if we're looking at sort national food security and things like that. (Y&H policy maker 004)

Whilst this policy maker starts off in justifying East Yorkshire's intensive agriculture by reference to the lack of a local market (low population and poor tourism) it is perhaps more about a commitment to global commodity trade and an acknowledgement that these commodities have to be produced somewhere (as even commodities are 'local' to somewhere, at least in the first instance). This policy maker balances the need for locally distinctive products with the need for mundane commodity products. These commodity products have to be produced *somewhere*, and tend to be associated with areas that do not have a strong

tourism sector, but that are instead 'flat and boring' (East Yorkshire organic grower 006). Areas like the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors (both are national parks in North Yorkshire) with their strong tourism identity are seen as being more appropriate for local food. Regionally, although many types of agriculture are practised in the Yorkshire and Humber region, the dominant image of agriculture is of something that happens in the landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors (i.e. upland hill farming). East Yorkshire, although significant in agricultural terms, is not captured within this imaginary. The following quote on funding programme development demonstrates that despite recognising the diversity of agriculture in the region, it is specifically the upland areas that are concentrated on and which are seen as needing help:

Respondent: Yeah because I mean this region covers every form of agriculture there is

Interviewer: Yes

Respondent: So you know we have to have that flexibility to be able to turn our hand as to what we want to do, so in some regions it may be you know 90% of them will be arable so their priorities will be slightly different to what we've got – you know we've got a lot of upland, you know upland farmers and things like that, erm remote rural communities that need some help, so... (Y&H policy maker 003)

Other regions are seen having being arable agriculture which needs supporting, yet East Yorkshire is an arable area ('it's one of the largest agricultural areas certainly one of the largest arable areas in the country, I think actually in terms of size I mean it's only bested by East Anglia' – Y&H policy maker 013a) but does not feature in her description of which parts of the region need funding support. In later describing where they work, the same policy maker talks of North Yorkshire and York as being the main foci of their work ('the most rural area'), but in reality this is where the head offices and regional offices of other regional bodies and organisations are based, rather than there being no agricultural project work in other parts of the region.

Interviewer: in your role do you cover um, obviously agriculture and land management is your thematic focus, do you have a geographical area that you're responsible for or is it...?

Respondent: All rural areas in Yorkshire and the Humber...And I would say really that's

predominantly North Yorkshire because that's, the most rural area if you like.

Interviewer: Do you have much involvement in East Yorkshire at all?

Respondent: Um, not really. No not really.

Interviewer: Why do you think there's a difference perhaps between North and East Yorkshire?

Respondent: Uh, well I don't think there is, to be honest. Because you know I mean because when I say, it's mainly, you know the rural areas tend to be mainly North, North Yorkshire I mean cos it's, got the Yorkshire Dales and...the Moors yep. Um, and so the Yorkshire Agricultural Society is based at Harrogate so that's where I would go for them. The NFU is based at York so, um, yes I mean I wouldn't necessarily, I mean the only places I tend to go to in East Yorkshire would be Bishop Burton College. (Y&H policy maker 003)

Similar imaginaries were described in Italy, for example, one winemaking business described how the region possessed the characteristics to be a good productive area in agricultural terms (again the interviewee wanted to speak in English but occasionally slipped into Italian so I have translated immediately after any Italian):

c'è una zona molto fertile, molto buona per la coltivazione, ma tanta gente non la ha, non la sfrutta (this is a really fertile area, it is really good for cultivation but many people don't have, they don't publicise this). Ha! When I go in Trentino it's similar, but in Trentino all, all soils are cultivated, in this area only a small area is cultivated, molto un peccato (it's a great shame), anche perchè abbiamo la possibilità i prodotti sono buonissimi, pero sono conosciuti, però (also, because we have the possibility, the products are fantastic, for those who know, but), but there aren't none, non sono molto valorizzati (it isn't valorised), the region don't promuovere (promote)...there is a problem, because in Abruzzo there is a lot of trouble to em to make publicity, we are very, in Abruzzo there aren't very, we aren't like Tuscany, in Tuscany the Tuscan people sell something with a little publicity, we have a lot of kind of wine and oil and other things but we aren't good with publicity. (Italian wine business 009).

Again another region is offered as being better suited to local food, in this instance, Tuscany is

suggested as somewhere where food can be promoted more easily, that they are better at promoting what the region of Tuscany can offer, even though, in her opinion, the Abruzzo possesses opportunities that it doesn't make the most of. The regional government and local people are implicated in not sufficiently publicising the area. Publicity can help people imagine what an area is like, the types of food that it might produce, and may encourage people to visit or to purchase food from such places. The next section will address how the research participants talked about imagined ruralities.

### ***Imagining the rural***

The designation of national park areas supports the imaginary of North Yorkshire as 'really rural', a concept utilised by the national park authorities in their promotions, and East Yorkshire, with no national parks is therefore seen as less rural. In contrast, the Abruzzo region has the highest designation of national park land in Italy. However, respondents still indicated that the area was unknown and that tourism benefited areas such as Tuscany, despite Tuscany having only minimal land designated as national park.

Tourism is an important aspect of how areas are imagined (through brochures, television programmes and other promotions) and which also influences policy makers' subjectivities in making and thinking about policy for these areas, and as the above quote suggests, popular destinations are emphasised at the expense of areas like the East Yorkshire. Yet, the quote below from a regional policy maker acknowledges that the landscapes and scenes of East Yorkshire were popular for the artist David Hockney,<sup>106</sup> then this means keeping a particular type of agriculture functioning:

you know we need...we need livestock in the hills if we want...if we want to keep the James Herriott landscape for the benefit of the tourists then we need to keep livestock up there. And you know if we want to keep the valleys that Hockney loves then you know there needs to be barley growing on it. (Y&H policy maker 004)

Therefore, commodity agriculture is supported or justified in retaining landscapes treasured by artists such as David Hockney, which provides a cultural validation for agribusiness in the same way as James Herriott does for the Yorkshire Dales. Seeing North Yorkshire as the place where rural development and local food 'happen' gives rise to apathy on the part of other areas in the

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<sup>106</sup> David Hockney has been painting East Yorkshire scenes since the mid-1990s, in particular of the Wolds and the rolling views; he lives in Bridlington, however his works of East Yorkshire are less well-known than his earlier work in the US.

region:

we then rely upon the other bodies like the Council, the tourist board, VHEY, the leaders in the council themselves, erm to talk about it and promote it, which they've done very badly in the past, if anything at all, they've just sort of sat back and said yes North Yorkshire (Y&H policy maker 012)

### ***Where's that? Knowing Peripherality***

The geographical peripherality of East Yorkshire is seen as a deterrent to involvement in national policy making activities, in particular the distance between the county and the rest of the country. This peripherality serves two purposes, firstly that 'policy' is seen as something 'done' at a distance (i.e. in London) and secondly that policy makers at a distance are less likely to know of places like East Yorkshire or the Abruzzo. Policy-making is seen as a more distant activity, a view shared by participants in Italy and the UK. There was a perception that other regions had both higher levels of policy making activities but also higher levels of 'alternative' businesses such as organic production methods or care farms who might be involved in that policy making. The physical remoteness of East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo, combined with the isolation that the more remote rural parts of each area experience, compound the feeling of remoteness. One regional policy maker commented:

no-one knows where the Abruzzo is, not even in Italy (Italian policy maker 006, CFA)

Whereas, for a local food business, it was the distance from centres of policy-making activity that were more problematic:

The policy makers are located far away from us, and I think they forget that there are businesses in these mountains (Italian business 009)

Similar concerns were expressed in East Yorkshire:

I suppose we're a bit out, out on a limb here erm but that has it's pros and cons...it's, you feel a bit out here we're out on a limb, if we were in a city maybe we could just pop round and find the person we need to find (East Yorkshire Producer 011)

Being 'remote' could have benefits, but problems specifically related to not being able to access policy-makers and the meetings that they run:



...from our point of view, erm, we don't have a real lot to do with it because we're, unfortunately we're in the wrong place. It, things are all based down south, you know there's a producers' council which [my husband] would love to be part of and love to be on but they have meetings once a month in London, and there's just no way with, it's a whole day out, you know (East Yorkshire Producer 012)

Both of these respondents suggest that it is their fault that they aren't included in policy making by being in the 'wrong' location. Not only does the geography of an area add to the complexities of policy-making, from how an area is perceived by the policy makers and businesses and how the area is relational to other parts of a region and country, but also the concept of 'rural' and 'rural development' further complicated matters by being interpreted differently and not easily defined. These examples illustrate the necessary patchiness of knowledge about the world (Haraway 1991, quoted in Pedley 2010).

### ***Conceptualising Rural Development***

The conceptual nature of rural development (as a discipline, not to mention the variety of ways that 'rural' can be interpreted and defined – see next chapter) is seen as being something amorphous and therefore difficult to explain and to work with. There also persists the concern that 'the rural' is still not fully understood by some and that some policy makers don't really understand what rurality is, a point often made in relation to the use of statistics that area supposedly too coarse to get to the right level ('to drill down') but also in relation to the 'rural premium' of the higher cost of delivery in rural areas – both of which are frequently cited by rural policy makers. There can be a number of reasons underpinning this, whether as a result of not actually living in rural areas as suggested by one policy maker

this is the argument where rural comes out with urban, you've got people making laws or making strategies for rural people when they live in the town, yeah so there's no connection, there's this great disconnect problem, now whether that's true or not I'm not actually certain (Y&H policy maker 002)

Earlier in the chapter I outlined how policy makers position their profession as one which requires a certain skill and knowledge, and rural development as a complex concept can overlay another level of knowledge and expertise needed. Being good at one's job is more difficult when working in a rural with rural residents, who are seen as having different and special characteristics meaning that policy makers need to:

...ensure professionally that um...all the bits of the jigsaw are in place you know. That you...how can I put it? I mean again this is a bit of personality thing I think although it would apply across the board, people would be less, more good at and less good at it, but I think if you know...the way I would approach it is that if I have skills, technical skills and I'm a professional in my field, then providing I put in place the right elements so you get the right...the evidence base is there so you can see what the issues are, you've identified the opportunities, you can see a way forward and what the elements are. If you can put all that in place and then convince people particularly in a rural context because the rural people often do feel neglected, they've been left out, you know they feel like the poor relation. If you can demonstrate that you actually are working for them, that you're on their side and that you're not just another bureaucrat that's come out the woodwork...and that takes time to demonstrate. (Y&H policy maker 006)

So not only is policy making complex *per se*, but rural development is seen as adding another layer of complexity as it incorporates a whole host of services and issues through the lens of rural, which in itself is not easy to define or pin down:

you know rural development is not just some green cuddly thing you know everybody knows about...it's a discipline...let's face it rural as a context is different from most other things this [organisation] does because it's a geographic...it's a concept, it's a geographic concept, it's not about education or training... (Y&H policy maker 006)

Working in rural areas and with rural people is seen as bringing challenges (time consuming, dispersed communities etc.) that are set against working within an urban area. In addition to the comments made above relating to rural residents 'feeling left out', there is, it is suggested, an extra need for understanding of the challenges of working across disparate communities:

...you know I do think we need some continuity and stability especially when you're dealing with...in, in a rural context because just engaging people is so much more challenging because you are trying to do it over a...over an area of small scattered populations really. (Y&H policy maker 006)

So despite problematisation of the rural-urban dualism within the academic literature (see Murdoch 1997b), the use of the ideas of rural development persists on the ground. A similar point is made by Castree (2004: 191) and Lacour and Puissant (2007) in relation to the term

‘nature’ which people continue to interact with, use, perceive and define something they call ‘nature’ in a wide range of daily activities. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

## **5.8. Conclusions**

This chapter has contested the view that policy making is a neat and linear process by concentrating on the complexities described by local food and rural development policy makers and businesses. Layers of messiness and confusion can be found in the ways that ‘policy’ is thought about and where it emerges from, who produces it, who can be involved in the production of policies and deciding upon priorities. As new policies and ideas come forth, sometimes the previous ones disappear, but at other times they sediment over preceding ideas and policies, leading to overlap and confusion.

Despite the national level rhetoric that rural development policy making should be separated from rural development delivery, my research has shown that this is not the case on the ground and that many practitioners see informing and influencing policy outcomes as integral to their work.

I have argued that often it is down to one person (‘fiery spirit’, ‘animateur’, passionate and motivated individual) to drive forward policies and projects – this person embodies certain characteristics that enables them to build strong relationships and garner support to take things forward. One of the earliest impressions from the research was that ‘policy’ was difficult to speak about, primarily as a result of its slippery character illustrated by the comments throughout this chapter.

These descriptions of how people engage with, try to understand and make sense of worlds of policy making appear complex and messy, even for those directly involved. So, what does all this mean for ‘effective’ policy making? Thinking about answering this question, the central premise of the research, is clouded by the messiness and lack of coherence that seems to be inherent. Policy transfer is often cited as a way of learning about what has worked well in other areas and how these examples of so-called ‘best practice’ can be transferred. But as been shown above this is not an unproblematic process, as local specificities (such as organisational capacity, having the ‘right’ people and the ‘right’ knowledge) and complexities associated with certain policy themes (such as local food and rural development) can fracture the elements of success that had worked elsewhere. In addition, processes of ‘measuring’

success can be either prescriptive or visceral (or sometimes both) so that knowing what has worked well can be difficult to judge. Also, what is viewed as being successful in policy terms may well be judged differently by businesses or consumers.

In practice, policy makers pragmatically use a variety of modes of judging success, combining the formal performance indicators or targets (in terms of jobs created, brownfield land used etc) with more-or-less gut feelings of what has been successful. For example, one policy maker involved in running a food festival described how it was difficult to measure the number of people attending the event due to the porous nature of the venue, so aerial photos and anecdotal evidence from event stewards were used to monitor year-on-year growth.

As a result of these complexities described by research participants, I started to think about how processes of being involved in policy making could be reconceptualised to overcome the limitations of those models shown in Chapter 3, and this is what the final section of this conclusion will reflect on.

#### ***A new way of conceptualising policy processes***

In contrast to the neat, linear and sequential diagrams of the policy 'process' presented in the literature review (see Chapter 3), from the material that I have presented this chapter I wanted to attempt to represent and capture the complexity in a diagrammatic counterpoint to those earlier models. My attempt to pen such a diagram evolved, and with each adaptation I tried to more adequately portray the complexities and messiness of policy-making, as described by the respondents.

I wanted to signify the more complex and disordered realities described by policy makers and businesses, and attempts to make sense of the external and internal influences on policy making, the policy failures and other unintended outcomes, and modes of policy learning. However, I realised that no matter how hard I tried to encapsulate this messiness I always ended up missing something out, or ending up with a diagram which in itself was incoherent whilst not even encapsulating the essence of complexity and fluidity that I was intending to convey. In many ways this is symptomatic of trying to fit the messiness of the world into a two-dimensional image.

The presence of the passionate and committed individuals in the model below is not intended to signify a lone hero working in isolation from other elements of the model (i.e. government, NGOs, businesses and so on), such as indicated in the business entrepreneurial literature (see

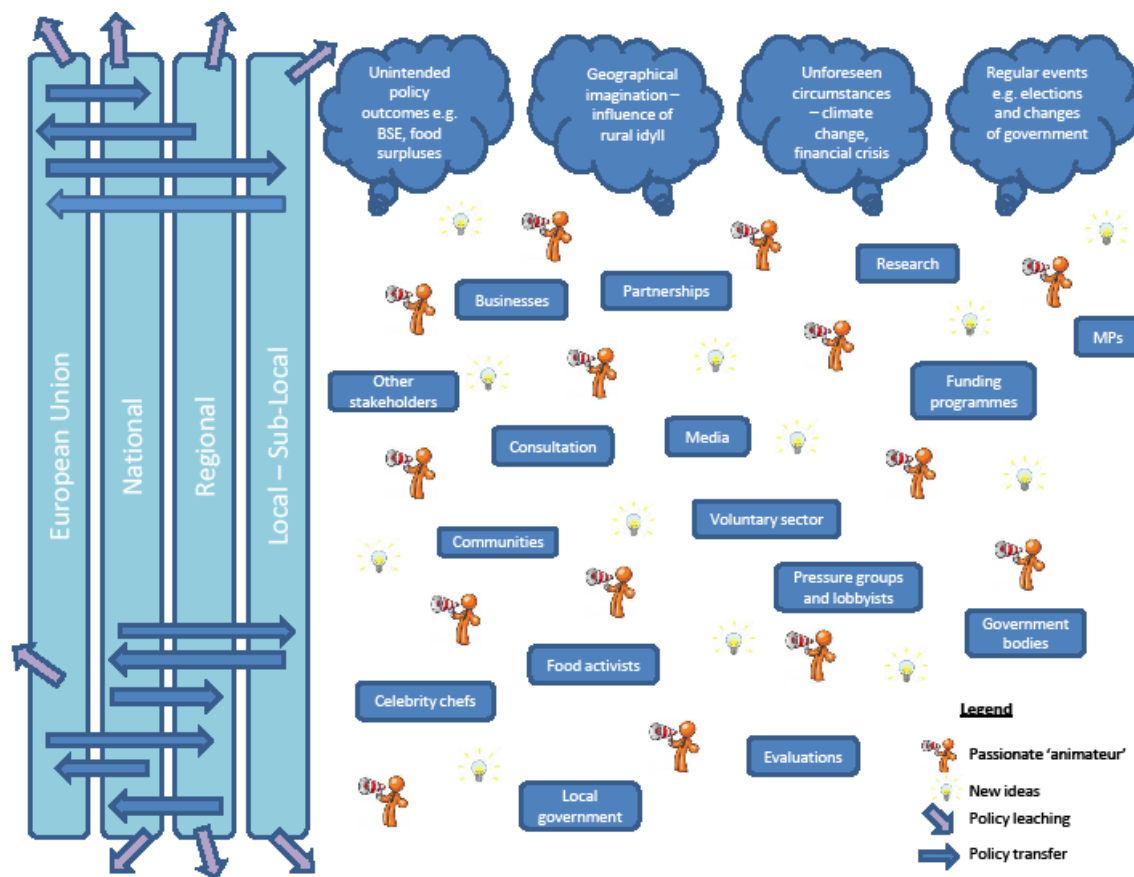
Gibbs 2009). The passionate and committed individual is likely to be found within any of the organisations listed in the model, and is shown as separate to the organisations to highlight the centrality and significance of these individuals, in addition to them being seen by stakeholders as transcending organisational boundaries. Policy entrepreneurs have been written about (Kingdon 1995; Lovell 2009) but my concept of passionate and committed individuals is about more than creating and innovating new ideas, these individuals possess the characteristics that enable them to perform in a way that others in the same position might not be able to do.

As Law (2004: 2) suggests, simple clear descriptions don't work if what they are describing is not coherent in itself, and attempting to reduce representations to increase clarity can only increase the messiness. The description of the worlds of policy inhibited by the respondents are suggestive of Law's (2004) notion of a fluid, elusive and multiple world, that many realities are vague and ephemeral – trying to clarify this can lead to further distortions.

There are always going to be complications in attempting to put such diverse relations and actions into a simplified diagram. For example, some actors possess more or less power than others, and inclusion in policy processes does not necessarily confer influence over the outcomes and the resulting policies. As Pedley (2010: 263) suggests, actors possess varying abilities to enact different things that are not pre-given but are instead contingent on associations and the specific situation. In contrast, some other actors possess privileged access to certain resources that enable them to act as 'discourse formers' (Cloeke *et al* 2000b: 118).

I tried to illustrate the fluidity of ideas, people and resources through the diagram (see Figure 14), but however I did this, the two-dimensional nature of such a diagram resulted in a fixity that was not appropriate. To illustrate the limitations of this approach, I have included my final effort in producing this below:

**Figure 14. Non-linear policy making assemblage**

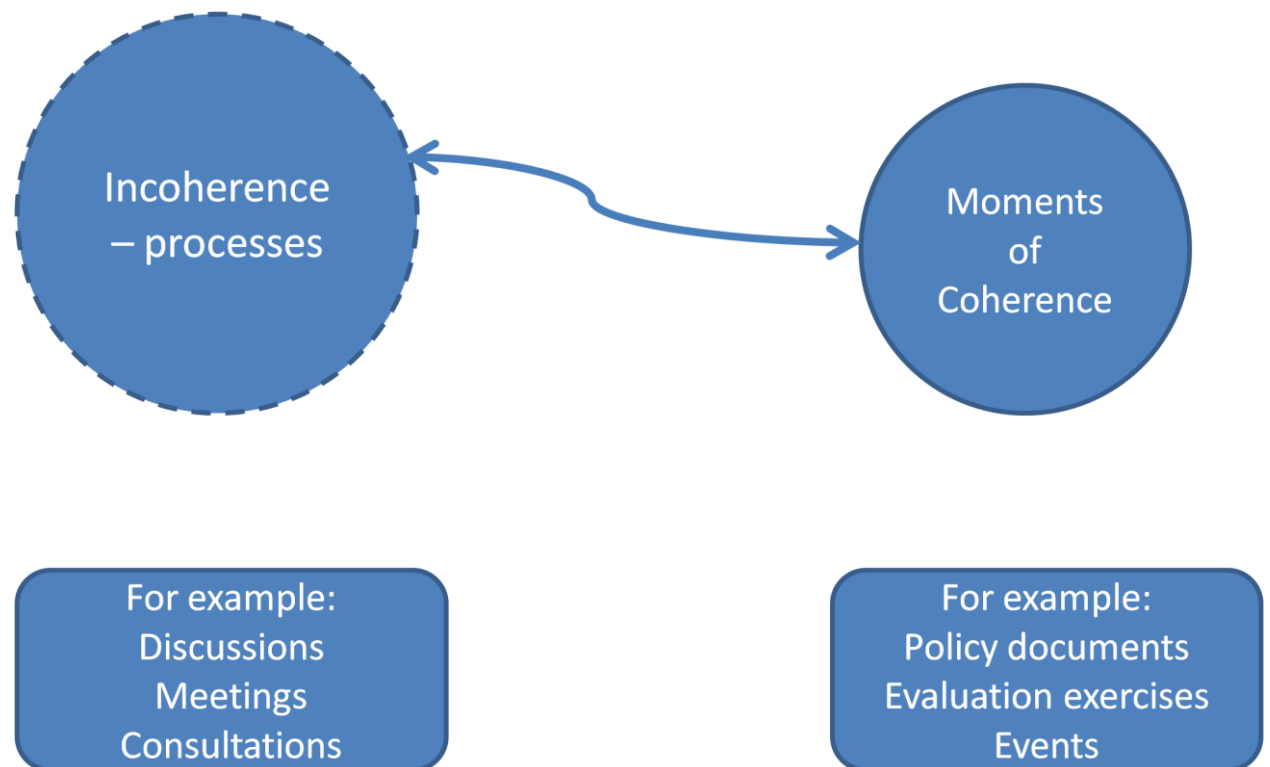


This diagram (Figure 14) has ended up being too messy in itself, requiring explanation to the extent that it has defeated the point of providing a diagram – i.e. a diagram should be self-explanatory and relatively clear. Yet, the political sciences literatures are so concerned with demonstrating the linearity, orderliness and clarity of ‘the policy making process’ that I wanted to counterpoint these with a way of thinking about policy-making as a much more subjective, contested and relational ‘process’ that is constantly evolving.

To this end, I have conceptualised a new model which sees policy making as a spectrum between two nodes, through which policy-makers, policies, resources, ideas, events, funding and all the other elements related to policy making are constantly moving (see Figure 15). The two nodes in my depiction are ‘incoherence - processes’ and ‘moments of coherence’. The moments of coherence might be materialised in events, policy documents, evaluation exercises and so on, but may in themselves be illusions of coherence. The arrow between the two spheres represents how the moments of coherence and processes of incoherence relate to one another and is intentionally curved to illustrate that these processes are not always

straightforward or linear. The line is also double arrowed showing the movement between the two moments is constantly evolving and in a process of becoming (coherence / incoherence).

**Figure 15. Policy-making as a relational and messy constellation**



This 'simple version of complexity' shows how most processes associated with policy making exist somewhere between two states of incoherence and coherence. This is not to say that policy makers themselves are in any way incoherent, but that the relationships, partnerships, processes, associations, funding programmes and political negotiations contribute to an overarching framework that is contingent and relational, and difficult to get to grips with. Glimpses of coherence may appear only to disappear almost as quickly, leaving people unclear as to why something failed to become, why something either happened or ceased to happen. The 'things' suggested as moments of coherence may also appear as moments of incoherence – for example, research such as this thesis (and other commissioned research) may shed light on situations but may further complicate matters by throwing up new ideas or by presenting material that had not been anticipated. This 'reality' of policy making has emerged from detailed discussions with interview participants and listening to their descriptions of how policy making works and the opaque and cluttered policy landscapes that policy makers and other stakeholders work in.

The challenge has been how to represent the myriad flows of information, ideas, words, resources and other 'things' as they pass in, through, and out of policy making assemblages. As Law (2004: 7) observes, it might be better to imagine the world as a rip-tide, and to think of it as being filled with currents, eddies, flows, unpredictable changes and storms, with intermittent and fleeting moments of lull and calm. The 'moments of lull and calm' are those moments where, however briefly, coherence can be seen through the mess and navigated. This is the 'world of policy' that I am trying to represent and capture above, whilst recognising that attempting to simplify in a diagram there are necessarily aspects that cannot be encapsulated. As Law (2004: 9) notes, we need to unlearn our desire for certainty and the expectation of arriving at stable conclusions about the way things really are. By getting away from diagrams such as those in Chapter 3 which attempt to reduce policy making processes to a series of neat inputs and expected outputs, the diagram above tries to incorporate the slipperiness of such processes.

This chapter has exemplified the constant changes and complexities involved in 'making and doing policy', showing how policy makers are not necessarily 'rational' characters that act objectively and impartially, but that by necessity they bring their own interests, understandings, interpretations and partiality to the processes they are involved in. This subjectivity and complexity will continue to be explored in the next chapter, but with the added multifarious layers of the discourses and practices of rurality. The next chapter will address in more detail the issues raised in this last section. In particular it will explore how the physical and imagined geographies of an area influence the types of policy that can be made for that area, and will problematise urban-rural dualisms which, it becomes clear, are far from dead and are in regular use in thinking about local food and rural development.



## **CHAPTER 6. LOCAL FOOD AND LOCAL SPACES IN THE EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE AND ABRUZZO, ITALY**

“you know, let Yorkshire people eat Yorkshire food” (East Yorkshire local food business 003)

“non è toscana” (“well, this isn’t Tuscany” Abruzzo policy maker 005 – author’s translation)

### **6.1. Introduction**

Building on the arguments presented in the last chapter of policy-making as a complex and slippery process, this chapter will show how some rural areas are represented as being more idyllic than others, and how these representations influence how different rural areas interact with phenomena such as alternative food networks. As shown in the literature review (Chapter 3), a number of processes are changing the ways that rural areas are thought about, what the function and purpose of rural areas might be (Marsden 2009), not least the production and consumption of food and the types of agriculture underpinning this. The academic literature refers to the so-called ‘new geography of food’, which sees changing food production and consumption processes and patterns as changing the ways and places of food, from interactions between producers and consumers to new spaces of food production and consumption. These changes, as well as historical impressions of different rurals, emerged from the research as being significant for those involved in the research and how they made sense of local food production in the specific contexts of East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo.

‘Rural’ is as complex a term as ‘policy’ and both are interpreted by different people in a multitude of ways – this chapter will analyse the ways that the UK and Italian research respondents thought about and made sense of the respective rural spaces and the activities that happened there. Far from being defunct, this chapter will demonstrate how policy-makers, businesses and consumers continue to find relevance in images of ‘rural’ as being ‘idyllic’. Critical reflection on singular constructions of romanticised rural idylls can show not only how some ‘rurals’ are continually excluded, as are certain activities (including food production) and groups. Rural idylls can be drawn upon to invoke a reactionary politics of defensive localism, and local food can be seen to embody these trends.

Food, local and otherwise, is used here as a way of exploring images of idyllic ruralities and the associated perceptions and understandings of areas, specifically of East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo region of Italy. In addition to the economics and requirements of food production,

here food is taken as a means of both creating the identities of an area and of people, whilst also communicating and performing certain messages of rurality and the identities of rural areas. The academic literature on a new geography of food being mapped out in the UK has tended to concentrate on Wales and western parts of England (Devon, Cumbria and so on); other parts of the country have been notable by their absence in this literature. East Yorkshire is therefore presented as being different to the 'typical' areas that have been concentrated on in the academic literature on alternative food networks and the new geography of food; it can be seen as the 'Other' to ideas such as the organic core (Ilbery *et al* 1999) or rural areas which are represented in a more idyllic way. This can also be identified in the Abruzzo region of Italy, where frequent comparisons were made to parts of Italy such as Tuscany. Tuscany was perceived by Italian respondents to be an easier place to produce and sell local food, than the Abruzzo. Local food economies were seen as being more difficult to imagine and realise in the Abruzzo. The geographical comparisons that research participants, in both the UK and Italy, made between the rural area in which they were located and other parts of the country (which were seen to perform 'better' in some way) will be illustrated, as will the ways that this works to highlight which 'types' of places are well suited to produce 'local food'. I found a strong awareness in both case study areas of the differences between them and contrasting regions presented as 'strong' local food areas like Tuscany or Cumbria / Devon, which were seen as being more attractive in some way. This chapter will extend this by thinking about the stories about rurality carried by the food itself and how specific rural areas are seen as local food places by building (or not) on ideas of the rural idyll.

Organic agriculture and food will be used to illustrate how alternative food production methods are viewed in less idyllic areas like East Yorkshire. Although Evans *et al* (2002: 314) critique the reality of a post-productivist transition, there appears to be a high degree of consensus on the concept of a post-productivist transition even though Wilson (2001) suggests it has been largely uncritical. East Yorkshire still operates a largely productivist, commodity based agriculture. Despite Ilbery *et al*'s (1999: 286) claim that there is some evidence of a changing attitude towards organic methods among the broader farming community, I have found that in East Yorkshire it is largely still viewed with suspicion and as something for 'hippies' rather than a mainstream option for 'proper' farming; this persists ten years after Ilbery *et al*'s assertions. I have chosen to use organic agriculture and food as a case study as many respondents in Italy and the UK discussed it. Also, the alternative food literature tends to assume that organic food and local food can be conflated (Smith 2006; for example Stagl 2002 and Seyfang 2006 talk about localised organic food networks, yet most organic food in the UK is imported – see Ilbery and Maye 2011), yet here I show that the overlaps cause

concern and confusion for producers and consumers alike. By concentrating on organic agriculture and food in East Yorkshire I will show how some of these tensions are manifested in specific places. Organic agriculture (*agricoltura biologica*), and associated low impact systems (*lotta integrata*), were prevalent in the Abruzzo, as the mountainous parts of the region where I undertook my research had not been suitable for industrialised agriculture. This 'unspoilt' aspect of agriculture here was generally seen as strengthening food production in the Abruzzo, while Italian respondents were more concerned about the future of farming more generally. In Italy multifunctional farming was seen as critical in ensuring the continued presence of agriculture in the area.

The second part of this chapter will illustrate how research participants construct rural places as different to both urban and some other rural areas. These differences were viewed on a general level, regarding factors which made rural people and rural communities different to those found in towns and cities, to specific references to food and its production and knowledge about this. In particular local food is seen as an explicitly rural thing: as something which requires an *effort* on the part of the consumer and the producer and this is contrasted to urban food which embodies convenience and placeless food purchased via supermarkets. Local food was presented by a number of research participants as something special, an experience that could form part of a special occasion or a holiday. Cloke (1997: 370) notes the breadth of methodological approaches to rural studies, based on a 'cultural turn' in the discipline, and refers to *imaginary texts* (emphasis in original) which represent the countryside in popular culture, including images, film, and fiction. I will argue that food itself and its marketing and promotional material can be added to this list of imaginary texts, which contribute towards how people within and outwith the countryside imagine rural areas and food production through the notion of the rural idyll. As Daniels (2011: 182) notes the geographical imagination in its various forms and meanings is a powerful ingredient of many kinds of knowledge and communication, within and beyond geography as an academic subject. It is a way of envisioning the world, and of experiencing and reshaping it too. Jones (1995: 43) discusses ways that urban ideals influence the rural, including the increasing movement of people and information between the two. However, he only discusses flows of people and information, ignoring the flows of other 'things', and the direction of movement suggests one way only, rather than acknowledging the ways that rural areas influence urban areas too. Food, for example, could be argued to be one of the most important flows between rural and urban places. As seen in the last chapter, professional discourses on farming and the countryside have been influenced by images of farming in other parts of the country, as mediated through television programmes such as *Countryfile* or *River Cottage*.

Correspondingly, these discourses influence how policy makers imagine specific spaces as being appropriate for local food production.

Experiences of the countryside are different for many people, whether they come into direct contact through living, working or visiting rural areas, whether they purchase food perceived to be 'rural' in some way, or they own a second home in the countryside, or less direct experiences through media representations. Notions of the rural idyll are changing constantly; this chapter will explore how these notions are understood and play out in East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo.

## **6.2. Knowing the Rural Idyll – Geographical Comparisons with a more Idyllic 'Other'**

The rural idyll is not a fixed and static concept, as Williams (2011, 1973) has observed from a wide-ranging review of historical literature on the imaginaries of the rural idyll, as outlined above and previously in Chapter 3, and the everyday practices of people in rural and urban areas, as well as the influence of the popular media and historical images, continually shape and reshape the notion of the rural idyll. I will show in this section how those living and working in East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo region of Italy compare 'their' rural against those parts of the respective countries that conform more closely to the images that have been immortalised in the notion of the rural idyll(s). As outlined in Chapter 3, notions of a rural idyll are relevant in Italy, particularly drawing on imaginaries of beauty and aesthetic linked to the landscape, as opposed to notions of a rural idyll in the UK which are broader and tied to ideas of social belonging and community as well as the 'quaintness' and attractiveness of rural areas.

I came across frequent geographical comparisons which form an element of people's way of thinking about rural idylls. The interview participants were conscious of what a rural place should look like and what sort of activities should or should not take place there (in particular, what types of food should be produced). Regular comparisons to the south-west of England by interviewees in East Yorkshire, and to regions such as Tuscany in Italy during the Italian research phase, suggest that these are the places popularly seen to conform to 'rural idylls'. In contrast, East Yorkshire is seen as 'flat and boring' (East Yorkshire organic grower 006) and the Abruzzo is 'remote' with a 'difficult terrain and climate' (Italian policy maker 002). This is an interesting dichotomy as in the UK, places seen as being 'better' for local food often had national park designations, which conferred a certain idyllic-ness on them (Gilg 1996). Yet in Italy the Abruzzo has the highest proportion of land designated as national park out of any of the Italian regions, yet interviewees did not see their area as idyllic, but as rough, wild and

difficult to live in and produce food from. Even in 'successful' agricultural areas there can be a feeling of remoteness:

I wonder if it is partly to do with erm you don't go through East Yorkshire to get anywhere (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

And another grower explained:

I suppose we're a bit out, out on a limb here erm (East Yorkshire grower 011)

While in Italy:

Because sometimes the man who writes the law of the region are in Pescara, don't think for the, my area, a lot of people don't remember that there is Valle Peligna (sic) and that there is internal area (sic), [for them there's] only the coast (Italian wine producer – interviewed in English)

As the quotes above demonstrate, the people that I interviewed were acutely aware of the physical peripherality of East Yorkshire, and also of the Abruzzo area where the prosperous coast concealed the needs of the more marginal inland areas. Both groups used this peripherality to account for a wide range of characteristics of the area. This perceived physical remoteness contributes towards the areas being seen to be somehow 'behind' the rest of the country:

yeah and in this area we are swimming against the tide slightly cos Bridlington's a little behind the rest of the country, always has been and always will be probably so we'll just sit here and wait til they catch up (East Yorkshire producer 019)

For the research participants, East Yorkshire is not only seen to be on the fringes of things going on elsewhere in terms of policy but also in terms of new developments in food production (alternatives such as organic farming methods) and generally the suitability for local food systems. Some people that I interviewed suggested that East Yorkshire could be seen as 'backward' (see Eriksson 2010 on 'backwardness') in comparison to other parts of the UK, and that this affects peoples' perceptions of new ideas including local food, farmers' markets and in particular organic food. However, not taking up supposedly progressive alternatives like organic farming might well be based on a real competitive advantage from

maintaining the existing systems. As shown in Chapter 3, for some farmers the subsidies for commodity crops mean that there is no incentive to change – the so-called strategic non-adopters according to the innovation-diffusion model (see Morris and Potter 1995, Morgan and Murdoch 2000, and Padel 2001 for a discussion of the innovation-diffusion model). In Italy, in discussing the importance of local food for rural development, connotations of local food with tradition and heritage were seen as almost being a disadvantage by one policy maker, who noted that people moving out of rural areas and into towns and cities had tried to move away from this image towards one of being more modern:

Intervistricce: quindi, che importante è il prodotto tipico per lo sviluppo rurale?

Appellata: er, credo, um, tantissimo, very important, perchè il prodotto tipico è l'espressione di una cultura del territorio, della storia, della sua tradizioni e quindi è un'ottimo strumento per fa conoscere anche da punta da vista turistico un territorio ...tradizioni e la cultura

Intervistricce: anche, per la gente indigine che importante è la concetta di prodotti tipici anche per loro ....

Appellata: allora sicuramente per le, il territorio rurale sì, erm quindi che hanno subito un processo di inurbamento c'è in nuove cittadine, hanno piuttosto um voluto un distacco, una lentonamento da questa cultura... qualsiasi un rifiuto huh e quindi vanno al supermercato, LIDL, discounter, comprare (Italian policy maker 006)

Interviewer: so, how important are typical products for rural development?

Respondent: I think they are very much so, because typical products are an expression of the territory's culture, of the history, of the traditions and therefore are a great way of promoting the area and getting across to tourists the traditions and our culture.

Interviewer: also, is the concept of typical products also important for local people?

Respondent: yes surely for them, the rural territory yes, erm there is also a process of urbanisation, with new small cities, they have become more detached, a slowing of these cultures, there is a rejection in favour of supermarkets, LIDL, the discounters, to go shopping there. (author's translation)

Images of rurality and the connotations of this (e.g. being 'old-fashioned' or 'traditional') that can travel with food (embodied and performed by food) can create images within people's imagination of what types of food different areas can produce. The next section will consider how these images may lead to some areas being 'pigeonholed' as producing a certain type of food in a particular way, and how this might preclude them from doing any different.

### ***Which Rural for Which Local Food?***

Jones (1995: 47) observes that as a result of the limitations of academic definitions of 'rural' compared to lay discourses, rural geographers may be blind to large tracts of space that are 'rural' to some degree, and that this leads to a partial understanding of the rural. He specifically identifies southern villages close to urban centres as areas that might be excluded from being rural by academics, but areas like East Yorkshire could also be added to the excluded areas as a result of popular discourses of the rural idyll emphasising places like the Yorkshire Dales. For example, one policy maker lamented that economic development agencies like the Yorkshire Forward (one of the Regional Development Agencies) predominantly saw North Yorkshire as being the place where local food came from, as a result of the types of farming taking place there, and that as a result East Yorkshire with its grain farming was not presented with the same opportunities.

I always felt we were a little bit on the fringes of all of that sort of stuff... and this goes back to the old North Yorkshire/East Yorkshire um...scenario in respect of...historically North Yorkshire was perceived as the rural bit of the region and [East Yorkshire wasn't]...on all of the [rural or local food] agendas you know you'd find Yorkshire Forward going to North Yorkshire, or other organisations primarily focussing on North Yorkshire. We started to redress that, it's a lot better, but I always sort of felt with local food...because you get a lot of hill farming in North Yorkshire, therefore you get a lot of cows, and sheep, and you get butter, and you get milk, you get cheese, whereas we grow grain so you didn't have quite the...the same sort of...opportunities (Y&H policy maker 006)

The presence of animals is specifically seen as linked to the production of local foods, which may stem from Jones' (2003) observation that animals are integrally bound up with cultural formations of the rural. By growing grains (cereals) East Yorkshire is not viewed by a number of policy makers as relevant for local food production. Phillips (2004: 16) notes that the fattened bodies of animals feature in many idyllic pastoral images, which may influence how people think about livestock production and local food contemporaneously.

A number of my respondents pointed out that East Yorkshire did not compare well to other areas in terms of the landscape and type of farming, as regards producing local food. Little mention was made of how East Yorkshire is associated with local food, other than in comparison to other geographical places that are more suitable. The attractive landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors were seen to lend themselves more easily to promoting local food, whereas the food production of East Yorkshire was concomitantly seen as less attractive. This had clear consequences in how for policy makers viewed certain areas as being associated with local food production:

I think local food has that perception of being produced in the Dales or the hills, where you can see the animals, or the products growing. I think the East Riding tends to be sort of...not seen as a traditional local food area... (Y&H policy maker 005)

And another suggested that:

I mean it's easy to see how you would promote erm lamb from the North Yorkshire moors isn't it? It's easy-peasy! Promoting wheat from Holderness is...or barley from the Wolds is...um...Just doesn't work in the same way. You are not producing something that's sort of directly...that's sold directly to the end producer (sic) really, and it's you know except for...Well...I mean, it's, the chain between the farmer on the North York moors is the farmer, Asda, consumer. (Y&H policy maker 004)

This latter policy maker (004) sums it up by saying that perhaps the chain between the producer and the consumer is more easily recognisable and identifiable to the consumer for products that come from animals than for cereal products. It is interesting that this policy maker obscures the processing of the animal from the field via the slaughterhouse / abattoir straight into the supermarket – a similar point is noted by Stassart and Whatmore (2003) in their analysis of a localised beef food chain in Belgium where the unpleasant realities of killing an animal for meat is obfuscated from the consumer. Holloway (2004) similarly suggests that the image thus created of farming at agricultural shows tends to collude in the reproduction of a perspective that 'forgets' particular issues (including slaughter, but also aspects of intensive livestock production), and instead tends to associate farming with the spectacular or appealing live animals, a sensual experience of food and the farmed landscape, and conservation practices. In addition, for many people, ASDA is not a place to purchase *local* food (as the quote below from a local food business in East Yorkshire demonstrates, and see Seyfang 2008), so it is surprising that this policy maker emphasised it as a site of local food. The



supermarkets' *modus operandi* is associated with a number of chains that complicate the policy maker's neat chain above. The links in typical supermarket chains include packaging, transportation, distribution and so on, meaning that although a supermarket might be close to where the food was grown or raised, the means of getting it to the consumer are not so straightforward.

you wanna see, the, the policies in place and people eating properly and people caring for the environment, so, but yeah it's when it's exploited, I mean you know what [annoys me] is big business like ASDA and MacDonald's all of a sudden doing organic milk or organic food or, and pushing the local buttons and all that, but, it's, they're multi-national companies and the money's not staying in the region (East Yorkshire local food business 003)

Consumers also saw this as 'jumping on the bandwagon' (Joan, FG3) by supermarkets and larger companies, in particular regarding fair trade. In many of the points made by policy makers in particular, animals were seen to represent areas with strong local food systems, increasing the visibility of local food to those who lived in the area and also to tourists and other visitors. If livestock are seen as representative or totemic of farming and food production, this serves to further exclude East Yorkshire as a place of food production, and local food production in particular. That animals have been so strongly linked to local food production is interesting, as some other respondents felt that people do not know or do not like to know that their food comes from animals' bodies (see below). In East Yorkshire livestock farming has declined and also the intensive forms of agriculture in East Yorkshire means that many animals (predominantly pigs, and where they exist, dairy cows) are kept inside for their whole lives. Carolan (2008: 415-6) found differences in what farming and non-farming rural residents<sup>107</sup> considered to be acceptable in the countryside. The non-farming rural residents talked of the countryside as big open views, fields of corn and fresh air and silence, whilst the farming residents talked of agriculture specifically, livestock and manure, and clean crops, illustrating their differing perspectives regarding the countryside.

Carolan then quotes Buttell *et al* (1990) on farming as becoming increasingly concentrated in fewer farm holdings and suggests that part of this process is that livestock become concentrated and dissipated. As livestock (and their odours) continue to be concentrated into fewer areas, other areas are becoming sanitised due to the disappearance of these animals (p416). As a result of these processes, Carolan concludes that understandings of the

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<sup>107</sup> Although he did not include urban residents in his study.

countryside have shifted so that livestock and their sounds and smells are increasingly becoming 'out of place'. And as they become 'out of place' it can be argued that those areas where animals are absent shift from being places of food production to not being seen as such. Many of the policy makers, businesses and consumers that I spoke to saw the presence of animals as strongly linked to food production, which excludes areas like East Yorkshire from imaginaries of local food production due to the dominance of arable large-scale farming and the associated absence of animals. For another policy maker not being able to see the animals resulted in East Yorkshire not being seen as a food producing area:

I think local food has that perception of being produced in the Dales or the hills, where you can see the animals (Y&H policy maker 005)

The situation in the Abruzzo is similar. Despite the topography of the Abruzzo region being different to the landscapes of East Yorkshire, and arguably an 'attractive' part of Italy with four national parks in the region many businesses and policy-makers reported similar difficulties. Many respondents independently stated 'non è toscana' ('well, this isn't Tuscany') and suggested that popular images of Tuscany were how local food producing regions were imagined. In the hard, wild landscapes of the Abruzzo they were doing what they could but were not able to compete with places like Tuscany.

And in discussing the local food guide that was produced for East Yorkshire, one policy maker observed that although they thought the guide was excellent, in their opinion, it would be so much better for the businesses if they were in North Yorkshire:

But, but you know imagine if that was um you know if you had got all those producers in you know, between York and the Dales, or York and the Moors, where, where the...number of tourists and things was greater, then all those businesses would do better wouldn't they? (Y&H policy maker 004)

For another East Yorkshire producer tourists were also seen as important and linked the higher tourist profile of other areas to the successes of local food systems such as farmers' markets; this suggests that increasing tourism in East Yorkshire might help boost local food in the area. As such the Yorkshire Dales, the Lake District, Devon and Cornwall are suggested as robust areas for local food.

Er, well [East Yorkshire is] a good rural area, it's not, it's not obviously that touristy,

obviously they're trying to promote tourism cos tourism would help the farmers' market thing that's why I think they do quite well in the Dales erm you know especially throughout the summer, well even in the winter months, and of course they do better, they do in the Lake District and down south I think because of tourism, you know it's good to go to a farmers' market in Devon and Cornwall erm (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

### ***Popular Rural Idylls***

Three counties that came up again and again in talking to UK policy makers and local food businesses were Devon, Cornwall and Cumbria. These areas were seen as having strong local identities, as being better suited and placed for local food production and in the case of Devon, the southwest was more generally seen as better for alternative food production such as organic food and farmers' markets. In Italy, Tuscany was referred to by the majority of interview respondents. These opinions were found amongst policy makers, businesses and consumers, in the UK and in Italy, and affect not only how the areas are viewed but what kinds of activity (specifically food production and farming) can be deemed 'normal' or 'appropriate' in those areas, and as a result, are translated into policy documents and strategies. Respondents linked the strong tourism in these areas as being one of the core reasons, in their view, for greater success.

On the North York Moors National Park Authority's website, tourists and visitors are encouraged to buy local produce at farmers' markets and help to support the landscape and culture of the area, helping in the appreciation of the North York Moors as a 'special' place:

Culture and traditions are as much a part of the North York Moors National Park as the landscape itself. Cultural qualities are concerned with the intangible elements which go to make up the National Park. Dialect, *local menus*, traditional practices and celebrations, even artistic reactions to the area, are all important to our experience and appreciation of this special place.

(<http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/culture-and-traditions/> accessed 17 March 2011, emphasis added)

And, it continues:

Why not sample quality fresh local produce? As well as enjoying great meals you will be helping the local economy and farming communities which maintain much of the

outstanding landscape in the National Park.

(<http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/farmers-markets/> accessed 17 March 2011)

Thus, making the link between food, the local economy and the national park's beautiful landscapes. By contrast, the *Visit Hull and East Yorkshire* tourism website<sup>108</sup> does not make such clear links and information is much less easy to find, indicating a different approach in the two areas in promoting both local food and its linkages to heritage, culture and tradition.

Tourists are therefore seen as critical to supporting local food networks, but it might also be that consumers have an imagination of those areas from either visiting or (more likely) from watching television programmes such as *All Creatures Great and Small* or *Heartbeat*.<sup>109</sup> It may be that through programmes such as these viewers feel they *know* and have a link with the area and might therefore be inclined to purchase products from those areas, either when in situ or if available in other retail outlets such as supermarkets. Policy makers suggested that businesses in such areas are better able to succeed. In contrast, East Yorkshire does not necessarily have the same strength of image and identity on which to sell its products. Indeed, one policy maker suggested that East Yorkshire is an invisible area:

...the East Riding understands where the East Riding is but I'm not sure if anybody other than the East Riding knows what the East Riding is (Y&H policy maker 001)

In Abruzzo, the same sentiment was expressed about the L'Aquila province that it was very little known, even in Italy. The April 2009 earthquake highlighted the Abruzzo region, but had led to negative images of the area (Abruzzo policy maker 004), affecting tourism, as a National Park policy offer lamented:

Non abbiamo una ...sicuramente possiamo di questa che, er generalmente questa... la maggiore parte del territorio del parco non ha subito danno il terremoto, però si come passato la margine, il terremoto in abruzzo, anche tutte le aziende agricole, agrituristiche, turismo probabilmente hanno sopporto perche i clienti hanno pensato che cui forse successo, i danni, i problemi, non ci sono stare problemi nella maggiore parte però, perchè il terremoto sotto è al L'aquila in li cui fino non li entere abruzzo (Abruzzo policy maker 005)

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<sup>108</sup> <http://www.visitthullandeastyorkshire.com/vhey/>

<sup>109</sup> Both of these television programmes are set in the two National Parks of North Yorkshire (the BBC's *All Creatures Great and Small* programme set in the Yorkshire Dales, and ITV's *Heartbeat* programme set in the North York Moors).

We don't have a...certainly we may be influenced by this, that, er generally this...the major part of the territory of the [National] Park wasn't immediately damaged by the earthquake, because we are on the edges, the earthquake in the Abruzzo, also most of the agricultural businesses, agriturismos, tourism probably has bore the brunt, because tourists thought perhaps it had happened here, the damage, the problems, there aren't the problems though for the most part because, because the earthquake predominantly affected L'Aquila and not the entirety of the Abruzzo. (author's translation)

### ***Food and Identity***

Food was seen as symbolising the identity of some places and regions in the UK, but East Yorkshire was not seen as having a strong identity, which for one policy-maker could be ascribed to the lack of such an iconic local product:

but we don't seem to sort of, or haven't in the past, had sort of an identity of something like for example you know pork pies from Melton Mowbray or you know erm er Lincolnshire sausages say, or Cumberland sausages or something, there isn't sort of a necessarily an East Riding sausage (East Yorkshire policy maker 013a)

For another policy maker involved in national level politics local food reinforced the sense of identity of an area, but this was more likely to be found in remote rural places rather than places that were urban, even close to urban areas or places of agribusiness, as industrialisation is seen to erode both the sense of identity and the availability of local food:

And there is a strong...a much stronger rural identity in Cumbria than you'll get here for example... In Wales you get it, down the southwest you get it, Cornwall, you get it; there is a much stronger sense of local identity. Very often the places where its strongest is where the rural poverty, Cornwall for example is a relatively poor place compared with...compared with, I mean compared with rural East Yorkshire... the strong sense...a local sense of an area is reinforced by local food too, they go...you know in a largely industrialised country you can only get that in pockets, and it tends to be in remote-ish pockets you know? (UK policy maker 008)

So, *identity* here is seen as a local thing and a characteristically rural thing, but also something which can help promote an area and the products, and local food is seen as an intrinsic part of that identity, which can be specifically reinforced by local foods. Food imposes an identity on

an area but also helps to shape the identity of that area. Trubek (2005, 2008, cited by Bowen and De Master 2011) calls taste a form of local knowledge in places like France, where communities rely on particular foods and taste to remember experiences, explain memories, or express a sense of identity (see Bessière 1998).

The areas that are popular with tourists and which are the settings for television programmes and films or are used to sell particular products conform to the ideals of the rural idyll, as outlined above. As mentioned earlier, the rural idyll is brought into existence in relation to an un-idyllic other (Bell 2006), typically thought to be urban areas but as Bell suggests, agribusiness falls into this category. Places like East Yorkshire, with its commodity farming which creates a specific landscape, are not generally regarded as scenically beautiful, rather being the un-idyllic 'other'. The intensive agricultural landscapes of Lincolnshire have been described by Pearson<sup>110</sup> (undated) in a similar way. They are not seen as attractive for creative people who are positioned as driving forward new and alternative ideas:

I mean I have my own theory about that as well, that erm, erm beautiful, scenically beautiful places tend to attract alternative forward thinking people, and erm flat places are not places where creative people want to go, and therefore places that are kind of flat and boring don't tend to attract a lot of alternative things, but I don't know whether that theory's right or not, it's good theory though isn't it?! (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

And that as a result of this, places like East Yorkshire are seen to be inhospitable for alternative ways of living and thinking, so that in the opinion of the same grower there are:

no things like that you know I mean we have a wind farm now – wow that is progress – erm but I can't think of even therapeutic community for instance, erm, there's no, there is in York I know, there's no kind of erm, well there is in, you know the Steiner place, the erm Camphill Community – there's none of that in East Yorkshire, alternatives of any kind (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

Despite these perceptions, one interviewee was directly involved in an 'alternative' form of farming, growing organic food via a care farm<sup>111</sup>, involving people with physical and mental

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<sup>110</sup> <http://www.carrlands.org.uk/creators.asp>

<sup>111</sup> An initiative that originated in the Netherlands to offer care to vulnerable people by involving them in practical aspects of food growing.

disabilities in growing food. He also pointed to antipathy to anything 'different' in the East Yorkshire, not only organics, and suggested that in general villagers are antagonistic to development. For him, certain people were also not welcome in some villages, those that don't 'fit in' with the 'rural idyll', including those with mental health issues (see Philo *et al* 2004 and Parr *et al* 2004 for a discussion of mental health and rurality):

I think things are slowly sort of turning around, cos we have lots of events here er open days and things and obviously some of them have been along and they're seeing what's happening and gradually coming round to the idea, cos I think the main, well they always have this thing about the smells with compost for some reason [laughs] that was one of the main objections, and then other one was this, you know peoples' ignorance about mental health and fears of having you know madmen running round the village, so yeah no I can't say that the local village is very supportive so far (East Yorkshire farmer 011)

#### ***What can be 'local' – contradictions***

East Yorkshire is home to, or close to, a number of large food producers that use products grown and raised locally (but intensively), but which would not necessarily be considered 'local' food. These producers are linked into nationalised and internationalised chains. Specific local examples include McCain's at Scarborough, Tryton in Hull, Cranswick's of Preston.<sup>112</sup> The quote below from a local farmer who was keen to be interviewed as he sells his produce at farmers' markets and farm shops in the area revealed that it was actually a small proportion of his business selling that goes through these routes and that he had a diverse cropping system with different products going off into various supply chains. This example illustrates that intensive farming co-exists with more localised food chains (Ilbery and Maye (2005) report similar findings), but also that produce at farmers' markets and farm shops cannot simply be conflated with food produced in more environmental or socially just ways (i.e. 'alternatively'). In addition, Carolan (2011) cautions against viewing all intensive agriculture as a homogenous body (monoculture); he observes that there can also be diversity within intensive agriculture.

Respondent: and we usually grow peas for Birds Eye but we don't grow peas anymore<sup>113</sup> and we used to grow, recently I've grown borage and dried peas as well

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<sup>112</sup> 'Local' food manufacturers producing oven chips, Yorkshire puddings and meat products such as sausages, respectively.

<sup>113</sup> The Birds Eye plant in Hull closed in 2007 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/humber/6251233.stm> accessed 17 March 2011)

but I grow about 5 acres of potatoes and about 2 acres of field vegetables as well

Interviewer: And the wheat and barley that goes through conventional routes presumably to a grain merchant?

Respondent: Yeah, that goes, that's right yeah I mean we sell it to merchants who, it either goes to mills and the barley's malting barley which goes to er maltsters which I specify it goes locally which is at Flamborough,

Interviewer: You specify that and you're able to do that?

Respondent: I mean this year it's all gone locally, it's all gone to Flamborough erm which is good, I mean previous years I've had it go to, touch wood I haven't had any rejected, but if you have a problem and it goes down south or further afield er and it gets rejected you, you have either have to pay the haulage for it or which is a huge amount or it goes for a low feed price you know erm and I had some the other year go to Burton on Trent quite a lot and I was a bit worried cos er you know in case it was like this, will it get rejected or not (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

**Figure 16. Carling beer advert at bus stop, Beverley, East Riding of Yorkshire** (author's photograph)





The barley in this instance is sold locally, but this is down to economics (not having to pay the cost of haulage if it is rejected on quality) rather than a desire to avoid the environmental costs of transportation (so-called “food miles” – see Coley *et al* 2011 for a discussion) or a deeper commitment to localised food chains. As a result of this East Yorkshire is vulnerable to changes in the commodities markets, as well as decisions made by corporations based elsewhere, as mentioned by the farmer (015) above not now growing vining peas since the closure of the Bird’s Eye pea factory in Hull.

Recently, the brewing company Carling has undertaken an advertising campaign highlighting their 100% use of British barley in their brewing processes (see Figure 16). The television adverts in particular drew on impressions of barley farming that may be outmoded in the UK context, a scene of ‘pastoral simplicity’ (Short 1991) showing men dressed in peasant farming clothes, using pitchforks with an old-fashioned trailer for their crop . These images contrast starkly with the agribusiness realities of barley (and other commodities) farming in East Yorkshire. A policy maker with a farming background stated that for him products like barley and wheat, the commodities grown in East Yorkshire, could not be local:

This place is just producing commodities for...most of our, after all our malting barley goes to China, our peas go all over Europe, our wheat can go anywhere. We were sending wheat to America two years ago from here. It isn’t local, that’s not local. (UK policy maker 008)

There was some feeling from a few policy makers that larger companies (such as those listed above and based locally within the area) should also be recognised as East Yorkshire companies, where a market for such branding exists. However, many of these companies based in the area are branches of much bigger companies with headquarters based elsewhere – although some companies do already do this, for example Mars labels its Mars bars and other chocolate products with a Made in Slough logo wrapped around a Union Jack – even if these products would not necessarily be classed as ‘local foods’ by consumers.

**Figure 17. Müller yogurt advert using traditional rural imagery**  
(source: TBWA/London)



In another example, the German dairy company, Müller, used traditional rural images to promote their policy of sourcing 90% of their milk within 30 miles of their factory in selling their yoghurt products in the UK (see Figure 17). The cows providing the milk might not spend their lives outside as the images suggest, and the farming might not be as rustic as the bottom left hand image intimates. A local authority policy maker opined that bigger operators should be able to brand themselves as using produce from the East Yorkshire:

...that shouldn't preclude bigger operators from also using and branding some of their product as East Riding product if there's an East Riding market for it, so you know the bigger operators like, like Cranswick, or like Tryton foods in Hull, and Tryton Foods in Hull are absolutely past-masters at it aren't they? You know Aunt Bessy's Yorkshire Pudding so they've made a bloody fortune out of that, out of eggs, and batter and milk! (East Yorkshire policy maker 013a)

The motivations for sourcing locally were summed up by a local food business as being in their interests in that consumers would think better of them for doing so:

if we're doing those things will look, look upon us erm in a better light as well erm so er you know I think, I think the customer is probably next most important that they like to see erm things on the menu that are from places that they can relate to (East Yorkshire local food business 010)

Having examined the ways that food can be linked to identity, rural idylls and the importance of the locality, the next section will address how perceived differences between urban and rural areas add an extra layer of complexity.

### **6.3. Multi-faceted Rural Idylls – Rural as Different**

Although my research is focused specifically on local food and rural development, many people emphasised the differences that they felt set rural areas apart from urban areas, some of which related to food and some of which related to ideas of identity<sup>114</sup>, community, tradition, kinship and other features that tend to be seen as ‘rural’ attributes. The rural is often viewed as being relative to the urban; we only know we are in rural areas because there are urban ones with which to compare them (Bell 2007) and for example, Ward and Lowe (1997: 258) observe that

...in counterpoint to the rise of the industrial city, rurality was constructed as ‘natural’ and became a source of moral affirmation and condemnation. In contrast to the supposed innocence of rural life, the city was perceived as corrupting, not only of traditional morality and social hierarchies, but also of nature, through industrial pollution.

And Mordue (2009: 333) argues that anti-urban sentiments are integral to the construction of this mythic heritage landscape, just as they are prominent in traditional constructions and imaginations of English identity itself (see Newby 1979; Lowenthal 1991; Cosgrove and Daniels 2002; Urry 2002). This section will address ideas of rural areas as different to urban areas generally but also that some rural areas can be differentiated in terms of their perceived idyllicism in contrast to other rural areas (akin to Bell’s 2007 ‘anti-idyll’), before moving on to specifically look at how the research participants expressed ideas of rural difference having an impact on the types of food, places for food shopping and the ‘effort’ that is needed for rural food.

Although the policy literature and some academics (see Chapters 2 and 3) have sought to erode the view that there are differences between rural and urban areas, New Labour’s rhetoric of the similarities between rural and urban areas has become embedded in the minds of policy makers. Here, I want to highlight that despite this rhetoric, ‘people-on-the-ground’ still think of and reiterate the differences between urban and rural, vis-à-vis the pace of life,

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<sup>114</sup> Although issues of food and identity were linked by some.

moral codes of behaviour and knowledges of food production and food. Interview respondents used 'urban' and 'rural' to give meaning to identities, values and representations of rural areas. These differences are still drawn on by my research participants to explain and protect rurality and for displaying 'country' characteristics such as being old-fashioned, being part of a community, and having the time to know about and find 'proper' food. 'Country people' are presented as knowing about 'country ways' whereas urban people (or 'town' people) are seen as not being able to understand these (expressed in moral behavioural codes of dressing and comportment). 'Urban' people also, it is suggested, don't know about farming and food production, which has consequences for the liaisons between consumers and producers when food shopping.

Commenting on television tourism in North Yorkshire, Mordue (2009: 334 quoting Edensor 2001: 63) remarks that 'the coherence of most tourist performances depends on their being performed in specific 'theatres''. In this case, the countryside is constructed as a theatre in which people perform rural leisure and rural tourism, and where rural residents perform as 'country people' who live a 'country life', although the potential chasm between the staged and the experienced needs to be recognised. Part of this performance of a country life can be seen to include knowing about, and having time for, local food (however defined), although again this may be perceived or imagined rather than being a reality for all country residents.

### ***Dualities in Motion – Urban and Rural Differences***

During the interviews, although the focus was on local food and rural development, many people also offered more generalised reflections on rural areas and rural life. In particular, rural areas were set in contrast to urban areas. For example, a local policy maker portrayed country people as different to urban people, and stereotypes of urban people working in factories without access to fresh air were still drawn on to illustrate why urban residents enjoyed visiting the countryside, although the same urban visitors were imagined to not really understand rural life:

I don't think it is, it's, people just like, you know if you're working in industry, and it's noisy or sat in an office all day and you never move, the attraction of fresh air, yet it is not expensive... It's not because it's cheap, it's because people like the countryside and if you're working in an office or a factory to get out in the fresh air that's attractive in itself...because it's all aspects of rural life, which is what actually urban people don't understand (East Yorkshire policy maker 012)

This reinforces the ideas mentioned above, and in particular the comments from Lowe and Ward (1997) that rural areas were seen as maintaining the vestiges of a 'traditional life', safely away from the polluting influences of the city. The same policy maker went on to emphasise the importance of living in a 'community', which is seen as an inherently rural phenomenon, in reinforcing the values of the countryside for urban visitors: 'but there's people [visiting the tourist accommodation] who are quite happy to support the news, the local, the village newsletter as well, so I mean it's er, people like to be involved in a in like a community.' (East Yorkshire policy maker 012)

Rural areas are therefore viewed as places where 'community' still exists, in contrast to urban areas. Moreover, traditional traits like kinship and support for one another were raised as being specifically rural. This tension sometimes crystallised between 'old villagers' and newer (urban) residents and was highlighted by a local farmer whose husband was involved in local politics as well as farming. For her, the older residents were positioned as knowing how rural areas work, in contrast to the newer residents who have moved in from neighbouring towns and cities and therefore have to be 'educated' by the older residents. The 'incomers' were seen as bringing new ideas that might not fit a rural context, but also as lacking the requisite knowledge of how rural villages 'work':

But you know [my husband has] sort of, you know he got on the parish council and he got quite a few other people eventually went on erm the parish council who have lived in the village quite a few years, you know a long time that's he known from young, so he's sort of got a few more people on now, the committee, the parish council now is about 50:50 I think, old village, old village people, not old but you know that have lived all their life and the new people, so it's sort of more balanced out, because the new, the new people who come, I mean they're, it's very good that they're enthusiastic and want to be involved in the village life but they come and they just do not realise the, the problems that are sort of in a village and oh yes we'll do this and we'll do that and you feel as if you're putting a dampener on it a bit I think but [my husband] has to sort of say you know slow down, you know, that is, it's not possible to do that! Things like that, and he's got a few people who are on, who know, now and back him up sort of thing you know... (East Yorkshire farmer 012)

It is not only residents that are not seen as understanding rural areas. One policy maker complained about other policy makers who don't understand rural areas, or at least not 'proper' rural areas, because they don't live in rural areas. Politics such as these can serve to

exclude people, activities and things that aren't seen as being appropriate in rural areas. For one farmer in Italy, who combined her farming with working part-time as a doctor, she found that she was not taken seriously by other members of the farming community and often felt discouraged by being labelled as a 'hobby farmer' (Italian agriturismo 001) – 'hobby farmer' can often be applied in a derogatory sense (see Holloway 2001).

Some rural areas were also seen as being more intrinsically rural due to their remoteness compared to other rural areas that are closer to urban areas:

... it's amazing that [those people] who live on the plain of Holderness forget the geography of the Wolds is rather different ...because people who live in villages like Cherry Burton or Bishop Burton or on the edge of Beverley, think they live in a rural area, well they forget that they're almost a suburb of Beverley which is a suburb of Hull and us in the sticks here, we know what it's like (laughs) (East Yorkshire policy maker 012)

This individual illustrated that even within 'rural' areas there can be distinct differences in how people perceive rurality, and what is 'properly' rural. Coming from 'Cumberland' myself, my respondents included me in the category of people who know what rural areas are really like. In Italy, one business also explained that the people who lived and worked in the more accessible coastal areas did not understand the inland mountainous areas and the problems experienced in such areas – she saw this as a problem for making effective policies. By contrast, the following policy maker also bemoaned the lack of understanding of rural areas by people who live in towns, and specifically the problems this created when they designed policies that affect rural areas. He went on to mention, however, that wealthier people now lived in the countryside and commuted to work in the cities to escape the perceived antisocial behaviour and urban problems were seen to be absent in the countryside:

but this is the argument where rural comes out with urban, you've got people making laws or making strategies for rural people when they live in the town, yeah so there's no connection, there's this great disconnect problem, now whether that's true or not I'm not actually certain because quite a lot of the people who make those stuff actually live with us these...but there is an urban bias because the problems occur in urban areas yeah I mean that's the social problems occur, you know the reason that these rich people live with us and travel from here to Leeds is white flight yeah cos they've created such unsocial conditions in [the city], you get beaten at night, you daren't go

out on the street, you get robbed you know there's crime, alcohol all this stuff, housing problems, erm it's all very great and fun but it isn't anywhere to bring your kids up yeah so they, what do they do, they move out here and bring their kids up out here (UK policy maker 002)

so, although many of the comments highlight more generalised views of rural life, they illustrate the tensions and potential difficulties involved in making policy for, or working in and with, rural communities (or, perhaps, other communities viewed as 'different' such as gypsy communities).

### ***Constructing Difference: Agriculture***

One of the core ways that rural is positioned as being different to urban is the role of agriculture, in terms of being a specific type of business that is not comparable to other business types, but also the role of agriculture in shaping the way that the countryside looks. However, the rhetoric from central government about the lack of difference between urban and rural has been pervasive. In order to comply with such rhetoric, policy-makers construct careful arguments about differences. They also don't want to be seen as being out of sync with national policy rhetoric:

...I think there is a difference between urban and rural. I wouldn't argue anything about the connectivity between urban and rural um...I wouldn't argue about that at all. I wouldn't argue there's a lot of similarities and issues in you know...if you're poor you're poor whether you live in the city or the countryside, you know poverty is poverty. I wouldn't argue against that, I would argue that you know good businesses need a business plan and they need to be able to market. But I think where I do believe...I do believe there is a difference between urban and rural agendas, and um...one is that you know if you're poor in a small hamlet its more difficult to get to services for example than it is if you live in an urban area...I believe that the deprivation is much more hidden in a rural area because it gets...hidden in a rural area than is the case in an urban area because...because...the data collect...the databases that we work to today still do not drill down sufficiently to expose that hidden stuff ... I think there's...I think there's the business about masked issues particularly in respect of deprivation...I think that...perhaps agriculture is the easiest one to use, and it's only my personal view, others would have other views but I don't believe agriculture is just like any other business...the agricultural...the business that is agriculture totally underpins what our whole countryside looks like, you know which other businesses

don't. So when it comes to other businesses and the difference I mean my gut feeling tells me this (Y&H policy maker 006)

Agriculture is therefore used to support arguments in favour of the inherent and enduring differences between rural and urban areas. However, as noted by Holloway and Kneafsey (2004) agriculture has become an increasingly specialised activity undertaken by relatively few people, and remote from the experience of most urban, and indeed many rural, dwellers. Besides 'scientific' evidence, participants relied on gut feelings and other more embodied reactions to explain the differences. But this can cause internal conflict in wanting to present agriculture as different at one level whilst being the same on another level:

Respondent: I mean I think that...I think that...I get a bit sort of caught on this one because at one level I would say the farmers are just like any other business, and should be treated as a business and OK, er you know we should be mainstreamed and [laughs] and then I find myself thinking special kindings [sic] for farmers so...and there is a bit of a conflict there.

Interviewer: In what sense a conflict?

Respondent: Well if you are saying they should be treated like any other business then you shouldn't also be wanting special treatment for them in terms of extra advice or help to...(policy maker 004)

The previous Labour government's campaign to present rural and urban as broadly similar has really become embedded in people's minds:

And then I think there's the issue of...this argument that you hear quite a lot you know are rural businesses any different to urban businesses? Are...is agriculture any different to any other business you know? Um...we shouldn't be separating our towns from our cities, there's an absolute you know critical linkage between urban and rural um...in urban and rural contexts really. They are dependent upon each other and I think that's been a very strong sort of message that's come through over the recent times. (Y&H policy maker 006)

Yet despite the rhetoric and wanting to adhere to this, many policy makers do feel that there is a real difference in rural areas which primarily stems from the agricultural basis of the



economy and the landscape. Although the UK New Labour government tried to construct urban and rural as being primarily similar, agriculture is often the basis for arguments of difference. Agriculture is argued to be intrinsically 'rural', for example Gallent *et al* (2008: 115) suggest that farming's embeddedness within rural society is part of the rustic agrarian image of the countryside ('the rural idyll'), popular in the English psyche, while Halfacree (1993, quoted in Holloway 2004) states that agriculture is clearly a key dimension of social understandings of the rural. The following comment from an East Yorkshire policy maker illustrates the commitment to a discourse of similarities but trying to build in an element of difference too, so that rural and urban can be differentiated from one another:

I've no evidence it's just a gut feel really that...it's just a different...it's just a difference in the...I don't know what the word is. The...the nature of a lot of what underpins a rural business, the types of people; you know they, the lifestyle where people want to do what they want to do. So...you know I'm one of those people who would not argue about the linkages at all, would not argue that there are many similarities but I feel strongly that there are differences. (Y&H policy maker 006)

In comparison, for the Italian respondents, urban areas were often viewed as being different to rural areas yet urban people were seen as welcome new residents to rural areas, as urban people *wanted* to live in the countryside, as they could appreciate the quality of life on offer from having known the 'darkness' and 'danger' of the city. In the Abruzzo region, the people that were interested in farm work tended to be from urban areas and who wanted a rural lifestyle. This included people attracted by quality of life as well as those for whom the city did not offer suitable agricultural employment. Local young people often wanted to get away from the area:

...lavorano ragazzi che hanno lasciato Bari o Napoli per lavorare qua, perchè nella grossa città industriale incontro più lavoro mentre qui è un modo di realizzare anche un modello di vita...Quindi ecco magari i giovani [della paese] va ma fare poliziotti e galipoli e gli americani vengono lavorare [della paese]...Cui abbiamo già diversi stranieri, ho una pittrice, persone che possono lavorare benissimo a distanza, non, abbiamo uno scrittore, abbiamo uno 'designer' chi ... perchè non hanno bisogno di vivere a Roma, e però la qualità della vita è che tosto questa...si, però ecco per chi vieni della città e già riconoscibile o ma la qualità della vita per chi in nato qua ancora non, um c'è riprovare lo schifo per la città, poi ancor forse...(Italian policy maker 001)

The young people working here have left Bari or Naples to work here, because they can't find the work they are looking for in industrial cities, but it is also a lifestyle choice...Local youths (from the village) go and work in other parts of Italy and the Americans come to work (in the village)...We have a diverse range of different people, a painter, a writer, a designer, people who can work remotely, who don't have to live in Rome, and because the quality of life is more difficult there. People who come from this area perhaps don't appreciate the quality of life because they don't know what living in the city is like so in some ways it's easier to attract people who come from the city kind of environment where, you know, the city, there's lots of problems and things to appreciate this kind of lifestyle, than it would be to attract and convince local people. (author's translation)

This policy maker went on to comment that the people moving into the village preferred the safety of the area, where one doesn't need to lock one's car at night, compared to the danger of the city, which correlates to the comments made above by a UK policy maker about the dangers of living in a city like Leeds. Despite these comments from one Italian policy maker on the desirability of a rural livelihood, a couple of Italian respondents also pointed out less idyllic features of 'working the land'. For one agriturismo owner (Italian local food business 007) and a policy maker (Italian policy maker 002) working the land was associated historically with being a poor man's work. They both commented that typically working the land had been seen as a punishment. According to the policy maker, working with farms to preserve traditional and autochthonous products, in Italy the common image of farming is of being low paid and hard work, while the agriturismo owner said that he had always been told to get an education and a good job or they'll make them work with sheep as a punishment. From their perspectives then, working the land was traditionally promoted as being a last resort. Such comments illustrate how, for some people, rural living and working can be far from idyllic, instead resulting in hard physical work with little financial reward. These images of rural working are often obscured by notions of a rural idyll which reifies and reconstructs peasant agriculture but without the hardship, as Corti (2009) notes:

Anche in Italia, dove per lungo tempo la cultura dominante ha trasmesso immagini denigratorie dell'attività rurale – il contadino, la sua 'gastronomia', ma anche le sue abilità manuali (agricole e artigianali), i suoi passatempi, sono oggetto di idealizzazione e di amorevole ricostruzione (p250)

Also in Italy, where for a long time the dominant culture has conveyed disparaging images of rural activities – the peasants, their ‘cuisine’, but also their manual abilities (agricultural and artisanal), their hobbies, these are now all objects of idealisation and romantic reconstructions (author’s translation)

Barham (2003) makes a similar point in stating that concepts like terroir and heritage reflect ‘a conscious and active social construction of the present to recover and revalorize elements of the rural past to be used in asserting a new vision of the rural future’. Having looked at the ways that the research participants continue to draw on the general differences between town and countryside (or urban and rural), I will now turn to consider food specifically as a feature that distinguishes rural areas and people from urban areas and people.

### ***A Taste of Rurality – Rural Food Specificities***

For the respondents involved in my research, urban areas were presented as simultaneously being dangerous and threatening, and cosmopolitan and exciting. Urban people were seen to have different food knowledges compared to rural people who might be more ‘in touch’ with how food is produced. Rural areas were seen as offering an opportunity for gaining such knowledge, as being spaces that offered the time to appreciate and savour local food. In contrast, urban areas were constructed as spaces of hurriedness with a need for convenience. In particular, supermarkets are seen as being urban food shopping experiences. However, it is worth be cautionary, as these essentialised images may diverge from the lived experiences of people in both rural and urban areas.

Respondents perceived the opportunity to ‘escape to the country’ as something particularly attractive for urban dwellers. They imagined that being in the country would make people feel more relaxed and would enable them to have the time to ‘make the effort’ to buy and savour local food, something that the city did not encourage or even offer. The countryside is seen as offering traditions that have been lost to (disconnected) urban residents who relish being able to feel part of a community and having the time to experience food with a story. Evidence from the interviews suggests that buying and consuming local food is seen as something that requires a certain amount of effort, both from the perspective of the producer and the consumer. This concept of effort is, I will argue, connected to traditional ideas of the rural idyll in that rural areas are synonymous with having the time to identify and seek out local food. This concept of taking time for food results from the perceived slower pace of rural life, set in opposition to the faster pace of urban life, yet is something that has not been explored in the literature (although Tregear 2011 briefly mentions the concept of ‘effort’).

The idea of local food as requiring more 'effort' or as being part of a special trip suggests that the perceived slower pace of life in rural areas enables one to take the time to search out and savour local food. Food can be seen as a way of performing rurality, helping to reassure people that some aspect of their imagined rural and agricultural life continues. Of course, this ideal may actually conceal the noisy realities of rural life and food production, in particular the demand for local food chains means that rural areas need to be productive spaces with the associated 'noises' of production and transportation. In a localised food chain all parties are seen to have to make more 'effort' and this is set in contrast to large-scale intensive production and the supermarket model of food production and consumption which is viewed as easy, convenient and accessible to all (i.e. not special, something that anyone can do). However, people moving to the countryside in search of this peace and quiet and a slower pace of life aren't always prepared for the realities of farming, as the farmer below discussed in relation to their flock of geese:

you open the doors and all these geese all come rushing out, you know wings flapping and squawking sort of, the first few minutes they all come out squawking and that, anyway we had a man came up and er he said 'I've er come to complain, the geese are disturbing me, can't you do something about the geese? It is disturbing, it is ruining my quality of life'...And er [my husband] said to him well I'm very sorry about that, there's not, what do you expect? And he said 'well they are noisy, they wake me up on a Sunday morning, I can't have a sleep-in you know on a Sunday morning.' And erm well [we] said well what do you expect us to do about it? He said well couldn't you put an elastic band on all their beaks in the morning to stop them squawking! (laughs) and it was, he was serious, it was serious, and he really did think that you could put a er band on their beaks to stop them squawking in the morning...you know but all the people on all the estates complain of the noise, and you shouldn't be driving a tractor on a Sunday morning cos we're sleeping in.... this estate that's across here now, they got a petition up that we mustn't start a tractor up on a Saturday morning, on a Sunday, on a weekend mornings because we disturb their quality of life, you know, everybody's, it's the quality of life that they've come to the country for, and, but you aren't expected to farm. (East Yorkshire farmer 012)

So, noisy geese and tractors are considered nuisances by people moving to the countryside, spoiling the 'rural idyll' that they had moved to experience. In turn, country people are expected to understand. In a different vein, rural residents were seen by some interviewees as more virtuous than people from remote towns and cities. For example, in talking about

farmers' markets to a farmer who sold some produce at farmers' markets, he expressed a concern about 'non-genuine' (i.e. those who were not directly involved in growing or making their product) businesses attending farmers' markets, especially where the produce had been purchased from a wholesaler and not actually produced by 'farmers'. However, this was only seen as a problem if the seller was from an urban area, whereas 'country' people could be permitted to sell produce that wasn't their own, by virtue of being 'genuine' country people:

... they used to be farmers and they found themselves in financial difficulties and they moved to a little smallholding near, near Hunmanby, up there, and they're really old fashioned and there's about 3 or 4 brothers and they do little markets all over the place, Pickering, South Cave, York, Skipton, you name it, they're everywhere, they're everywhere, and they're genuine you know genuine country people and do you know they wouldn't, they probably, they wouldn't be working if they didn't do what they are, now you know what I mean so actually we all, we know they're not genuine [producers] but erm, and they don't sell particularly that much you know erm but I suppose they do, they do get a lot of their stuff from local producers I suppose but, but yeah but then there's the out and out other people who don't actually do anything, they er you know, er everything they sell is not quite right you know, they buy it in yeah (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

### ***Buying food – effort and convenience***

At the same time, 'effort' was also presented as something required of consumers in making the decision to buy local food rather than supermarket food:

but er so yeah people do make that conscious effort, and I think people are looking now to erm to just I you just get a little bit more quality and erm things and I think people are just prepared to go out of their way and erm, and if, and they like to support local, they like to support local people (East Yorkshire local food business 018)

But as the following policy maker suggests, this effort from consumers will only be forthcoming if they've got the time, food with a story is associated with having time, which is not something often correlated with supermarket shopping:

the other thing to remember is that the majority of consumers if they've got the time they're interested in the story you've got to tell about the product, that's not to say if you're in a supermarket queue but if they coming to a smaller retailer they're actually

quite interested in hearing about the provenance of the various things that you have for sale (UK policy maker 010)

Supermarkets were viewed as creating more effort (for producers) whilst also being perceived as effortless as far as consumers are concerned. Yet, for some consumers who don't live in close proximity to supermarkets, but who nonetheless wish to use them, getting to the supermarket can represent an effort, as can making use of the extended opening hours of supermarkets, as Gillian described:

But you can get the 24 hour ones as well cos I know we went to erm Tesco's in [local town] and we were there at half past eight, nobody there, we were back home at 10, but we made the special effort to say that's what we're gonna do, we're gonna do the grocery shop, when everything starts to get low, we say right ok get the list out, we usually have a list as long as your arm, and just go and do it, go and do it, and come and it's out the way then! (FG3)

Simultaneously supermarkets required virtually no effort from consumers: they become a mundane, everyday space as opposed to a place of experience and sensuality:

if I can go and talk to the people where I'm buying it from you know yeah you can go and talk about it to them, you can talk about it, your guests, to them and vice versa and it's just, you know people just they like it the that it's not just well certainly that it's not from the supermarkets I mean anybody can do that and it doesn't make it special at all does it? (East Yorkshire tourism business 009)

Despite this, a number of participants at the focus groups differentiated between the supermarkets, so that whilst some were mundane (for cheap food), others were presented as special places for 'nice' things, as Kathy, Susan and Yvonne discussed:

Kathy: I go to Marks and Spencer's a lot cos it's more expensive but its quality and there's only me so I, I, you know I want nice things

Susan: I was going to say I like Marks and Spencer's but I don't go there that often cos you do your bigger shop you know in the supermarkets, but you do go into Marks and Spencer's because it's shopping you don't want, you go around putting everything in your basket you know...

Yvonne: No you can't go in there if you're hungry, it's fatal, you've got to eat before you go in! (FG3)

On the whole though, it was suggested that supermarkets represent greater effort for the producers, through stricter regulation and specific quality assurance schemes. Supermarkets' own assurance schemes were seen to require extra investment and adhering to rules and regulations which didn't always make sense. The assurance schemes of supermarkets are additional and separate to those which farmers already adhere to:

I just started dealing with 'em and they got taken over by a very large company that were packing for Tesco's and then you know I didn't really exist anymore then cos they were, you know they were looking for bigger growers, erm you know dictating what you did and what you didn't do and well they also have er we do assurance schemes but they have their own assurance schemes and they're very, very you know it's a lot more investment really...They're stricter really (East Yorkshire farmer 016)

When I talked about supermarket assurance schemes with another farmer, he listed a number of issues that he felt were unnecessary (and occasionally ludicrous) and which had put him off supplying Marks and Spencer's:

Marks and Spencer's have their own [assurance scheme], and one of their biggest issues was do you have fire exits on your lambing shed? Fire exit signs! No, and I won't be doing – cos if lambing shed ever goes up I'll be the last one out, you know and I probably won't get out and anyway is it for the sheep to read, is it for you to read? What is your problem? Do you worm your dog – is one the questions. Right...well what's that gotta do with you whether or not I worm my dog, you know...I said I'm not answering that – they said (adopts official tone) oh you'll have to answer it. Ha (laughs) why bother, why bother? (East Yorkshire farmer 014)

In his opinion, the supermarkets were stipulating criteria that bore no relevance to his operations, and which, for the most part, represented 'common sense'. Yet for consumers the reassurance of such schemes was important, and was something that they could easily identify, although they might interpret the scheme (e.g. the Red Tractor Logo) as meaning that the food was locally produced:

Interviewer: would you say that you specifically look for products that are local in

some way?

Kathy: I just look for the tractor logo

Others: Yeah

Interviewer: you do?

Kathy: Yes I won't buy it if it hasn't got the tractor logo on...Because the, the Union Jack, it can be anything, I didn't know that

Joan: Yes it can be packed in this country

Kathy: As long as they import a whole carcass and joint it up in England, Britain it gets the flag on it but the tractor it has to be raised and slaughtered here in Britain so you know that you've got the standard (FG3)

Eden *et al* (2008a; 2008b) explore how 'knowledge fixes' such as assurance schemes are understood by consumers and show how information provided via logos such as the Red Tractor or Fair Trade did not reconnect consumers so easily and that some consumers found it difficult to evaluate what the schemes really meant. It is not only assurance schemes and logos that are increasingly confusing for consumers, understanding the seasons can be complex too, especially in what Bell (2009) has called a 'world of locals' where what's in season in one continent may be purchased in another. The next section will explore how respondents understood and negotiated seasonality.

### ***Understanding the seasons***

Local food is typically viewed as being seasonal, while supermarkets are perceived to disconnect people from the seasons. Supermarkets were argued to move people away from experiencing the seasons: 'the changing of the seasons is not something that we experience with supermarket food.' (UK policy maker 003). Strawberries were seen as particularly iconic examples of this disconnect with the seasons, as one consumer pointed out:

Joy: Well the one time I did complain at erm I can't remember whether it was a Granways, Safeways, not when it was Somerfield's in the village erm was it was July and they'd got strawberries, and oh I thought strawberries and they were American



strawberries, and I called for a, one of the managers and I said this isn't on, and he said we don't have any choice they just come through, they just do a best buy and that's what they do, and I said not on, not on, not in season (FG1)

The loss of seasonality is directly linked here to the purchasing policies of supermarket chains, where local stores have no control over their stock. Disconnection from food production, and therefore the knowledge of what foods are in season, as well as how food is produced were one of the central themes of the 2002 Curry Report on Sustainable Food and Farming (see also Holloway 2004 on reconnection). Consumers were aware of the change in seasonality of food, and the erosion of seasonal food availability currently, which can be attributed to refrigerated transport and the supermarkets:

Kathy: You know things have made, refrigeration's made a difference, we can get things from all over the world now that weren't available

Gillian: Well you always knew it was summer when you could smell cucumber in sandwiches, cos there was nothing more summer to me than cucumber, that smell you know but now I mean it's

Linda: Well you can get cucumber, cos if you can't get cucumber locally they'll bring them in from, they fly them in!

Yvonne: They go round and round.

Kathy: And it's because they've got refrigeration, and I think as well they treat some things don't they with some sort of chemical.

Joan: They must do mustn't they?

Susan: Yes they do to stop them ripening.

Others: Yes

Dorothy: But you see that wasn't available then, you ate what was available in the season

Susan: But you knew the seasons, which fruit and vegetables were available, you never ate anything out of season

Others: No

Susan: In the winter it was cauliflower, cabbage, swede, sprout, carrots...

Dorothy: But you knew it was all local didn't you? When we were kids it was all local you know but...

Kathy: Yeah in the summer you had green beans, peas, you know salad broad beans (FG3)

This dialogue among the consumers at one of the focus groups shows detailed knowledge about the reasons behind changes in the food chain (transport and refrigeration) and links in to Bell's (2009) idea of a 'world of locals', where the global food system necessitates knowledge of what's in season in different parts of the world. But it also suggests the reification of times gone by with the assumption that most food was local and seasonal in the past. It is not only customers who are 'out of touch' with the seasons, one business suggested that (some) people running food businesses such as restaurants also worked on the same principles as supermarkets with year-round availability. She stated that:

You know, so they're, they're, it's unusual for chefs to be kind of au fait with seasons and things... most cafes and restaurants they want one vegetable wholesaler who'll just come and supply them with everything, it's fairly unusual to find a restaurant that will say 'right, this is August, it's French bean and runner bean season, we'll put that, you know we'll build the menu around that, and we'll get it locally – they just don't think like that, so they'll suddenly decide in December that, you know, their menu has to have French beans (East Yorkshire organic food business 006)

Responding to such demands from restaurants and consumers is argued as being more difficult for local food businesses specialising in seasonal foods. One respondent also suggested that farmers' markets felt the pressure to offer consumers a choice akin to the 'supermarket standard' so that:

You know, it was like the classic, not so long ago, the strawberry lady got kicked off Hull market for not being able to supply strawberries all year round! (East Yorkshire business 014)

This resulted in the replacement supplier 'just buying them in! Buying them in, yeah, buying them in from wherever you, you know, and that's ha, ha, because the organisers think oh you know if you've got strawberries there they've gotta be there every, every month.' (East Yorkshire business 014). The 'standard' set by the supermarkets is here suggested as influencing how farmers' markets need to operate to attract and satisfy customers, a point made by a farm shop too, who commented that if she doesn't offer the foods demanded by consumers who don't 'get' seasonality then she risks losing custom:

we get an occasional comment because obviously when certain veggies go out of season they rocket in price but they want the item, you know like avocados are only in, in a season but when they're out of season I can still get them and they want them but the price just shoots up on a weekly basis, and they still can't get that, a lot of customers still can't get well if you want strawberries in November you have to pay for them. I try not to do, I try not to do things out of season but the trouble with being a small producer is that people want bananas all year round and if you can't supply them they will just and look somewhere else for them so if I can get them, the basics, then I do but I don't tend to, I don't do strawberries all year I do them when they're in season things like that, yeah difficult. (East Yorkshire farm shop 019)

Another business attending farmers' markets was adamant that seasonality was what would set farmers' markets apart from other food retailers:

we just sell what we have, and people say oh have you got broccoli or you got cauliflower and I say well it's out of season you know and it's er you know we can't do it you know but they ask us for peppers and you know, they don't understand seasonality! (laughs) but we keep it seasonal you know that's the thing (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

Although I am concerned here with seasonality and the erosion of knowledge regarding which foods are seasonal when, the last few examples have also illustrated how seasonality is affected by politics associated with the spaces of food production and consumption. These can vary from supermarkets to farm shops and farmers' markets, and the next section will

explore such issues in more detail.

### ***Spaces of Local Food Shopping***

The space in which food is purchased also affects the way in which people think about it. In contrast to large, soulless supermarkets, farm shops and other rural-based retailers are seen as being intrinsically *local*, for example, by being attached to a farm – and this makes the experience more intimate than a large retail unit like a supermarket. Reiterating Holloway and Kneafsey's (2000: 290) point that the space of consumption is as symbolic as the produce consumed, one tourism provider, comments on the importance of purchasing food from a village location, or from an outlet connected to a farm:

I suppose even local you think of as, because you're buying it from a farm shop, you know, actually attached to the farm or a retail unit or whatever it is, attached to the farm, you're feeling then you know it is local it's not just a big retail area somewhere, you know it's based in a, well yeah in a village really on the whole (East Yorkshire tourism business 009)

Some consumers at a focus group felt that the trend for young people to go off to university rather than staying in their home town had changed their food tastes, changing from 'bland' British food to spicier food available in towns and cities:

Linda: But we carried on how our parents had brought us up but by the time our children had become older there were all these new take-aways

Yvonne: They just accepted them, that was part of their lives.

Susan: Yes I think it was to fit in with everyone else as well you know

Yvonne: And lifestyles changed didn't they? You know a lot of kids were leaving home when they were younger you know so they were obviously at universities or whatever, going to Leicester or Manchester or whatever, and they ate differently,

Kathy: Than Hornsea! (FG3)

By moving to towns and cities for a university education, the young people were seen to develop more 'cosmopolitan' tastes, especially compared to the parents' generation who had

experienced traditional food that they had been involved in producing (on the allotment, baking in the kitchen).

The next section will further develop this idea of connection-disconnection, examining how interviewees talked about the different interactions that occurred when buying and eating local food.

### ***Knowledge of Food – (Dis)Connectedness***

In relation to local food, knowing about the methods of food production were not seen as urban attributes, reinforcing the Curry Report's (2002) notion that consumers and producers need to be (re)connected. Reconnection can refer to knowing the seasons (as outlined above), knowing how food is produced and by what means, and to the material practices of buying food at farmers' markets or farm shops. Holloway (2004: 323) outlines representations of non-farming publics as being ignorant about farming and needing to be educated about the 'truth' of food production. As was seen in the last chapter, many food producers also saw policy makers as ignorant about the realities of farming and food production. Yet, as Holloway notes (p325), agricultural shows carefully manage the representations of food production, so that the stages which cause squeamishness amongst consumers were omitted (see also Stassart and Whatmore 2003a). Consumers are not always able to gain certain knowledges.<sup>115</sup> I came across this concern too, both from a butcher<sup>116</sup> and a food fair organiser:

...it's difficult with children isn't it? Because I mean I know when we're going into schools to educate them about food you can't really take in bits of meat and say this is from this. You have also got the thing about you know people are vegetarian; you've got to be careful that you're not offending...different religions and all sorts of things and multicultural you don't want to offend or upset anybody. We've never talked about meat interestingly. We've always mainly centred it around fruit and vegetables or cheese, or yoghurt or something like that, *where the animal survives* (East Yorkshire policy maker 007, emphasis added)

As one consumer observed 'and they don't really want it to look like an animal, it's easier to go into a supermarket and have it cling-film wrapped and it's just like that' (Joy, FG1)

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<sup>115</sup> Although television programmes like the BBC's Kill It, Cook It, Eat It series which follows the journey of farm animals from the pasture to the plate might go some way to providing these knowledges.

<sup>116</sup> An interviewee (a butcher) referred to his colleague who could cut up animals' bodies once they had been killed, but he could not accept the actual process of killing.

**Figure 18. Packaging of beef mince from a UK supermarket (source: author's photograph)**



Figure 18 shows packaging from one UK supermarket of beef mince, and the image of farming presented is one where animals are absent, perhaps confirming Joy's comment about the distance between the meat and the animal it came from.

Following on from a discussion of what organic production means and how consumers understand this, one producer moved on to discuss the various things that he had been asked when selling his produce at farmers' markets suggesting that attempts to bridge the disconnect between production and consumption is not altogether unproblematic. Although he confirmed that he liked speaking to consumers at farmers' markets, he was frustrated by the questions that he felt people asked without actually understanding what they were asking – particularly relating to terms like 'organic' and 'free range'. He responds by:

I sort of, I say we produce our own, it's fed from our own stuff and tell 'em all about it and erm then they'll ask is it free range? You go well it's in a grass field, erm they get these little things and half of them don't really know what they mean. (East Yorkshire Farmer 008)

And that:

You know I was asked the other day is you lamb free-range? Erm, yes! Most sheep you will find are kept outside – it's what woolly coats are for! (East Yorkshire Farmer 008)

Another farmer had also had the same experience, suggesting that people were applying terms developed for chickens to other farm animals:

No, I say, people, you get silly people erm asking is it, is it free-range? What free-range sheep?! No we have a massive shed, massive shed, it's huge – they go now you're tekking the piss aren't you? Yeah! (East Yorkshire farmer 014)

And he went on to describe another question from a consumer:

You know, someone said do you feed them? You know yeah it helps! Yeah, do you feed them other than grass? Yeah, because we have, to get 'em right for you this is what we have to do, I'm a sheep farmer, I know what I'm doing yeah. (East Yorkshire farmer 014)

He felt that television chefs such as *Jamie Oliver* had influenced people to ask questions, particularly in terms of 'free range' food. But that breeding pigs and chickens was different to cattle and sheep and that some of the information presented had therefore misled consumers who might not appreciate these differences. Another farmer suggested that whilst at farmers' markets he could easily spot a 'type' that would ask questions about food, without necessarily knowing what it meant or what the right or wrong answer should be:

Respondent: [laughs] er it's, we get a type and you can see them coming funnily enough!

Interviewer: Can you?

Respondent: Erm, people are interested generally yes that I enjoy, it's the sort of ones that think it's the right thing to ask, they don't really understand why, they'll then buy about half a pound of mince, you know, it's erm, very rare they go on, go on the ones that ask all the questions that you know get, end up going out with great lump of beef, they'll probably end up with, one of the great things was when the BSE scare was on,

erm, in the middle of York parl, Parliament Street doing a farmers' market and this woman proudly pronounced that erm because of the BSE scare, she'd packed up eating beef, oh dear I'm sorry to hear that, 'can I have a pound of mince?!' [laughs] Yes dear! Or burgers, something daft, because it wasn't actually a lump of beef she thought that was fine! I thought yeah right you know I've heard it all now! 'I don't eat beef but can I have some mince!' Yeah! Bonkers, there you go, it's part of the fun of it. No, enjoying customers we call it! [laughs] (East Yorkshire Farmer 008)

Correspondingly, consumers at one of the focus groups were concerned about whether they had the '*right*' knowledge to ask the right questions at farmers' markets. Knowing about food is, thus, not seen as something that urban consumers are familiar with. The woman's lack of knowledge about beef is tied up with the fact that she was attending a farmers' market in the city centre of York, one of the larger urban areas close to East Yorkshire. Chicken was a particularly important product for the consumers at the focus groups, and something which consumers felt knowledgeable about, as Kathy explains:

Kathy: Their free-range chickens, when you strip all the meat off the bones, the bones of the bird are really strong, you know they've got proper leg bones and there's like a sharp pointy bit of bone that I always have to be careful I don't get in the meat cos Chloe would just wolf it down anyway! But that's really thick and strong and you go and get them from other supermarkets and they're weedy, I mean if you know, it was on television, was it in, was it Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall?

Others: Oh yeah

Kathy: And you know chickens need, they need the grubs from the grass and the earth, scratching about, to grow properly, and have the erm right things for you, it, he did a thing on it and apparently you know these chickens that you buy if they're cheap they're just nearly all fat, they've not real value you know... You know the Coop ones, they're not cheap I know they're not, but they're, they're good, you can tell they've had a life outside, they've not been stuck in somewhere, pecking at you know constituted food. (FG3)

Kathy's comments are interesting, as chicken was identified by Jackson (2010) as a food which consumers were particularly concerned about, but in this instance free range is assumed to mean that chickens live their lives outside whereas it can actually refer to indoor chickens



having more space as opposed to being in a cage (see Miele and Evans 2010 for a discussion). At a separate focus group, one participant stated that 'I could do away with meat, I just need chicken and fish I think' (FG2). Thus, obscuring the reality that chicken is also 'meat' from animals' bodies.

Knowledge about food can come from a variety of sources, including the recent proliferation in cookery books and television programmes about food. Another interviewee indicated that while these television programmes, such as the ones mentioned above, were interesting and generally informative, they gave consumers the wrong impression of what farming is really like. They suggested that (real) farmers maintained a detachment from their animals, which were viewed not as pets but as a means of producing affordable food:

farmers farm, they farm an animal for a purpose, and there's a detachment between that, they don't call their cows Daisy and they don't pet them, they're there, you look after them and you love 'em in a detached way if you're a caring farmer but you don't pet them whereas like the TV thing like Jimmy's Farm and all stuff like that, they portray animals as pets that have a happy life and it's not really like that, intense farming is not like that and if it wasn't for intensive reared chicken and intensive reared pork it would be extortionately expensive, people wouldn't be able to afford it. (East Yorkshire butcher 005)

Intensive farming is positioned as a more detached and unemotional practice of rearing animals to provide affordable food. This farmer indicates that Jimmy's Farm is not a true representation of farming, and may be more akin to 'hobby farming' (but see Holloway 2001 who discusses smallholders and their relations with animals as 'friends' but also simultaneously a source of food). However, another farmer who rears 'alternative' animals in a more intensive fashion commented how some geese were distinguishable from the rest and therefore they became more attached to these animals which might have had a bit of black, or be particularly characterful – to the extent that they might not be slaughtered (East Yorkshire farmer 012).

As suggested above regarding a lack of knowledge about the seasons, in Italy one policy maker suggested that working with local food or historical breeds required a different knowledge that had been lost. Specifically, he suggested that working with flours produced industrially was easier and resulted in a more uniform product than working with 'artisanal' flours and as such it was hard to create a demand for these products or to commercialise their production (Italian

policy maker 002). And he went to say that the differences in such products meant that people's tastes would need to change if they were to succeed, for example in making pasta with soft grains rather than the harder durum wheat.

### ***Necessary Intensity – Feeding the Population***

Farming intensively was presented as being necessary in the UK due to the demands from the population for cheap, convenient and readily available food, according to a farmer who viewed their business as being niche and fairly small-scale (although only in comparison to more intensive, large-scale operations, as her business could still be considered large in comparison to smallholdings for example). She suggested that supplying supermarkets led to a specific style of farming, different to her own:

[the animals are] born, 30,000 in a shed, seven weeks they're killed and that's it, and it's just a real, and they supply for sort of all the supermarkets do Cherry Valley, that sort of place but I mean that is how you have to supply food in Britain, erm for the amount of er food that's needed (East Yorkshire farmer 012)

The same butcher who discussed the television programme Jimmy's Farm also claimed that intensive farming would not disappear because consumers can't afford for it to, as intensive farming is necessary to ensure a reliable and affordable supply of meat (this is a contested point, as many see intensive food production as externalising the costs of pollution and so on, thereby not reflecting the true cost of food – see Pretty 2003). For the butcher and farmer above celebrities like Jamie Oliver were responsible for promoting negative images of intensive farming – the farmer below agreed:

what with the cookery programmes and people bothered about their health nowadays I think and going down that line of buying healthier things and you know but and the, and the programme, television programmes your Jamie Oliver type you know, against intensive farming and things like that puts a lot of people off and they'll, but what we like, our, we are always open for anybody to come you know (East Yorkshire farmer 012)

In addition to the butcher above, one farmer I spoke to also talked about the Jimmy's Farm programme. Despite being an intensive farmer himself, he greatly enjoyed watching it, but was still not convinced that smaller scale methods of food production could prevail. This illustrates the commitment to productivist agriculture in East Yorkshire (amongst some

people). He also felt that farmers' markets and other alternatives would be for small-scale and new-start businesses but wouldn't have a broader impact:

Erm I think yeah I think the intensive agriculture will continue, yeah but I think there'll always, there will always be people who in small ways whatever that will, that's probably where the farmers' market is, it'll be more of the mebbe that is where the starters come in you know that's mebbe how they can get in, I mean when you watch Jimmy's Farm I love watching it ... and you know what he's doing it is er it's encouraging to, to other people in countryside to er to follow his thing but I, the, it may be limited obviously if it gets too popular then erm you know it will be, it will start being competitive and erm prices and things won't be as good will it? (East Yorkshire farmer 016)

For this farmer, then, increasing alternative production is good and should be encouraged but he felt it could only grow up to a point, beyond which he thought the price premium would be cancelled out.

#### **6.4. Who can produce local food? Authenticity and bogus-ness**

During the research, many comments were made relating to bogus 'farmers' attending farmers' markets concerned businesses from Leeds and other more distant urban places, which were seen in a more negative and threatening light than rural producers that were known or familiar (see Smithers and Joseph 2010 for a discussion of authenticity at farmers' markets). 'Country' customers are seen as having the responsibility to insist on local food, because if they don't then no-one else will, as this regional level policy maker described from a situation where he was organising a regional meeting and specifically wanted local food for the lunch, which he had to specify, thus reinforcing earlier comments regarding 'effort':

I demand, I demanded local food...but it would cost a couple of extra quid per head so he would do local food but it was at a surcharge of two pounds a head, which I paid, and it was very good local food, but again you see local food's more expensive, local wasn't cheaper, making him source from his local butcher, making him tell me where the cow came from, making him tell me where the strawberries came from and everything else, the food was excellent and he did it very well, but that extra cost to him rather than buying it off Brake Brothers, was a couple of quid cos he had to go to

extra effort but you can insist, but if you don't insist, if we don't insist as the country customer then nobody else is going to insist (UK policy maker 002)

Consumers and businesses (who are also consumers themselves) reflected critically on farmers' markets. There was concern that the products on offer might not be 'genuine', and this was a concern that was mirrored in Italy, with mention of businesses selling supposedly 'typical' foods which were not typical (Abruzzo policy maker 002). There were also reports of companies using the earthquake to promote their products even though they hadn't been affected (Abruzzo business 009). Another policy maker in Italy reported that farmers had been sold seeds claimed to be a 'heritage' (or heirloom) seed when in fact they hadn't been – this had led to them establishing a special 'authentic' centre growing genuine plants (Italian policy maker 003). In East Yorkshire, one business purporting to sell genuine local products has recently been prosecuted for selling products that were neither local nor his own, causing concern among other local producers about the impact of this on the trust they had developed with consumers. Consumers at one of the focus groups were aware of this, suggesting that importing produce was 'naughty' and that farm shops can be misleading:

Linda: Well yes because I use farm shops normally

Susan: Having said that some of the farm shops import.

Others: Yes.

Susan: They're naughty, some of them are not what they say they are! These farmers, and farmers' markets, hmmm, they, it came to light and they were importing stuff but weren't saying anything. (FG3)

On the part of producers, a number of respondents alluded to the effort required in producing food at a smaller-scale, in direct contrast to the industrially produced products which do not require skill or knowledge at an individual level. Many viewed local food as being harder to produce given the smaller quantities involved and the impact that this can have on price.

And, er, if anything and I agree what sometimes people say about the, they're quite expensive sometimes some of the stalls on farmers' markets and especially the meat, some of the meat products and the prepared foods which I know take time and effort, they're all, they're not done on a factory scale of course (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

For policy makers wanting to stimulate economic development and job creation, farmers' markets were difficult as the people running such businesses may prefer the 'kitchen table' scale according to one policy maker:

In the right location they can do well, but the kitchen-table scale of production can't expect a huge level of production. (Y&H policy maker 011)

And another agreed that:

I think we should not overplay farmers' market, most of the people who operate and supply and sell through farmers' markets have a fairly limited capacity you know they're operating at the capacity that they want to operate at, they have no particular ambition to become er Richard Branson of the food world you know that ain't what they're at (sic), erm and so it's fairly, fairly limited what they can do (East Yorkshire policy maker 013a)

Consequently, local food producers were seen by some respondents as needing protecting and encouragement in their roles due to the difficulties of running a small business on a sole trader basis. Local food was seen as being particularly difficult as the 'product' (i.e. growing and rearing animals and crops) is seen as intrinsically different to the 'products' of other business sectors, and being passionate again comes into the equation:

I have got an understanding although it wasn't local food I was organising, I have got the principal understanding that actually its quite hard running your own business, doing your own marketing, doing your own advertising, sending everything off on time and getting everything done. Um...they've got an even harder job because they're also growing their product or rearing the product and they often work...fifteen hours a day on a regular basis, seven days a week, they work very hard...They are very passionate about what they do a lot of them. Um...and they don't always send things off on time or get things to you on time and that's not because they mean to it's because they are doing all...you know they work very hard. (UK policy maker 007)

Writing eleven years ago, Holloway and Kneafsey (2000: 286) suggested that farmers' markets represented a new and distinctive dimension to the placeless foodscape of contemporary Britain. They also stated that (p287) farmers' markets are associated with particular discourses of rurality and food quality, affecting their location and success. The map of

farmers' markets indicates no farmers' markets in East Yorkshire in 1999, and very few in the East of England more generally. This corresponds to the general emphasis on alternative food networks as being a feature of western areas of England, as was mentioned by many of the research participants. Although farmers' markets have since appeared in East Yorkshire, the numbers are still lower than those in parts of Western England, and therefore Holloway and Kneafsey's (2000) observations may still apply in East Yorkshire.

### ***Provenance and Trust***

Holloway and Kneafsey (2000: 293) posit that one way of reading farmers' markets is as an alternative space which offers a challenge to the dominance of the supermarket-productivist nexus. Yet in East Yorkshire, farmers' markets have become established in an area that also supports this supermarket-productivist nexus. As Holloway and Kneafsey suggest (p287) farmers' markets also include products raised and produced in 'conventional' ways, as the primary criterion is that the product is *local* not necessarily '*alternative*'. Yet by virtue of being in a specific consumption space, such as farmers' markets, farm shops, or food fairs, consumers are making specific assumptions about the quality and freshness of the produce as a result of the *site* of consumption. However, I also found in talking with consumers during the focus groups that they also place a certain amount of trust in supermarkets, as a result of not having a way of finding out whether what the supermarkets say they are selling is actually what they are selling:

Interviewer: you trust that what they're telling you is...

Nancy: No sometimes you have to just take it on trust, cos you can't prove it, depending on what it is

Catherine: Yes I mean it's like having this little tractor mark on the chicken in the supermarkets, the little, the red tractor to show, that's supposed to show that it's British well, I, how convinced am I that it's had its life in this country or whether it's just been packaged in this country

Anthea: Yeah but somewhere in Tesco's they had this is from 'John Smith's Farm' in Norfolk and there is John Smith!

All: Yes!

Anthea: It might only have been finished off in John Smith's farm! (FG1)

Using food to tell 'stories' about the place of production, the methods of production and the person who produced it are increasingly popular in highlighting the provenance. In a similar way, one local restaurant specialising in local sourcing cited customer perceptions as a stimulus for their use of local food. They suggested that customers felt more comfortable if they were able to personally relate to the places their food had come from:

they like to see erm things on the menu that are from places that they can relate to, so they know where Weel is, they know where Drifffield is, they know where Leven is, and they can see that products are coming from these villages that they maybe live in or they have a relative in or a friend or they pass through on the way to work so they're so customers relating to the places that you get things from, I think's important, er it's a comfort thing really for the customer reading the menu, they, they like, it's warm for them the fact that this is from somewhere nearby (East Yorkshire local food business 010)

They were therefore using their menus and the local food as a means of telling a story, both about who had produced it and where it had been produced, but with certain assumptions about the ways that the food had been produced. In telling stories about food, certain parts of the story are included but equally some specific processes are excluded. Using local food and telling stories about the food and the producers would make their customers would think better of them:

so it's, it's putting over that relationship, that close relationship between us and those producers and getting the customers on board, and they're feeling part of it really by stating it on menus erm so, so our own passion for it, erm the customer and getting them on board and getting them to think better of us because we do it (East Yorkshire local food business 010)

The use of stories about local food is being used as a way of connecting customers to the food that they're buying and eating in restaurants as well as supermarkets. In discussing her own consumption of local food, a policy maker elaborated on the ways that she 'knew' about its production, traceability, and the way it reassured her that it had been produced well:

I mean I've got various places that I go to for my produce and I'll know where it's come from. I'll know that I could have driven past that cow at some point in time. I mean I probably won't have done but the point is I know where it's come from and I know that it's been humanely slaughtered, and everything has been OK about it and I also know you know that it's been...what it's been grazed on and probably what its eaten, and everything...if I wanted to know I could know because you, because your local producers know all that information and they know everything about it. (Yorkshire policy maker 005)

This is interesting as she likes the familiarity which is both real but also imagined, and how this leads to a number of assumptions about how the animal has been treated, and how this differs compared to other outlets. She doesn't actually *know*, but feels comforted knowing that she could ask should she want to and therefore that everything is ethical and proper. It also contrasts with the earlier points that livestock are not visible in East Yorkshire, yet some feel that they have seen them.

While Norberg-Hodge<sup>117</sup> has written that 'the local food economy is the root and fibre of the entire rural economy, and efforts to strengthen it thus have systemic benefits that reach far beyond the local food chain itself' she preceded this by suggesting that:

Local production is also often conducive to a gradual reduction in the use of artificial chemicals and other toxic substances. Food sold locally does not need to contain preservatives or additives, and doesn't need to be transported vast distances in lorries or planes. In addition, when we produce food locally, we do not need to subject the land to the conformist rigours of centralised monoculture, eradicating competing plants, birds, insects and other animals. By promoting multi-cultures for local production, we allow people and nature space to move and breathe: diverse people, plants and animals regain their place in local ecosystems.

Despite local food being presented by some as being free of chemicals it is too easy to assume that all local food will be effectively organic. People that I spoke to in East Yorkshire demonstrated continued commitment to the use of agro-chemicals in farming (although organic farming is evident and perhaps even increasing in the area), even where they sold their

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<sup>117</sup> <http://www.localfutures.org/publications/online-articles/reclaiming-our-food> accessed 23 February 2011.



products locally, thus challenging the assumptions made that local is in some way more natural or organic than products purchased through supermarkets and other retailers.

...it is a very entrenched chemical agriculture area...because it's arable, and erm, because farmers have gone down that road for such a long time, there's a certain amount of defensiveness of that and because it is quite a rural area, an awful lot of people are connected, distantly in one way or another, with agriculture, now it could be that that has an effect that organic was seen here as being erm kind of old-fashioned, ridiculous, out there, for longer than it was in the rest of the country, erm that could possibly be a factor. (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

With her reference to organic being perceived locally as 'old-fashioned and ridiculous', organic food production is, therefore, presented as *not* being as progressive or new. In relation to 'defensiveness' regarding conventional agriculture, Padel (2001: 53) notes that the traditional way of promoting organic agriculture has been to identify problems with conventional agriculture, leading to organic farming and farmers being seen as an attack on the rural identity, resulting in defensiveness from conventional farmers. Questions of whether organic will become increasingly important, or whether the changing climate, concepts of peak oil and a growing global population will in fact stimulate a continuation of productivism in the form of 'sustainable intensification'<sup>118</sup> are currently of great significance. While discussing local food with people engaged in food production in an area traditionally embroiled in intensive food production, I found that there is still a strong commitment to producing food in those ways, and to the idea of providing consumers with cheap and plentiful food.

### ***Consuming the local***

Born and Purcell (2006: 200) assert that there is nothing inherently good about local methods of production, which easily can be as unsustainable as those in conventional agribusiness, and that, if the local in question is corn or hog country in Iowa, wheat farms in eastern Washington, or the Central Valley of California, consuming local food means consuming conventional capitalist agriculture. East Yorkshire may be viewed similarly. Consumers were relatively uncritical and assumed that 'local' would be 'better' – as one consumer suggested 'I, you tend to think of it being better for you because it is local, don't you really?' (FG3). Most of the consumers I spoke to suggested that they did look for local food in their everyday shopping, but what 'local' meant could vary by product, vary by the store they were in, and

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<sup>118</sup> see Food 2030 or the Royal Society's 2009 report – Reaping the Benefits: Science and the Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture.

'local' could easily be overridden to satisfy their preferences. Apart from one participant, most of the consumers hadn't thought in detail about how food in East Yorkshire was produced. A point often made in interviews was that in East Yorkshire there used to be more pigs than people, yet the consumers were puzzled about this as they didn't see the pigs:

Joanne: No but if I go out to East Hull, you know if I go to Withernsea or Hornsea or something I'm not aware of, even you know big, over, covered up things, I'm not aware of pigs, pigs and pigs – I mean where are they??

Joy: They are out there.

Catherine: Well they're all on the farms out there, I could take you to some farms out there...The majority of them went into this intensive pig farming, and intensive, it's not very pleasant I don't think to see these intensive pig farms, they shut them all in...

Nancy: So they're in sheds?

Catherine: Yes, yeah (FG1)

These consumers were aware of the methods associated with intensive pig rearing, although again the unpleasant nature had not dissuaded them from consuming the products. And in another focus group, consumers had thought about local food production in a generic, abstract way. One had direct experience of working for a pub which was part a national chain which directly specified exact products, and felt that if given the choice most restaurants and pubs would prefer to source locally. Local farmers were seen to offer high quality produce and there was an underlying assumption that local food would intrinsically be better for them:

Yvonne: there are some pubs that work like that, but I don't, don't usually if they're given free rein they would rather source it locally, because it's better for them

Susan: Yeah quicker

Joan: Yeah and they've got quality control, you know, they're local so if this isn't good back it goes I want something different

Yvonne: But as you said it's easier to erm sort them out isn't it? If you buy local, you

know you can say that was rubbish, you know if it was. But in fact it's usually, it's not a problem usually, you know when you buy local, because they...

Linda: I think they have a high standard, round here, our farmers, haven't they?

Others: Hhmm [general agreement]

Kathy: We've got good farmers round here

Yvonne: You know, from, looking from the other side of it, really, it's good that you do try and support them all isn't it? Cos they're trying to make a living and if we don't buy it then you know...

Kathy: Well, it's use them or lose them! Isn't it? (FG3)

These consumers uncritically accept that local farmers are good farmers in need of support. The same group of people, however, went on to discuss their concerns about chemical residues on food, following on from a discussion of how generally life had improved from conditions experienced by their parents during the war:

Yvonne: ... the thing that worries me is sometimes when I think about it you know I wonder what we are eating sometimes...

Dorothy: Oh I agree

Yvonne: Because of what was, what is sprayed on and all that, and that does worry me at times because there was nothing like that when we were young

Kathy: Yeah just manure on it weren't there?!

[laughter]

Susan: Just a load of manure!

Yvonne: But you wonder now just what is going, what chemicals are being used, and I think that's why we try to buy local because you know you've got more idea of what's

going on haven't you really?

Joan: Yeah well I mean that's the beauty of my, growing my own, having my allotment

Linda: Yes

Kathy: Well that's it, you know what you've put on but I mean farmers have to, to be economical, they've been pushed into using these

Dorothy: Yeah they're struggling anyway aren't they and they've got to do something to help themselves...(FG3)

So, the consumers at the focus groups were aware of the presence of chemicals in food, and this was something that they were concerned about, but they very quickly moved to defend farmers' use of chemicals. Using chemicals in food production was justified by the consumers who suggested that farmers need to keep their costs down, to remain competitive. Government policies are indirectly blamed for pushing farmers into a situation where chemicals were seen to be a necessary part of farming. However, the consumers' discussion here indicates that localness would alleviate their concerns about chemical residues in food, suggesting that local producers would be in some way more trustworthy than food produced 'elsewhere', and that food available when they were younger was purer, all of which draws on ideas of rural idyllicism, whilst simultaneously casting areas of intensive production as an anti-idyllic rural.

### ***Constructing Idylls and Landscapes***

Although agriculture's contribution to rural economies has declined, one policy maker locally saw agriculture's contribution as being broader than purely economic, in terms of heritage, landscapes and she also makes the link to tourism and how local food can contribute towards that – these issues were all combined in the LEADER programme for East Yorkshire (Coast, Wolds, Wetlands and Waterways 2007-2013). This view of agriculture being closely tied up with the way rural areas look can be seen to stem from the notion of the rural idyll, and part of England's heritage, as elaborated by Gallent *et al* (2008: 114) who assert that the countryside is an important part of England's (sic) cultural heritage. One policy maker linked agriculture's contribution in 'producing' a landscape, and a 'heritage', but also in offering 'quality' products for tourists visiting the area:

Then you know you were then starting to look, particularly from the visitor angle, at the hospitality sector and what the offer was. And so you then made the link through to local produce really....And so you made that link through to locally produced stuff um...in the theory it should be of a better quality but also there was the added benefit of the attraction if people were coming to the patch to know they were staying somewhere where they were serving locally produced beef, or lamb, or whatever it was. So...that was quite an important link for us and um...you know right from the word go in defining what we meant by the heritage of the East Riding we had included the agricultural sector, now that wasn't prefabricated really. I mean, that was because the agricultural sector has created over the centuries much of what the heritage of our area is really. And so there was the link with local producers you know, so that was...in some respects it was a tenuous link, in other respects it was a very clear link really. (YH& policy maker 006)

For another, this aspect of agriculture needed to be remembered when thinking about food issues at a national level:

I think this is where sort of the government are looking really at the food issues erm we have to have erm things that are going to work for all, erm the other thing, the environment is as it is because of farmers not in spite of them! (Y&H policy maker 010)

A discursive framework has emerged where farmers produce landscapes and it is this which justifies support for farmers. In the Abruzzo, having a good quality environment was seen as a key strength for the area to capitalise upon. In some ways this promotion of an 'idyllic' and attractive landscape plays a part in constructing and reinforcing the notion of rural as being idyllic in the minds of consumers and others which can influence their food purchases. As the following business (Italian agriturismo 008) explained in relation to why they went down the route of local food:

Appellata: quindi, la nostra ricchezza è proprio la qualità dell ambiente, solo l'ambiente, perchè noi siamo circondate da parchi naturale o alsi riserve...quindi questo è un punto di forza di territorio ecco anche se è limitatamente per un certo tipo agricoltura, però noi facciamo soprattutto agricoltura biologica, perchè l'agricoltura industriale non è pensabile, e altre tutto è un territorio molto interessante proprio da punta di vista turistico, ma i turisti cercano anche servizi qualità, ecco della, del cibo, quindi nella benessere in generale, il cibo è un elemento

Therefore, our main wealth is the quality of the environment, always the environment, because we are surrounded by national parks and natural reserves, so this is a strongpoint of this area, also we are limited to a certain type of agriculture, we primarily practice organic agriculture, because industrial agriculture isn't possible, and so our area is popular with tourists but the tourists are also looking for service quality, and here the food, and wellbeing in general, the food is an element (author's translation)

Consumers were aware of the link between farming and how the landscape looks, although they attributed much of this to the presence of animals, which as suggested earlier, are not prevalent in East Yorkshire:

Kathy: Well that's how they're climbing on the moors and that are managed isn't it so...

Yvonne: Yeah, but you know they have to manage things

Dorothy: Yeah, but our country wouldn't look the way it does if farmers stopped

Joan: No, it would become forests

Susan: It would completely change

Dorothy: You can't afford to lose it, can we? We really can't...

Susan: It would be forested everywhere...

Yvonne: And the animals...

Joan: Yes, you miss them, you know, that year when it was the foot and mouth and everything it was awful

Kathy: And then when they started to move the animals in you know you used to get them all, didn't you, at the sides of the roads, but when this was all happening they were all two and three fields over so they weren't into contact with anybody, that was strange (FG3)

The absence of animals during the 2001 foot and mouth disease crisis may be more perceived than real for East Yorkshire, compared to areas like Cumbria and Devon which were seriously affected and where there are also higher numbers of farm animals. For these consumers keeping the landscape as they are used to seeing it conforms to ideals related to the rural as unchanging and of having attractive landscapes, both of which contribute towards constructions of the rural as idyllic. There is a real commitment in the area to the idea of big farms and intensive methods of production, or what Buttel (2006) has called the 'global agri-industrial model of sustaining the unsustainable'. One farmer running a farm shop talking about the problems of sourcing local products in the area said that although a lot of smaller businesses were diversifying, this was only on a small scale and was only likely to occupy the other members of farming families:

Er, but no there are still small producers doing that, I mean even on some big arable farms there's maybe the wife or the son or daughter-in-law, to make ends meet, they'll do these little things (East Yorkshire farmer 007)

Clear evidence has been presented that the research participants still use distinctions between urban and rural areas in their lives and work, despite academic arguments that such dualities should be abandoned. In particular, agriculture is used as a means of constructing difference between urban and rural areas, even though the literature review showed how governments and academics had sought to blur the boundaries between 'town and country' as rural economies become more broad-based. This section has shown the different ways that interviewees talked about, and thought about, knowledges of food, and how these relations are played out, specifically at farmers' markets where the connections between producer and consumer are supposed to be closer. Knowing about food and its production is seen as a more 'rural' knowledge, whereas urban consumers are presented as unknowledgeable and as asking silly questions. The understandings of food production gleaned from television programmes and other media can lead to false impressions of 'real' farming, where there is little room for emotion and companionable relationships especially in the industrial agricultural landscapes of East Yorkshire (as discussed by the butcher on p238 regarding pet names for livestock). Rural people are argued to 'know' about food production – this 'knowing' relates to ways of producing food, understanding the seasons and knowing where food comes from, particularly in relation of food from animals. The 'effort' required to buy local food was presented as being intrinsic to rural areas, with their 'slower pace of life' (Short 1991) thus drawing on imaginations of rural idyllic-ness.

The next section will specifically highlight how alternative food production methods, and alternative ideas generally, are seen by interview participants as being slower to catch on in East Yorkshire and Abruzzo, or adopted by a few who are seen as ‘unconventional’ or ‘marginal’ in some way, although, as will be discussed, there may be genuine reasons for this ‘slowness’ to adopt. Organic food production is used as a specific example due to the importance it held for interview participants. Organic food was a significant issue for many respondents, and the ways that organic food is presented by the media and others often draws on images of a more natural, authentic way of living and producing food, harking back, again, to rural areas as being more idyllic.

#### **6.5. Context Specific Organic Food Production – East Riding of Yorkshire and the Abruzzo**

The alternative food network literature highlights the potential for alternative food systems to challenge the dominance of mono-cultural agriculture and the globalised food system. However, typically this has resulted from a concentration on areas where intensive agriculture has not been adopted to the same extent as places like East Yorkshire, for reasons relating to difficult terrain, poor fertility and a wetter climate, places like the Abruzzo region, for example (Atkinson *et al* (2007) found similar in Campania). Although local food is not necessarily seen as being organic, it can often be conflated as such (Born and Purcell 2006: 200). Indeed, for many involved in the organic movement, the two are seen as inseparable (Feagan 2007: 36). In the alternative food networks literature, organic production is seen as part of the move toward relocalisation although as will be shown below, the specific conditions and contexts of some areas means that being organic can be more problematic than being local. In addition, Holt *et al* (2006, unpaginated<sup>119</sup>) in a report investigating the organic food market in six European states including the UK and Italy note that ‘to a degree, organic has become associated with the rural idyll which traditional extensive farms can also lay claim to’. Like the rural idyll, organic food production is a contested and multiple term that embraces many different scales and characteristics of ‘organic-ness’ (see Tomlinson 2008). Many have noted the appropriation and the subsuming of organic principles into industrial agriculture (Goodman and Goodman 2001: 102; Smith 2006) as a result of the codification of organic practices into certification schemes. Smith (2006: 449) also observes that grains were the first relatively established markets for organic production. On this basis, it might be expected that organic agriculture would be more prevalent or more accepted in East Yorkshire, but this has not been the case during my research.

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<sup>119</sup> [http://orgprints.org/8440/1/holt\\_Comparison\\_markets\\_EU\\_states.pdf](http://orgprints.org/8440/1/holt_Comparison_markets_EU_states.pdf)



Despite Smith's (2006) arguments that socio-technical niches such as organic food can be more transformative if they align well to the existing socio-technical regime (i.e. conventional food production) the evidence presented below shows that in an area dominated by the conventional socio-technical regime, niches such as organic production are still regarded with some suspicion. Although the research has not specifically concentrated on organic producers, my research has involved a significant number of participants linked to organic food production, and there are other organic producers in East Yorkshire area who were not involved in my research. Organics as a system of food production and the knowledge associated with it is place-specific and often passed on by word-of-mouth rather than through official advisory systems (Morgan and Murdoch 2000). Padel's (2001) research indicated that organic farming fits into the model of innovation diffusion. Building on Padel's work, Risgaard *et al* found that a 'local concentration of organic farms is often created through a process of diffusion, where the adoption of organic practices by one or a few farmers may spread to the local community' and that 'personal and local socio-cultural factors may play an important role' (2007: 448, quoted in Ilbery and Maye 2011: 32). Sutherland and Brown (2007, quoted by Ilbery and Maye 2011) suggested a tendency towards the clustering of organic farms through the neighbourhood effect and what they described as social capital. This relates to the 'existence of social relationships, information exchange, resource sharing, trust and the negotiation of social norms' (2007, 3). As a consequence, organic sub-cultures develop at the local level and such social capital was thought to be most suited to a mixed farming system involving livestock and field crops rather than intensive arable farming.

However, despite the presence of a number of organic producers in East Yorkshire, I have not found evidence of strong support networks leading to the broader diffusion of organic production locally. This confirms Ilbery and Maye's (2011) findings from southern England that organic farming is not, and has never been, spatially clustered building on networks of local champions and 'social capital', but rather is spatially uneven, increasingly heterogeneous and multi-dimensional in character. As such, organic farming can be expected alongside conventional intensive farming, which may also be spatially uneven, increasingly heterogeneous and multi-dimensional in character, a point made by Carolan (2011). Carolan (2011: 7) also describes how 'Global Food', shorthand for the large scale global food provisioning system, creates embodiments which help foster particular knowledges, tastes and feelings about food, and that these understandings (and the consumer "preferences" they enact) lend support to conventional food production and consumption. In his example, the consumer must be conditioned to prefer MacDonald's fast food (p6), or in other words they must learn to be affected by it. Carolan (2011) discusses specific case studies of alternative

food networks and outlines how these specific spaces and the bodies embedded within these become desensitized and even protective about the types of agriculture with which they are most familiar – i.e. people see their local agriculture as ‘normal’. This could equally well be said of the bodies (policy makers, food entrepreneurs and consumers) embedded within the food production / consumption networks of East Yorkshire. For example, an organic grower explained a hostile reception to organics as it is seen to be openly critical of intensive agricultural practices.

...it is quite a rural area, an awful lot of people are connected, distantly in one way or another, with agriculture... I will quite often get one or two members of the audience that are hostile... [at one event] I actually managed to upset everybody in the audience...of course you are criticising the decisions that individual farmers have made and if somebody is sensitive about it, and defensive then they will take that way, but I mean how can you argue for organics if you don't argue against the erm conventional, so in some ways you have to upset people, it kind of goes with the territory (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

While Padel (2001: 57) notes the tensions between organics and conventional agriculture, she suggests that it would be better to emphasise the benefits of organic production.

### ***Organic as ‘Other’***

So, whilst the physical appearance of places (i.e. its geography) can affect the success of local food economies, so too can the people living in those areas. For example the south west is perceived to have more affluent consumers who are educated about food production methods and are more likely to accept new or different ideas, as one producer suggested:

...it's like some people can label something as organic and unless you actually go the farm themselves and collect it from, on that day a lot of people are like well how do, I know, you can say it's organic but it could have all sorts of pesticides and that...Yeah, it's just lack of trust, that's the main obstacle. And they don't obviously, I think there's a bit more awareness about erm in the south, tends to be more affluent areas, isn't there, there's more awareness about er the dangers of pesticides and all that sort of stuff (East Yorkshire grower 011)

Consumers in more affluent areas are viewed as being more receptive to organic food and more aware of pesticide usage, in contrast to places like East Yorkshire. Consumers in one

focus group were sceptical about how organic 'organic' food actually was, and were equally curious as to whether it would really be fresher than other food since, in their view, the turnover of produce would be lower. This discussion arose from questioning how free-range a free-range chicken actually was, since the number of different labels had caused confusion. The general consensus around organic was one of suspicion and dubiousness:

Nancy: Yeah the definition of free range or organic free range and things is all barn, it's

Joy: I don't go overboard for buying organic

Anthea: No I don't

Nancy: Barn-yard or something...

Joanne: I always try and get free range ones

Joy: I try and get free range with eggs

Anthea: But organic food I don't, it's more expensive isn't it?

Nancy: And is it as fresh cos most people aren't buying it

Catherine: And also how do you know, what does organic mean? Because you know how some people said have you seen my car, it's got red on it and it's come from the Sahara, you know because of the prevailing winds so how do you know that something hasn't blown from that field...

Nancy: Exactly, no pesticides

Joy: And I'm not sure whether it, if it says it's organic, if it's the taste or it hasn't got nasty things in it, and therefore it's not necessarily the taste but the fact you're not contaminating your body with I don't know pesticides or goodness knows what (FG1)

However, in East Yorkshire there is a strong commitment and pride in the farming that takes place. As criticism of this is not popular, alternatives such as organic food production are viewed with suspicion, to the extent that some organic producers are more likely to emphasise

the local nature of their products over and above the fact that it's been produced organically. One local farm shop owner told me whilst walking round his farm shop that if he had organic tomatoes for sale that he would not advertise their organic-ness as in the past this had prevented them from selling well (he suggested that people thought organic automatically meant 'rip-off' due to media representations of supposedly higher prices commanded by organic food) (East Yorkshire farmer 007). Many respondents in East Yorkshire viewed organic food production as a problem, in that there was suspicion around organic food, for a number of reasons. Many people linked this to the area's strong history of intensive agriculture. One grower specifically suggested that their organic produce would not be sold as such due to the latent suspicion amongst customers locally:

Respondent: Well I think it's basically down to attitudes, yeah you know and er peoples' er, the public's attitude towards organic, I mean most people here are suspicious of it, if you mention organics

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: Yeah, I've noticed it a lot over, especially the elderly people,

Interviewer: In what sense? What's the suspicion?

Respondent: Erm, I think it's the fact that, they think that people are going to be ripping them off.... So I think there's a lot more, here, there seems to be a lot more positive response to local food than organic, in fact we probably wouldn't sell it as organic. (East Yorkshire organic grower 011)

Media representations of the higher cost of organic food may have influenced the consumers this business is referring to, and organisations like the Soil Association are trying to counteract these pricing associations through campaigning. In the Abruzzo, most of the businesses I interviewed were 'organic', even if they weren't actually certified as such. One registered organic agriturismo stated that he had been farming 'organically' for 45 years but only achieved certification in 2000 as a means of improving their image and as something to assure and communicate to consumers.

Although organic produce is often portrayed as an 'alternative' food system, the principles of organic food production have been appropriated by larger agricultural companies (Goodman

2000, 2001, 2007; Guthman 2004). Organic produce can thus incorporate the production of crops such as wheat and barley, which are generally linked to more conventional commodity chains of production, but which are required for products like organic biscuits or bread for example, and are less likely to be viewed as localised food products. Unsurprisingly, those who view themselves as deeply committed on a philosophical level to organic production methods are cynical and sceptical about organic methods being adopted by large agricultural companies as for them the definition of organic was closely tied up with the local. However, for some *organic in any way* was better than conventionally produced products – at one of the focus groups one participant was adamant that food should always be organic and that she struggled to accept non-organic produce (FG2).

### ***‘Muck and Magic’ – Organic as ‘Alternative’***

Up until the late 1980s the institutional machinery of productivism, including farmers' unions, considered organics as marginal, part of an “alternative” lifestyle and not a little subversive (Morgan and Murdoch 2000: 167). As one local farmer explained ‘I know my husband has struggled over the years cos they still look, he is a big chap and he’s got a beard and he still gets comments of Jesus sandals and they still think it’s a hippy thing to do is organics.’ (East Yorkshire organic farmer 019). This current view of organic food from East Yorkshire bears resemblance to national-level opinion from the 1970s that organics was all *‘muck and magic’* (Payne 1971, quoted in Smith 2006: 447), whereas Smith asserts it is now a serious international business prospect (p455). In the Abruzzo region most farms (in the mountainous areas at least) were already organic, even though they might not be certified organic due to cost of certification. It was suggested by a national park local products development officer that should these farms wish to pursue certification it would be easy:

Intervistricce: e la certificazione di biologica è molto popolare con aziende agricole in questa zona?

Appellato: no, in generale non tanti, abbastanza, ma non è tutti, però attraverso il progetto dimezzarsi, l’aziende che partecipa al progetto devono essenzialmente biologiche, ma siccome si ha un’altra zona dove generalmente l’attività sono già biologica, l’ottenimento di certificato è abbastanza semplice, non devono trasformare la loro attività, la fanno già biologica, non, è caro certificata (Abruzzo policy maker 005)

Interviewer: and the organic certification is that very popular with farms and agricultural businesses in this area?

Respondent: no, in general it isn't, quite but not for everyone, nevertheless through the project half of the businesses which are participating in the project, they must be essentially organic, but since this is another zone where in general activities are already organic, obtaining certification would be rather simple, they would not need to transform their activities, they are already organic, but certification is expensive (author's translation)

Back in the UK, discussing a farm that had converted from conventional to organic wheat production, the motivation for conversion was driven by the higher prices afforded by organic production. The higher prices were more significant for this farmer used to conventional methods of farming, than perhaps it might have been for those who see themselves as deeply committed to organic production.

he thought it would be more practical to have er smaller quantities that he could sell at a higher price, cos he has to transport it backwards and forwards, erm, so I think that was his main motive that he could produce but get a better price for it (East Yorkshire organic grower 011)

And even those who are committed to the organic cause and try to use their own wheat for alternative food systems by baking artisanal bread or making cereals, or supplying other end users such as flour millers, still sell the majority of their crop through more conventional channels:

...so, so and [we're] an arable organic farm, which is quite unusual, erm and [the] main crop is milling wheat, which is bread making wheat... I mean [he's] always rude to me how much we use, because actually it's amazing how much you know er a tonne of wheat is a mighty big heap! Erm and so no we sell, we er sell through organic grain dealers buyers and we also sell a small amount to an organic mill up in the North Yorkshire, well two in North Yorkshire ... They're only relatively small amounts but that, we're, we're very delighted to be supplying to an end user, because that's what we sort of believe passionately in really (East Yorkshire organic farmer 013)

So despite being passionately committed to the broader ideals of organic production, the nature of the actual product means that it's much harder to use without selling through more conventional channels such as wholesalers and grain merchants. Often the size of a business affects how it is viewed, with larger businesses viewed as intrinsically more negative than

smaller businesses. An organic food business respondent, for whom organic food was a way of life as much as business model, suggested that not being organic was acceptable as long as the size of the farm was not huge and using pesticides:

Interviewer: So you've got organic going on here but you'd prefer it to be local first, over and above the organic, or both ideally?

Respondent: Both ideally, yeah, um, [pause] I mean yeah and I don't mind if it's local and non-organic if the farms not sort of on a, on a huge scale and using loads of pesticides etc which I'm sure that a lots we know, I mean people growing food on allotments aren't necessarily going to be using loads of insecticides and so on, so you know in essence that, it is an organic product (East Yorkshire organic food business 003)

### ***Philosophies of Organic-ness***

For one organic grower, supermarkets went against the organic ethos, even though they presented sales opportunities for business growth. A couple of organic producers referred to themselves as not being particularly good business people and not making huge amounts of money from what they were doing, but that this was an accepted part of organic production methods.

I know it's a big thing if you're doing, if you're a producer of cheese or pickles or something like that, they love to get involved with the supermarkets cos obviously you can push you forward, you know you can push your business forward really well, erm, but it sort of goes against the organic ethos for us as well (East Yorkshire organic farmer 019)

Although the supermarkets provide a large and ready market, they seek to tailor organic produce to the conventions of the industrial market (Morgan and Murdoch 2000: 168) and for dedicated organic proponents this is problematic. Morgan and Murdoch (2000) proclaim that the organic ideal of reducing food miles through co-locating production and consumption finds no echo in the supermarkets' current agenda (p169). For one organic grower that I spoke to, organic production was about more than low impacts on the environment and producing food free from chemicals and could include relationships of trust and mutuality with customers and workers, not something which she saw as being part of 'business-as-usual' agriculture:

So yeah the organics is definitely a heartfelt thing, erm, and if I wasn't doing this I wouldn't be in any other business... Now people have so much choice because organics has become so successful and therefore mainstream, erm, they can get it from supermarkets...and the small local grower like me is competing with all of that... you see to me the organic philosophy goes a long way beyond even just how we treat the earth...it's the whole thing and you know, to me it's the same thing like if you treat the earth right it will give you healthy food, ok you have a sort of mutuality there, erm and I believe that that ought to be possible in our dealings with each other... So that's where I feel that the holistic approach of your original pioneers, a lot of those principles are going to be a bit diluted, I mean it's the same with [sighs] you know you get a sort of standard business model of, of a big farm and packing house and things like that, so you've got the boss and you've got the workers and what-have-you, I mean for me WOOF-ing<sup>120</sup> is all part of this, you know, mutuality – you know you help me, I help you, so I [sigh] I mean know that sounds really airy-fairy and what-have-you (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

For this grower, organics is something that is heartfelt rather than a business approach. Organic food production is integral to her whole ethos and being, each embodying the other. And like the organic farmer before who was mocked by those who associate organic production methods with wearing Jesus sandals and being a 'hippy', this grower suggests that her deeper commitment makes her 'airy-fairy'. And she also felt that the nature of large multi-nationals with their profit-driven activities and requirement to deliver profit to shareholders meant that they would compromise what was best for the environment and for people in order to return a profit:

I don't trust multi-nationals to put the interests of individual people and their food security first, not because the people who work in those companies are some kind of monsters but because big companies, their responsibilities and their duties are not to the world (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

People involved in growing organically are positioned as being 'nicer' people, more willing to support one another than those involved in other types of businesses:

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<sup>120</sup> Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms – worldwide organisation matching volunteers to organic farms.



Yeah so she's a nice person is [another organic grower]. But I think you find with the organic thing generally people are, we all try and help each other (East Yorkshire organic farmer 019)

But even other local food businesses were keen to emphasise the differences that they offered in contrast to the supermarkets, to accentuate their friendly and amicable natures, as one farm shop owner explained:

they like to be able to talk to 'em, all our staff they're all friendly and they're all talkative, you know, and this is what, this is what, especially older people hey, and young people as well, I mean you know you can never stop chattering sometimes you know [laughs] (East Yorkshire local food business 007)

There is a general assumption in the academic literature that organically grown products are particularly suitable to alternative methods of food consumption such as farmers' markets and vegetable box schemes (see Holloway and Kneafsey 2000). Ilbery *et al* (1999; updated by Ilbery and Maye in 2011) have written about an 'organic core' of organic farming and production in England and Wales, which broadly corresponds to the parts of the UK which the alternative food network literature and research has emphasised such as Wales, Devon, Cornwall, and Cumbria. Significantly, they found that 'the key organic areas do not coincide with the arable heartland of eastern England where intensive, industrialised cereal production is the 'norm', leading them to conclude that 'a process of spatial concentration seems to be occurring . . . but there is little understanding of why this is happening' (1999, 294). Indeed, Smith and Marsden (2004) suggested that much literature treats 'organics' as one homogeneous category, with limited attention given to geographical aspects of the sector (cited in Ilbery and Maye 2011), yet Tomlinson (2008) explicitly argues that the banner of organics incorporates a host of different practices and ideals.

### ***The Importance of 'Local'***

There was a feeling amongst a number of organic growers and food businesses that labelling food as local was more important and received better by consumers. A couple of businesses suggested that they would either omit the organic label altogether or would put it after the local reference. That is not to say that local was unquestioningly accepted as better, for a number of concerns were also raised about the "genuine"-ness of food labelled as local produce.

Yeah erm that's the thing I was going to say to you about local food, although people are suspicious about organic, they're not suspicious about, they often, I think there's a good response when you say something's local people can understand that a lot better for a start, and I think they are, there is a lot of awareness about the importance, well I mean it just makes sense dunnit, if you have it, buying local it's much more likely to be fresh, and er people feel good about supporting their local, local business don't they? So I think there's a lot more, here, there seems to be a lot more positive response to local food than organic (East Yorkshire organic grower 011)

To meet demand for organic produce a high proportion of it is now imported, which fundamentally goes against the original principles of being organic for some. The organic farmer above sees local produce as being a common-sense option, that it is the natural and sensible thing to buy, over and above organic food, which is viewed with suspicion. And for another organic farmer and food producer the organic status is important, but more recently they have promoted their localness in preference to their organic certification, and that the organic-ness was an added bonus but not the most important element:

I think this is, now, on our labelling at one time you know must have the organic big and bold now it still obviously has to be there and has to be fairly bold but as I said before we very much, we reckon our USP is the fact that we farm, we grow, it's stuff, our ingredients go in our product, we use our own spring water, we erm use our own sustainable energy using timber from the farm, erm, and every product tells a story and we think it's a story that sells our product definitely, the fact that it, tells a story, it's local and it's organic to boot! And I would put organic as the third thing definitely. (East Yorkshire organic farm and local food business 013)

Localness is an important element of the organic philosophy for many who I spoke to, and in some instances the localness would be prioritised over and above the organic status.

Yeah I mean erm...it's one of the big things that I believe in, organic food to be truly organic, it should be local, you know we're, we're at the stage now where we're importing stuff from all over the world, it's just to try and find something organic (East Yorkshire organic grower 011)

The fact that the area is a big arable producer is seen as a reason for ideas such as organic production methods not having established in the same way as in other areas:

I don't know, farmers have a sort of slightly different attitude if they're upland farmers cos you know they haven't had the scope for that, the sort of chemical inputs and things, erm whereas this area is very heavily arable (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

### ***Going too Far? Contradictions of Conventional and Organic Agriculture***

In comparison to East Yorkshire, the Abruzzo region can generally be described as an area not suitable for intensive or conventional agricultural production. A number of local food businesses in the Abruzzo region said that they were organic because they *had* to be (i.e. because the region could not be easily adapted to intensive agriculture due to the mountainous terrain, unlike for example the Po Valley in Italy where intensive agriculture is widely practised or on the coastal plains of the Abruzzo). Although Italy is often perceived as a country with a strong embedded local food culture (Sonnino 2007, Helstosky 2006 and Montanari 1996, 2004), local food businesses in the Abruzzo still suggested that they experienced difficulties in running their businesses. They had to diversify and constantly evolve to develop and retain a customer base. New technologies were seen as a good way of achieving this, for example, one of the farms had developed a scheme where customers could 'adopt a sheep' ('addotta una pecora') (see Holloway 2002 and Holloway *et al* 2006; De Gennaro e Fantini undated<sup>121</sup>) and had also developed links to restaurants in distant places including New York. The Italian policy maker below illustrates how farming has changed in the area, with farmers needing to develop a range of skills similar to those found in larger companies:

Perchè, ecco, fine un po' fa l'agricoltura era molto concentrato sulla produttone, sono come fare e produrre, oltre diversere, un'oggi diverse comunicatore, diversere aspetto di marketing, diversere un bravo ospite, un manager...prima da noi si diceva contadino scarpe grosse e cervello fino, da oggi non è più così...oggi non è più sufficiente, bisogna ecco proprio crescere anche livello di formazione professionale (Italian policy maker 009)

Because, here, it's the end of agriculture based solely on production, they have to make and produce, but also different, now you have to be able to communicate, do different aspects of marketing, you need to be a good host, a manager...we used to say the peasant has big shoes and no brain, but now that is not the case...today it's not

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<sup>121</sup> [http://vapraq.ufsc.br/arquivos/Fantini%20\\_MKTG\\_caso%20di%20studio\\_coop%20ASCA.pdf](http://vapraq.ufsc.br/arquivos/Fantini%20_MKTG_caso%20di%20studio_coop%20ASCA.pdf) accessed July 2011

sufficient, one needs to be at the same level as professional bodies (author's translation)

A dairy farmer and cheese maker expressed the same sentiment:

It's not easy now to be a farmer, it's not like before, you need to market, you need to manage the business (Abruzzo farmer 006)

For farmers and growers in the Abruzzo, organic production was all they had known and something they regarded as a strength, whereas for the East Yorkshire conventional farmer below, organic production is seen as unethical, cruel and even 'mythical'. Consumers asking whether his products were organic would get 'short shrift':

Interviewer: do they ask you any questions about how it's produced or...

Respondent: Erm, some do, very few, one or two ask if it's organic, they get fairly short shrift, erm

Interviewer: And what do they say when you say it's not?

Respondent: Erm, not only do I say it's not but it never will be cos I think organic is cruel they really get their hackles up! You know, it's mythical and cruel, I wouldn't produce my sheep under organic conditions, because I just don't think it's ethi, I don't think it's ethical, you know I think that what you deprive them of to what they need, yeah in my opinion need, it's just ridiculous, and then when push comes to shove, they can use what everybody else uses with a vets' certificate anyway so, so organic lets cross that off! (East Yorkshire farmer 014)<sup>122</sup>

The same farmer justified his position by questioning the size of the organic market, further qualifying this with reference to East Yorkshire 'well what is, how big's the organic market really? Particularly in East Yorkshire' (East Yorkshire farmer 014). This quote highlights that alternative food production methods such as organic food production and consumption has

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<sup>122</sup> I think the respondent was referring to organic production methods, and what he perceived as cruelty to farm animals by denying them drugs if they were sick, and that in certain circumstances organic producers could use drugs in the same way as conventional farmers, so that for him, organic was essentially no different to conventional but had been constructed as being better in some way that he didn't agree with.

not caught on in East Yorkshire in comparison to other parts of the country. He also went on to suggest that 'your veggies, a bag of organic veggies fairly sad aren't they to look at? Yeah, yeah you look at them and you think right, yeah, nah, organic' and that organic production is 'fairly minimal and the mark-up isn't there, they can't be making, they can't be making it [money]' (East Yorkshire farmer 014).

The following two quotes, both from livestock farmers, demonstrate the commitment to the principles of productivist agriculture in East Yorkshire. The use of chemical fertilisers is presented as a natural and required process of 'ordinary' farming (thus setting organic farming up as being un-ordinary or different) to ensure the supply of grass, which it is suggested would not grow without the application of fertiliser.

you get the occasional person asking whether it's organic and what not, no it isn't, not that, that means it hasn't got a piece o' paper, it's practically organic, it isn't because [of] the simple reason I use fertiliser on my grasses – if I didn't I wouldn't have any grass. It's very thin land here, if you don't put a bit of fertiliser on, it, nowt happens. Erm, and simple reason I didn't go down the organic route as for my cattle themselves we produced nearly all the feed that we, feed to them so it's as near as dammit but if we don't use, we hardly use any chemicals on the, on the crops (East Yorkshire farmer 008)

For both farmers here, going organic is seen as a step too far, running the risk of making their businesses unprofitable.

for going down t'road of organic was far too, we can't call them organic cos we do erm the grass is fed, you do have to feed grass with a fertiliser and things like that to keep your grass growing, and if you're going down the line of organic, you can't, you must, it has to be completely untouched and that sort of thing, which we found we just couldn't do – that is just too, you couldn't, you couldn't run a farm, an ordinary farm along at the same time as an organic unit, you have to have 2 separate units, so we can't call them organic but to us they're as natural as you can possibly rear [an animal] you know (East Yorkshire farmer 012)

The idea of organic as 'going too far' was expressed by another farmer currently growing crops conventionally, who suggested that moving to organic production methods was seen as a last port of call, only to be considered if prices of fertiliser and other inputs became unbearably

high, as highlighted by his comment after having mentioned the use of pig manure on a couple of his fields:

Interviewer: So you've been looking at alternative ways of fertilising...

Respondent: Yeah, yeah, I mean it might come to the point where we have to leave fields fallow put cover crops in you know like organic system or something which would probably halve our, you know, cropping, you know what I mean? But it hasn't quite come to that, but I do have some down as, although we're not paid for set aside now, I have some, I have some hillsides up here that, leave like fallow you know they're grass down and they're quite steep hillsides and I don't know if I'll ever plough them out again you know, just leave them as they are (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

The future of agricultural production is an arena of intense debate. Some have suggested that as oil prices increase conventional agriculture will start to look more expensive than organic produce, thus providing a window for organic food and GM food (see Chatham House 2009), although others have also posited that if conventional produce becomes more profitable than organic or alternative producers may return to the conventional sector.

***It's much harder here – East Yorkshire as 'conventional'***

East Yorkshire is typically seen as being hospitable for productive and profitable conventional agriculture, and the Abruzzo is seen as a wild and difficult terrain for food production. However, when it comes to organic food, the research participants from organic food businesses compared doing things 'organically' in East Yorkshire as more 'difficult' in comparison to places like the South West of England which was generally regarded by participants as being more receptive to such 'novel' ideas. The South West was also viewed as being better linked into organisational support networks, compared to East Yorkshire:

erm an awful lot of things are concentrated around the kind of south west of England...The Soil Association are there, there's a huge concentration of organic growers in Wales, Devon, Cornwall and the south west so it all seems to happen down there and sometimes I just feel cos I've lived in Scotland and here, sort of too far away from things, (East Yorkshire organic grower 006)

And another organic grower imagined that running a similar business would be easier in the South West, as opposed to East Yorkshire:

you know, erm, there's very little, I mean if you, it was to be in the South West of England for example there's all sorts of people tuned into organic there's loads of organic farms there, I'm sure something like Community Supported Agriculture would be easy to set up cos you've already got, got organised organic consumer groups whereas here you haven't got anything like that (East Yorkshire grower 011)

In Italy, Tuscany was frequently cited as a region where local food businesses were better able to promote themselves, had a stronger presence in the public's imagination and a popular tourist market. Wine, in particular, was mentioned as being easier to promote from Tuscany (see Brunori and Rossi 2000 and Brunori *et al* 2004) as opposed to the products of the Abruzzo. Romanticised images of the rolling Tuscan countryside which are popular in tourist brochures help to promote this ideal, yet despite this, Brunori *et al* (2004) describe dissatisfied Tuscan communities who complain of the wine monoculture, despite dominant symbolic images of local culture and image reifying non-monocultural landscapes.

C'è l'abruzzo non è la toscana! ... però non è, non, va bene, c'è un, un'attività fatta in toscane non è che forsate in abruzzo funziona, non è beh... Piuttosto che lavorare su quelle che sono le risorse dell'abruzzo del parco area. (Abruzzo policy maker 005)

Well, the Abruzzo isn't Tuscany! ... because it isn't, no, OK, it's a, activities that work in Tuscany perhaps don't function as well in the Abruzzo, not as well... well, we have to work with the resources of the National Park (author's translation)

In contrast to the views that East Yorkshire is a peripheral area with a small potential customer base, the view from an intensive farmer I spoke to (although he was considering whether local selling might be an option for him in the future) was that the East Yorkshire has a good location for linking to global networks and chains of food production especially in comparison to other areas (and this knowledge came from reading Farmers' Weekly on a regular basis):

...yeah, with having good road networks and ports fairly near, we're fairly central in t'country aren't we? Hhmm, not far from Hull and Liverpool for importing stuff for cheaper you know raw materials for feed ingredients that kind of thing I mean yeah the M62's handy really isn't it? Erm and we've got good quality of land, mainly in East Riding I would say we've got, most people have got decent, decent growing, good climate as well so you know as regards positioning I would say we're OK. (East Yorkshire farmer 016)

Yet despite the perceptions outlined in this section that organic food production ranges from 'out there', 'airy fairy', 'a hippy thing' to 'unethical and cruel' or even 'mythical', there was a view among the deeply committed organic producers that the changing situation regarding rising oil prices and pressures on fertilisers and so on, would lead to increased interest in organic production methods, some even thought that organic food would become cheaper than conventionally produced food as organic producers did not use the same expensive inputs (fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides, routine drug use, as well as oil).

This section has investigated the ways that knowing the rural idyll can affect how policy makers, businesses and others view un-idyllic others, such as East Yorkshire. In turn, this creates certain imaginaries about the types of activities in those areas (specifically food production). Alternative food production systems can find it harder to become established in areas that have embraced productivism because of entrenched local farming cultures, and by concentrating on organic food production in the East Yorkshire this section has demonstrated how such alternatives can be viewed in relation to conventional agriculture / food production. However, the existence of local and organic systems of food production in an area like East Yorkshire illustrates that nonetheless alternative food systems are starting to take hold. Although the academic literature tends to concentrate on areas (in the UK) that have not been so suitable for conventional agriculture, it can sometimes simplistically assume that developing local food systems in these areas is unproblematic. If the academic gaze only settles on areas like Devon or Cumbria, then the argument that productivism is dead is more convincing. However, if a broader view is taken that incorporates areas like East Yorkshire or East Anglia, then this view is harder to sustain. As shown above, even those businesses who are regarded as 'local food businesses' (their own self-declarations in addition to their inclusion in local food directories and local reputation) demonstrate a strong commitment to intensive and productivist modes of production as a 'proper' way of producing food, and may be involved simultaneously in food production for both conventional and alternative consumption markets.

#### **6.6. Defensive Localism – Inflections from East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo**

In this final section I will discuss how ideas of defensive localism remain relevant to the research respondents. This theme came out most strongly in the East Yorkshire research. I wish to extend the idea of defensive localism to incorporate a more ruptured conceptualisation, one that works from the very local scale up to the global. Morris and Buller (2003) expanded defensive localism to incorporate a further range of 'localisms' (see page 74



in Chapter 3). Defensive localism can be identified in schemes such as 'Buy Local Food' initiatives in the US (Allen and Hinrichs 2007) or 'use it or lose it' schemes in the UK. However, I want to explore the ways that research respondents talked about a range of localisms, from keeping business and custom within kinship networks up to wider networks relating to purchasing food produced by the Commonwealth countries, as well as political decisions informed by past trade conflicts such as the ban on exporting UK beef and other instances of countries boycotting produce from the UK. It may be that these examples of 'defensiveness' are peculiar to rural areas, such as East Yorkshire, where local populations have tended to retain local populations which remain largely static<sup>123</sup> (as opposed to some rural areas which experience influxes of new residents) and where strong familial links remain. As respondents have mentioned in comments earlier in this chapter, East Yorkshire is often viewed as 'being at the end of the road'. This is an area which may merit further investigation.

### ***Familial Localism***

Defensive localism will be extended to illustrate a potential familial localism existent in East Yorkshire where strong networks of kinship and friendship govern business and working relationships. Concepts of defensive localism originally utilised in political and racial studies have been used to critically examine alternative food networks and the turn to local (food) by policy-makers and others. As with the political and racial applications of defensive localism, the ways that rural areas as imagined places are likened the rural idyll builds up a national (English) identity, to the exclusion of others that do not 'fit' into those imaginations, for example gay people (Bell and Valentine 1995), people with dementia (Blackstock *et al* 2006), lesbians (Valentine 1997a) and so on. As such, imagined ruralities and concepts of defensive localism surrounding food may serve to further exacerbate these exclusions. The localisms of alternative food networks has been argued as representing a politics of place which is unreflexive or defensive, and the associated concepts of what is 'right' and 'just' can become entangled in gendered, racial and class divisions (see Harris 2009, Allen *et al* 2003 and Winter 2003a).

Defensive localism can be argued to be a feature of the rural condition – Jones (1995) argues that the rural residents he interviewed were particularly defensive about the things they valued living in a rural area, especially the peace and quiet and lower levels of traffic. Other aspects often associated with rural areas include being part of a close-knit community with support networks (often referred to as self-help). Part of this network of support can be

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<sup>123</sup> It should be acknowledged though, that there are large numbers of migrant workers from Eastern Europe (and beyond) who are more transient.

viewed as supporting other rural businesses, as a means of ensuring their survival but also as a way of keeping alive imagined traditions of rural life and how one should behave. Particular modes of shopping for food are seen as being appropriate for rural areas, linked to the types of spaces where local and rural food can be purchased. These spaces include farm shops, farmers' markets and so on but also 'local' independent outlets and shops in certain locations, with village locations being particularly emphasised.

Many of the businesses involved in the research talked of how they work with networks of relatives to strengthen their businesses or for sourcing produce. Knowing who the food had been produced by was also of interest to consumers, as well as the business owners, as the comment below from a local butcher illustrates:

I mean a lot of them are friends in a close knit community like we are anyway in a rural area a lot of my customers are farmers and er, and er if they're not farmers they're in, in that trade indirectly, in some way and they want to know is it, if it's from a certain farmer oh well we'll have some if it's from him cos I like him or like the way he farms or no we don't want any off him because, we'll have beef instead this week because of that...hopefully it keeps the money going round in the same circle rather than there's the council tend to do and farms everything out as the government does – farm everything to China cos it's cheaper! But cheap's not always best is it? (East Riding local food business 005)

Being part of a close-knit community is an essentialised ideal of the characteristics of rural areas, as seen in Chapter 2 relating to policy makers' imaginations of kinships bonds and self-help networks in rural areas. The comment above suggests that people will change their shopping habits (from say pork to beef) if the 'wrong' farmer had reared the meat. Another farmer I spoke to who also had a farm shop explained how he had let one producer of local meat 'go' so that he had space in his shop to sell meat that was being produced by a member of his family:

Yeah, and erm we were doing some dry cured bacon and sausage and that from [business name] at Weaverthorpe, which is going up to North Yorkshire. And er but we've just sort of er, what's the word, finished with her, we're just giving it a rest for a minute cos it wasn't selling and we hadn't, we hadn't any room for the Givendale beef so we sort of dropped the dry cured bacon and went onto the beef, put the beef instead, just shot, just could do with another big fridge like that really, fill it full of

beef! [laughs]

It seems that this farmer was reluctant (indicated by his 'stuttering' over the words to describe it) to terminate his supplier of bacon by not quite knowing how to describe having terminated her contract, and justifies it briefly with it not having sold well, before quickly moving on to how more room was needed for a beef product (Givendale) produced by his son. Givendale beef is a particularly interesting case, as although Givendale exists in East Yorkshire, as shown in Figure 19, the name was chosen via consumer focus groups held in Manchester and other urban areas remote from East Yorkshire by people who did not necessarily know about the connection to East Yorkshire.

**Figure 19. Marketing material from Givendale beef**

(source: <http://www.givendaleprime.co.uk/>)



The marketing literature for Givendale beef does not state that it is a locally produced meat in Givendale, yet the photograph is of the actual place. One producer associated with the Givendale brand suggested that it was up to consumer to make their own decisions based on the information available to them at the time:

we're not here to promote it as regional, local beef, we're selling it as er a special project, a special eating good quality beef product, and if people take it that it's regional that's up to them and their perception of how they want to look at it, but we're not selling it as local, it doesn't say anything about an area, it doesn't say about Yorkshire (Beef producer 004)

Some of the consumers at one of the focus groups felt reassured that the person running the butchers shop they used was purchasing their meat from their friends, as this was seen as some sort of informal assurance scheme:

Everything, they have their friends, it's the farmers' friends who supply them, they know where it comes from. He does duck breasts, he knows where he gets his meat from. (FG3)

Being 'friends' with your suppliers is seen as a way of ensuring provenance and traceability, which most of the consumers at focus group 3 felt reassured by. Farming as an occupation (or, some would argue, *a way of life*) is presented as having particularly strong links here, in that most people are in some way linked in to the agricultural industry. Defensive localism, or familial localism, might be particularly prevalent in farming communities as the following farmer suggests that farming communities are used to keeping their activities within the family to maintain control and reduce costs:

most farming communities it tends to be your either sticking, keeping to a family or you're trying to keep your staff to a minimum, that you can, just to keep your profit up, it er, everybody, the days of farmers driving around in big fancy cars and having plenty of money that's gone (laughs) (East Riding farmer 012)

A number of the farmers I interviewed raised the difficulties in getting good reliable staff with the right skills and the right approach to work. As a result of this, many of them kept employment within the family as far as they could:

we like to be able to keep it as a family, family farm, we have staff come in for processing but most of them are village people, you know village lads that come, that we've had, that have now been coming for a year or two, so a lot of these, you know it's a bit of employment for the village lads and Christmas where we set on a bit gangs of people, erm we mebbe have 20 or 30 at Christmas to work and we do get them from an agency but even through the agencies we've now got that the same people come, erm we've got a nice little crowd who come each year and you know the sort of same ones, so we've got the same staff. (East Riding farmer 012)

Employing staff from the local community was also argued to be a way of keeping the money and the benefits circulating locally, rather than benefiting other areas. Keeping things within

the family is also linked to being 'born and bred' and continuing a tradition based on what past generations have practised. One local tourism business owner suggested that how she ran her business was based on the networks that had developed over generations of her family being from the area. This comment followed from a discussion of the ways that she purchased products for her business from her cousins and other relatives (and distinguished between 'blood' relatives and new family members through marriage etc):

it was quite interesting because erm the only other person at that time who did bed and breakfast actually she's, she isn't a relation, her husband's a relation erm and I rang her, and talked to her, she'd only been going about a year er so it was very good of her really to tell me things but saying that we've always worked together...I would say that as well, erm, and I suppose, yes I would say actually being, being born and brought up here, you know I'm just carrying on what my parents did, in a way...and I'm thinking well I know I've helped them today [laughs] erm yeah I suppose it's just, you know er again I suppose it's like getting back to the old days you, you know you bought from the shops in the village, erm or the farm down the road or you know whatever (East Yorkshire tourism business 009)

Inclusive networks, such as those described by the above business, for those that are local or are known, but can be used as an exclusionary politics for those that aren't seen as being properly 'local' (i.e. newcomers) or who don't 'understand' rural (i.e. 'townies') and so on (as has been demonstrated earlier in this Chapter and in the previous Chapter).

Defining what is and isn't local can lead to some people promoting racialised discourses to sort out who can be from Yorkshire and who can sell local food, as well as what that local food might actually be:

And I think the food festivals are a nice idea for a day out, you get to try bits and bobs but then most of them aren't local people, most of them are from everywhere – you always get the little Greek bloke selling his olives! It don't matter where you go! He ain't a Yorkshireman (sic) and he definitely ain't growing 'em in his garden! (East Riding local food business 005)

The above comment is not only racialised, but also gendered ('Yorkshireman', defining who should be selling produce at food festivals and where they should be from.

This idea extends to the definition of local, with ideas of familiarity and knowledge of the area structuring choices and making the [local] consumer feel comfortable as the unknown and distant is seen as a threat or unwelcoming. As suggested earlier, knowing the places where the food has come from is argued as offering comfort and reassurance to consumers, they may experience 'warm' feelings from both the material elements of the food but also from knowing personally the places involved, as one East Yorkshire hotelier explained:

in a lot of cases the names of the er producers on there, erm which again is to make it personal, erm it's, it's because it is personal cos we deal directly with the individuals, we know them by first, on first name terms, we've invariably been to their farms and, and checked them out and talked to them and milked the goats personally and things like that, erm so it's, it's putting over that relationship, that close relationship between us and those producers and getting the customers on board (East Riding tourism business 010)

Knowing which bit of land, or which farmer, is responsible for producing your food tends to be associated with more localised networks as opposed to purchasing from the supermarket. Knowing and being familiar with places will be justification enough for some people, but the following regional policy maker explained that a further reinforcement can be found in the supporting the local economy argument:

...you know where you get your beef and er pork from, from the farm shop, its um, its what's grown locally, its what's produced locally so from that farm, so anybody going past that farm will say oh you know that's where our pork comes from. Or you know the different, just the, just a bit different for what you can get off the supermarket shelves. I think really its nicheness is knowing where it comes from and you know those places. And I suppose really you know if you want to take it the whole hog you can, you can also say well you know I am contributing to the economy by buying stuff which is made in Yorkshire. (UK policy maker 003)

In addition to informal networks that operate between the producers themselves, in terms of swapping and bartering unsold products, many producers stated that word-of-mouth was the best way to advertise their businesses, events that they were holding. One organic business had paid for advertising in a newspaper for example, and said that it had been a waste of money, thus reinforcing Holloway and Kneafsey's (2000: 289) point that informal and friendship networks amongst consumers are important as mediators of information. As has

been shown above, though, the informal and friendship networks extends from consumers to producers too, and not only as channels for promoting events but for sourcing products and suppliers.

### ***'Distant' Defensive Localism***

In addition to more typical instances of defensive localism, I came across number of examples of more distant (defensive) localism. At the focus groups consumers explained how and why they chose to buy certain products and what information they used to inform their decisions. For example, while fair trade schemes communicate fairness and quality at a distance (Whatmore and Thorne 1997), attempting to re-connect producers and consumers economically, politically, and psychologically through the creation of a transnational moral economy (Goodman 2004), some consumers reported that they were using other labels to eliminate produce from other countries or suppliers. Their decisions could be political or pragmatic, and the following comments illustrate how political trade disputes can leave a legacy that continues beyond the immediate embargo:

Kathy: I won't buy anything French!

Joan: Anything what?

Kathy: I won't buy anything French – they wouldn't have our lamb so, I'm voting with my feet there! I, and that was all those years and I still don't!

Yvonne: Well I must say I avoid anything French if I can! And it's amazing, looking around erm in a supermarket in the fruit department all the apples are French!

Linda: There's a lot of it!

Gillian: They, French that, and I won't buy them!

Kathy: Yes I think you vote with your feet don't you? We can't do anything else but if they aren't going to buy our produce why should we buy theirs?!

Dorothy: No, why should we! (FG3)

Supermarkets were again seen as promoting the global trade in food, and for bringing in

produce from other countries when the same could be bought from within the UK. One consumer explained her irritation that only non-UK apples were available at her supermarket, and how her decision was a blend of politics and pragmatics – she preferred the apples from New Zealand as it is part of the Commonwealth (political) and although in terms of distance no better than the apples from Brazil, she wanted apples nonetheless:

Anthea: The supermarkets annoy me with their apples and things whereas you know you think why can't they have all the English and you look on the label and there was some Braeburn apples I think it was, or was it Cox's I can't remember, but some were in from Brazil and some were from New Zealand and I thought I'm not having the Brazilian, New Zealand's no better but at least it's part of the Commonwealth! (FG1)

Morris and Buller (2003) refined defensive localism by adding a number of 'extra' localisms from their research. Flexible localism was identified in how farmers' markets utilised a fluid concept of what was local in order to maintain supplies. The discussion between the consumers below illustrates how, again, a blend of politics and pragmatism influence their behaviour – certain products should be very local whereas other products come under 'flexible localism' depending on how much the product is liked and the pragmatics of whether they even can be grown in the UK:

Interviewer:...what do you think is local food when you're, and how do you know that it's local food – you've mentioned strawberries and milk...

Nancy: Well it depends what it is because, some things which, that deteriorate or you know things like strawberries or greens or I mean potatoes don't deteriorate but I quite like to think that they're as local as I can get them, erm when it comes to things like meat I tend to avoid Irish and Australian [laughs] because I think, well Australian cos I think well, why's Morrison's stocking all this Australian stuff, I think they've now got a British policy but they did have a lot of Australian in one, for a long time and I tried...

Joy: Perhaps the weight of public opinion?

Nancy: Yes it could've been.

Joanne: Why Irish?



Nancy: Well, I just feel that, that I want British, and so I tend

Catherine: So it's political? That's a bit political.

Nancy: It is a bit political I suppose yeah, I think that you know I try and look at things and see, I don't know what my criteria are but I'm looking for certain things I would want them as local as possible and I'm willing to go a bit further – now I love bananas, so I know I can't get those locally, and I'm not over-particular whether they're fair trade or not, they have to be the right size and the right colour...(FG1)

Even though Nancy says she doesn't know what her criteria are, she is exercising political and pragmatic ways of filtering out the products she chooses. For example, even though Ireland is very close to Britain, meat must be British and therefore not Irish. The problems of selling products over greater distances, and the effects of consumer choices in where and on what they spend their money was deliberated in more detail at the same focus group. For example, food produced in Kenya would be acceptable for some, whereas roses wouldn't, while for others Kenyan produce would not be acceptable at all:

Anthea: Going back to saying how things change I mean at one time they didn't have to say where stuff came from did they? I mean I think with changing that people are much more aware and they do look, you know you think my goodness they've flown these things in from Kenya

Catherine: And I think shall I have it or not? And then well I do like...[laughter]

Joy: Yes

Catherine: But then the thing is

[laughter]

Nancy: You know when there's the English and you can see the union Jack I'll try and buy them.

Catherine: But on the other hand I mean I just think you can justify anything if you really want it can't you? Cos when I think what about these poor farmers out in Kenya you know?

Joy: But yeah exactly they rely on us to survive

All: Yes, yeah

Nancy: On the other hand because they're growing for us they're not growing for themselves, and therefore how, how much better could they be feeding their own people if they didn't

Anthea: But some people are growing aren't they? The people that haven't got the bigger farms will be growing like in the local markets in Kenya and these farmers would have more money to spend to buy those goods

Joy: Well yes but you know you can, you can justify it

Catherine: You can justify anything really.

Nancy: Yes it's a chain

Joanne: I think I should buy seasonal cos it's better for you and more

Catherine: But I do think the flower industry, I mean Kenya has all the roses don't they? Millions of roses and I do think that's a, a bit of er an extravagance, you know carbon footprints, to send all these roses...

Joy: Do we need roses when they're not in season?

Nancy: Exactly.

Catherine: Very nice when you get bought them though!

Joy: Oh I know

[laughter]

Anthea: I could justify food more than I could justify flowers,

Also 'acting at a distance' are labels such as the PDO and PGI outlined earlier. The language of



2001, a campaign to buy local with an emphasis entirely on localism support for local farming businesses completely erased concerns for environmental practices and agro-food sustainability. This point emphasises earlier arguments that local food cannot necessarily be conflated with sustainable, quality or 'alternative' food. As Feagan (2007, drawing on Hinrichs 2003) notes, issues of protectionism, resistance to the 'Other', privileging the local, minimizing internal difference, and separation are of real concern as localisation can become elitist and reactionary, appealing to narrow nativist sentiments. Defensive localism has often been presented as a negative and unreflexive model, representing closed and undynamic communities, yet it may offer a starting place for areas such as East Yorkshire. It is perhaps not be surprising in areas like East Yorkshire given the long tradition of agriculture in the area and the historical tendency for farming families to be self-supporting. East Yorkshire as an area is relatively geographically remote from many parts of the UK and is seen as being difficult to get to and not on the way to anywhere (a cul-de-sac), as reported by respondents earlier. Defensive localism has been seen as contrary to the ideals of local food networks, as it is regressive and maintains a status quo, whereas local food networks are positioned as being drivers of change.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the ways that policy-makers, businesses and consumers in the UK and Italy think about food, the symbolism of the spaces of production and the meanings translated by the food itself. Despite recent academic work challenging binary thinking, suggesting that dualisms such as rural and urban, alternative and conventional food, productivist and post-productivist, embedded and disembedded, do not represent current realities as boundaries are increasingly blurred (Sonnino 2007; Morgan *et al* 2006; Sonnino and Marsden 2006), I have suggested in this chapter how people on the ground continue to use such terms to make sense of where they live and work. As Sonnino (2007: 62) elaborates, from this perspective, the more 'embedded' food systems of countries such as Italy and France are misrepresented as forever rooted in a particular time and space, specifically with reference to peasant ('i contadini') agriculture, whereas countries like the US and the UK are condemned to be forever the homes of 'placeless foodscapes' (Morgan *et al* 2006), which were fundamentally incapable of producing truly 'embedded' agri-food cultures. The previous chapter illustrated how these images could affect the practices of policy-makers in planning for (local) food production in various areas, by categorising East Yorkshire as productivist this precluded the potential for development of different ways of producing and consuming food in the minds of policy makers in the UK.

Frequent comparisons were made by business and policy makers, and some consumers, between the area which they lived or worked in and other places which were seen to be more idyllic and therefore more suitable to local food production. However, this idyllic-ness is not so clear-cut and more likely aspects of idyll are to be found in close proximity to aspects deemed to be less idyllic. Previous conceptualisations of the rural idyll have argued that it only exists in contrast to the less idyllic urban, especially as historical reifications of the 'rural' largely stemmed from rapid urbanisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Short 1991 and Bunce 1994) and the nostalgic reflections on rural life that occurred. However, I have found that some rural areas are also seen to be less idyllic than others, as suggested by Bell's (2006) anti-idyll which includes rural areas with intensive farming. As a counterpoint to this though, I would add that both case study areas displayed aspects that could be argued to be idyllic in propinquity to places and things which did not fit into notions of idyllicism. In both countries, many of the villages (medieval perched hill towns in the Abruzzo, and period cottages round the village pond replete with ducks in East Yorkshire) could be argued to fit into imaginaries of beauty and idyllicism. Yet in Italy this façade of idyllic-ness concealed less charming aspects such as depopulation, an ageing population and the hardships of agricultural work, whilst in the UK the intensive practices of productivist agriculture (crop spraying, monocultural fields, intensive pig units) added a less idyllic element. As such, notions of the rural idyll can be further deconstructed so that it is not only the 'Other' rural and the 'Other' urban that are either idyllic or not, but the same rural can exhibit both the rural idyll and the anti-idyll simultaneously.

Despite academic arguments in favour of advancing beyond binary thinking, the evidence presented above shows that the research participants from East Yorkshire and from the Abruzzo region of Italy, continue to think in terms of rural areas having characteristics that are different and separate from those of urban areas, and how this transfers to food and food production in certain areas. The rural is still presented as a romantic place safely away from the dangers of modern urban spaces. As Keil and Graham (1998: 121) note despite attempts at reinserting nature into the urban, we continue to inhabit a symbolic world in which city and countryside, core and suburb, humans and animals are conceptually separated. Dualistic thinking continues to operate in the minds and experiences of people 'on-the-ground'. However, this chapter suggests that concepts such as the rural idyll should be broadened to make space for multiple rural idylls and even anti-idylls, as suggested by Bell (2006), and that countries outside of the UK may exhibit alternative idylls. As Wilson (2001) has discussed in relation to productivism-post-productivism, it is possible to identify a range of productivisms,

or rurals, situated along a spectrum which takes into account local specificities, such as can be found in local food in spaces like East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo region of Italy.

Representations of the 'urban' in both countries shared some similarities whilst also exhibiting a number of interesting differences. In general, respondents in both countries regarded urban areas as repositories of danger and poor quality of life. Yet, in Italy, some respondents also framed urban areas as places of opportunity – for finding new recruits seeking a better quality of life away from the darkness and danger of the city, as new markets for selling local produce to, and as a pool of people who needed to be educated about food production and the ways of rural life. This opportunism was barely mentioned in the UK research.

As introduced in Chapters 2 and 3, agriculture has been conflated with the rural in policies and politics, leading to particular constructions of what constitutes rural areas (i.e. agricultural productivity). However, academic notions of the post-productivist transition (Ilbery 1998; Shucksmith 1993) and the consumption countryside (Marsden 1999), although both contested, have perhaps offered ammunition for policies and political statements that urban and rural areas are broadly similar. The New Labour government sought to deconstruct and then reconstruct how rural areas were defined in order to claim that they were a Party of rural people as well as urban (see Woods 2008). However, many of the policy makers I spoke to, as well as businesses and consumers, were keen to adhere to this rhetoric but fundamentally saw rural as being different from urban based on agriculture. In particular, that farming had 'made' the landscape look the way it does, and that agricultural businesses exhibit differences to other businesses, were the key points to distinguish difference for the respondents. However, it is interesting that many respondents were keen to point out that the landscape looks the way it does *because* of farming not *in spite* of it, a point which contrasts with evidence presented by other bodies (e.g. Birdlife and RSPB) that farming has resulted in the destruction of biodiversity and core habitats through intensive agricultural practices.<sup>126</sup>

Knowing about food and the ways that it is produced came up in interviews with businesses and the consumer focus groups. Despite a strong policy goal in the UK of connecting, or reconnecting, producers and consumers, over the last ten years, my research suggests that this is realised in complex and contested ways on the ground. For example, mostly farmers' markets are presented as offering the possibility for relationships of trust (see Kirwan 2003, 2004) and as an avenue for consumers and producers to better understand each other. Whilst some respondents did indicate this was the case, there were also descriptions from some

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<sup>126</sup> See <http://www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2011/05/04/126595/Spelman-in-biodiversity-loss-controversy.htm>

respondents that the reconnection relationship between consumers and businesses was less straightforward than some policies and academics might imagine. Consumers reported that they would not necessarily have the confidence to ask questions about how food had been produced as they weren't sure about what the 'right' questions might entail. On the other hand, some businesses reported their irritation from being asked what they saw as 'stupid' questions. 'Celebrity' chefs were implicated in this, in particular it was suggested that by emphasising 'free range' production consumers were being led to believe that all animals should be produced free range. Whilst some would argue that this *should* be the case, many of the farmers responding drew distinctions between cattle and sheep, and pigs and chickens which tend to have different production methods. In terms of knowing about food, seasonality and provenance were also highlighted by respondents. Seasonality was seen to be a problem in that many respondents felt that most consumers did not understand seasonality and what foods should be eaten when (consumers themselves also shared this view). Certain foods (especially strawberries) were seen as being particularly problematic in terms of seasonality. Supermarkets were argued to have contributed towards the erosion of knowledge about seasonality. 'Provenance' (or traceability) is an interesting term that has risen in usage since the FMD outbreak in 2001. Some farmers suggested that traceability was not possible in the UK farming system, despite policy makers driving forward with such an approach. However, many consumers (including policy makers and businesses talking about themselves in their capacity as consumers) expressed that by buying local they *knew* how their food had been produced, by whom and where. This 'knowing' could be in the abstract, an assumption made that because they had seen cows in a field, therefore local meat would have been raised in such a way. A level of trust was also implied in these ways of knowing about food, that by being produced by someone locally it would automatically be 'better' and that it would be possible to find out more about the produce, should consumers wish to do so.

I have used organic agriculture as a case study in this chapter as it was a core concern for respondents in both the UK and Italy. Organic is a much contested term, and has been debated in the popular media as well as by academics (Tovey 1997; Morgan and Murdoch 2000; Guthman 2004; Tomlinson 2008; Ilbery and Maye 2011). In the Abruzzo, most primary food producers in the mountainous areas where I undertook my research were already farming according to 'organic' principles, even though they might not have been certified as such. Organic production was more accepted as a 'good thing' in the Abruzzo, whereas in East Yorkshire organic food was viewed with suspicion and scepticism by some. Moreover, some respondents referred to organic production as being 'mythical', for 'hippies' and not something for the mainstream. Opinions on organics in East Yorkshire were polarised: there

were also those in East Yorkshire who were deeply committed to organic production (at a variety of scales, from small-scale box schemes to large scale more 'conventional' farmers producing wheat organically) and who saw it as the future of food production in a changing climate and society. Many of the organic producers in East Yorkshire described their products as being '*local*' first and foremost and suggested that being organic might actually not be the most significant point to communicate to consumers.

The final section of this chapter illustrated the ways the respondents utilised a defensive localism that was refracted by product type and place. Place could be local or distant, drawing on different criteria and underlain by a politics of pragmatism (see Anderson 2011) – that one can really justify anything if you want it enough. Defensive localism is argued as a negative and reactionary politics that serves to exclude those deemed not to 'fit', for a host of reasons. Defensive localism, in whatever form it takes, could be seen as both symptomatic of ideas around the rural as being idyllic which emphasises the unchanging and traditional nature of rural areas with close-knit communities, but also as an unintended policy outcome as policies of reconnecting producers and consumers reinforces the primacy of the local, at the expense and exclusion of other scales, from the region to the global.

This chapter has presented yet more complexity relating to local food production, the ways of knowing about both food and rurality, and how policy initiatives can be played out in contested and fluid ways in practice. So what does this mean for effective policy making? This chapter has illustrated the ways that people engage with and negotiate the contested meanings of local food, how they 'know' about food and the interactions and messiness of definitions of rurality, urbanity and the rural idyll. The core point is the situatedness of policy making as a practice and the myriad ways that people interpret, adapt and make their own as regards the original intentions of policy makers, at whatever scale. These interpretations of policy intentions take place at a range of scales, including local, regional, national and supranational (predominantly EU) and suggest that interpretation and implementation are far from linear and straightforward as the models in Chapter 3 might indicate. Increasing the number of actors involved may lead to varying interpretations and the possibilities for adaptation increase. The processes of interpretation and implementation can be both a means of working with existing policies but also a way of influencing the shape of future policies.

Chapter 7 will address the research question and objectives to summarise the key points from this research and will identify future research areas.



## **CHAPTER 7. EFFECTIVE POLICY INTERVENTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL FOOD NETWORKS**

### **– WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS**

#### **7.1. Effective policy making for local food – conclusions from the research**

Research into local food networks has tended to ignore areas traditionally associated with intensive agriculture, instead focusing on areas considered 'marginal' to productivism. A series of crises associated with 'conventional' agriculture has instigated alternative modes of food provisioning, including organic production, farmers' markets, farm shops and community supported agriculture, to name a few. Research has tended to assume that such developments exclusively occur in such marginalised or 'peripheral' places, yet evidence has been presented in this thesis of localised food networks actively being constructed in an area of intensive agriculture. Furthermore, evidence has also been presented from the Abruzzo region in Italy, typically viewed as a more marginal region, which has suggested that even within places viewed as more hospitable to alternative and local food networks there are challenges presented. As such, this thesis concludes that local food networks and rural development are spatially and temporally contingent. This contingency is in part, but importantly, related to the subjective particularities of the people working within rural development and local food networks.

Academic debate has coagulated around whether such local (or alternative) food networks represent a real challenge to the globalised, standardised food system, whether they can contribute to broader processes of rural development, and how consumption and production relations are reconfigured in such systems. In terms of a 'new geography of food' it has to be acknowledged that in some places (for example, in parts of Wales) 'alternative' food networks may become the norm or at least a viable challenge to conventional networks, in other places, such as East Yorkshire, 'alternative' food networks are perhaps destined to remain supplementary to conventional networks, at least for the foreseeable future (unless radical reform of the CAP takes place post-2013 for example). Policy and policy-makers are seen as critical to the encouragement and function of localised food networks, yet all too often are omitted from the research process or are relegated to bland comments. Frequently, policy makers (like consumers) are obscured from the research by the continuing emphasis on food production and producers, or they are assumed to behave and act in accordance with the theories and models outlined in Chapter 3. 'Policy' as an area of research (as both a thing to be researched, and also research which responds to policy) is undervalued in academic research, and as such tends to be neglected.

This thesis has investigated the ways in which local food has increasingly been seen as an integral part of rural development, and the increasing interest in topic from academics, policy-makers, businesses and consumers. These issues were investigated in the case study areas of the East Riding of Yorkshire, UK and the Abruzzo region, Italy. The question which the research attempts to address is what steps can policy makers take to establish sustainable local food networks, particularly in areas with a traditional background in intensive agriculture specialising in commodity production? The specific research objectives (RO) were based on gaps identified from reviewing the literature. The research aimed to:

- RO1. Examine how and why the idea of promoting a 'local food economy' has become a key aim within rural development policy making.
- RO2. Examine how the term 'local food' is constructed by policy makers, food businesses and consumers.
- RO3. Critically examine the notion of 'effectiveness' as it relates to sustainable rural development policy-making and practice in relation to local food systems.
- RO4. Critically analyse the key factors involved in the success of local food systems, with reference to a bulk commodity producing area in the UK and an Italian region.
- RO5. Develop conceptualisations of the role of consumers and consumption in the emergence of local food economies.

The empirical chapters have introduced many ideas that emerged from the research and subsequent analysis. This chapter will distil the key messages and respond to the title of the thesis – the question of what is effective policy making for rural development and local food? Firstly, I will address each of the research objectives above. In particular, given the themes of the two empirical chapters, I will examine what effective policy making means in practice, especially given the realities of policy makers and others involved in the policy process described in Chapter 5. The empirical evidence indicates that policy-maker subjectivities and the complexities of the processes of policy making has resulted in a rethinking of the models of policy making to take account of these non-linear policy processes. Next, I will summarise the ways that place specificity affected understandings of place and policy through local food, before moving on to address the results relating to local food in the East Riding of Yorkshire and the Abruzzo.

Finally, I will discuss my reflections on the research process, including any limitations or challenges encountered during the research. The CASE studentship relationship with the

collaborative partner has been a core part of the research, and I will briefly discuss the impact of this on the research. The final section will also cover very recent changes to the policy landscape and how they might impact on local food and rural development. The last section will outline possibilities for future and further research stemming from this research.

Through my research I have not sought to provide a representative survey of local food businesses operating in the case study areas, nor of all public attitudes (consumers) to local food, and nor has it been possible to speak to all policy-makers in either of the case study areas. Rather, the research has provided a snapshot of relations, opinions and experiences in the organisations, businesses and of consumers in the two study areas within the time available and the availability / willingness of participants. The next sections will respond to each of the research objectives (RO), beginning with local food as a policy goal.

***RO1. Examine how and why the idea of promoting a 'local food economy' has become a key aim within rural development policy making.***

Although local food has been of interest to policy makers at a national level, particularly in response to consumer concerns following the animal health crises outlined in Chapter 3, more recent policy statements have been less concerned with local food and more concerned with a stable and secure *global* supply of food in light of a new agenda of food security. For many of the UK respondents, in answering questions whether local food was a policy priority for their organisation, most often local food was *not* a priority. Their priorities were broader, linked to economic development and more usually expressed in terms of creating jobs, generating GDP or creating new businesses. These were often more significant than, say, promoting local food *per se*. Local food businesses could be supported, but only if they demonstrated the potential to achieve these economic development priorities as well. Yet, despite these organisational priorities, many of the policy makers that I spoke to were passionate about local food and saw promoting a local food economy as a 'good thing' in itself.

Nationally, local food has risen in prominence, especially as a way of overcoming the ills of the modern food system and reconnecting consumers and producers who were seen to be alienated from one another in a global food supply chain. However, more recently a divergence can be seen to be emerging in terms of the discursive environment. On the one hand, there are those organisations and people for which local food is increasingly important and forms the future of production in an increasingly turbulent world (as part of sustainable agro-ecology). On the other hand, there are organisations which argue that biotechnology and sustainable intensification are more important and offer opportunities for responding to a

changing climate and growing population. Organisations like the Soil Association and SUSTAIN promote local food, as do funding programmes such as Making Local Food Work (MLFW), working to illustrate the benefits of local food systems, while organisations like the National Farmers' Union and the Royal Society encourage continued and even increased intensification of agricultural production, the oxymoronic expression of 'sustainable intensification'<sup>127</sup> (Royal Society 2009).

As such, I would argue that promoting a local food economy, whilst clearly of import for some organisations, is not necessarily a key aim for rural development policy. Local food may be a corollary of other economic development activities which prioritise entrepreneurialism, innovation and diversification, but not necessarily as an end in its own right. If there is a consensus that promoting a local food economy (or, more accurately, local food economies) forms a central part of rural development, then policy makers will be central to this, as already stated by Marsden and Sonnino (2008). Interestingly, the local food businesses interviewed clearly articulated their contributions to rural *economic* development. Policy makers will also need to change how they 'measure' their success or effectiveness. For example, a number of local food businesses suggested that they weren't eligible for support because they could not create more jobs – for them, the key aim was to remain as a *local* food business. These firms were already operating at the threshold and to expand would compromise their localness from their perspective. As such, there is a tension between policy goals of creating and sustaining local food economies and the promotion of export and business growth (for example the activities of the regional food groups). Food businesses wanting to remain 'local' fall into a gap in policy support and priorities. As such, they find it harder to access the support and resources available through some policy programmes. Chapter 2 presented the policy landscape relating to local food, agriculture and rural development and divided the history of policy developments into four time periods. From the material presented in Chapters 5 and 6, it can be argued that in the contemporary period the role of local food is being bifurcated, away from the strong role envisaged post-BSE and FMD towards a more contested period where local food is set against a more global approach as a means of securing future food supplies.

As Carolan (2011) suggests, people are generally strongly influenced by the type of agriculture that they are in proximity to. I found strong commitment to, and defensiveness of, intensive agriculture in East Yorkshire, despite academic arguments of a post-productivist transition. As

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<sup>127</sup> Although the term has been in use for a number of years, the Royal Society report linked it specifically to the use of fertilisers, GM and biotechnology and other science-based approaches to farming.

Clark and Jones (2007) note, there are many reasons for farmers in some places to continue with productivist practices as EU policies encourage these. Given this local level commitment to endemic farming styles, moving to a new mode of production needs to be sensitive to the local area, as illustrated in Chapter 6 in relation to organic production. Organic production has been seen as a criticism of 'conventional' farming (even though organic production has been 'appropriated' by many conventional farmers, this has also been subject to criticism for diluting the original principles), so in shifting to different styles of food production it may be necessary to work within an existing system at least at the beginning, as recognised by Winter (2003). One organic producer in East Yorkshire suggested that she regularly came across defensiveness over intensive farming and a rejection of organic – this, she suggested, was 'part of the territory' (East Yorkshire organic grower 006).

***RO2. Examine how the term 'local food' is constructed by policy makers, food businesses and consumers.***

What constitutes 'local food' and how it can be defined has been a key focus in the academic literature over the last ten years, but policy makers' constructions of localness has often been ignored in these explorations of 'localness'. My research has explored the ways that policy makers, businesses and consumers in East Yorkshire and policy makers and businesses in the L'Aquila province of the Abruzzo think about what 'local' means. Talking to these research groups about local food and rural development necessarily incorporated an element of how these groups defined such terms for themselves.

As suggested by Morris and Buller (2003) the use of terms such as 'local' was used in a relatively fluid manner. For some people in East Yorkshire, 'local' meant British and a discourse of self-sufficiency informed this as did one of high standards in the UK not being replicated elsewhere. For other people, 'local' meant very local with 'definitions' including a certain distance (such as 12 miles, 20 miles and so on). In Italy, however, 'local' was seen as being a pre-defined geographical area, such as one of the national parks (e.g. Parco Nazionale della Majella) or the province (e.g. la provincia del L'Aquila). For most people, however, a level of pragmatism was involved. This pragmatism involved accepting that some things just were not available locally so had to come from further afield. Further afield could be Leeds or Lincolnshire, as well as Kenya and New Zealand. Different products had different criteria for localness attached to them, with strawberries and meat coming up most often as being very local and certainly from the UK. Other products (apples, green beans and flowers for example) could come from further afield but even then consumers were drawing on criteria that they

had not previously articulated. These criteria involved how much they liked or wanted something, the colour of the bananas, social justice issues for workers in third world countries and political issues relating to the commonwealth and trade disputes. The complexity of the ways that people suggest they think about, and define, 'local' is not only spatially variable (within the case study areas, but also beyond) but temporally variable too, as people make different decisions depending the product concerned as well as their situation at that time. As such, trying to define 'local' is likely to be difficult and contested, as people draw upon the fluidity and nebulous nature of the term as part of a politics of pragmatism. In particular, places like East Yorkshire which has only 'half a hinterland' due to being bounded by the North Sea and the River Humber, and the Abruzzo where the mountainous terrain makes transport time-consuming and costly, what is local is further complicated by physical geography. So, my research has certainly confirmed that 'local' is complex, can be associated with other terms (such as healthy, natural, and so on) and is layered or tiered depending on place and product. As one policy maker suggested, localness should be defined according to a hierarchy depending on the scale at which the product is being marketed, as suggested in Table 15.

**Table 15. Hierarchy of localness**

<u>Level of sale</u>	<u>Geographic location to be identified</u>
Very local sales e.g. valley	Identify specific farm
District sales	Identify the valley, e.g. Wharfedale
Regional sales	Identify the county, district or other area such as National Park
National sales	Identify the region, Y&H, or perhaps the regional brand 'deliciouslyorkshire'

### ***RO3. Effective Policy-Making – what does this mean in practice?***

Chapter 5 demonstrated that even *talking* about policy making can be challenging. The term 'policy making' was not clearly or universally understood. Yet, to know when a policy has been successful or effective is important. However, to talk of 'effective policy-making' is to suggest an approach to policy-making that can be universally applied to all places, and which will result in ideal policy outcomes. More realistic, however, is the acceptance that policies need to be customised to suit local circumstances taking into account local historical events, local

contemporary circumstances and existing conditions. Concepts such as 'rural proofing' (or other types of 'proofing') are an incomplete way of addressing the problems, and are too simplistic to address complex issues such as rural development.

Analysis of policy is starting to gain greater prominence within geography (Bulkeley et al 2007; Lovell 2009, amongst others) as is the practice of policy-makers themselves (Krueger and Carr 2011), yet relatively few studies focus on policy makers in rural development. I have shown throughout this thesis how policy makers think about the practice of 'doing' policy, but also the specificities of 'doing' local food and rural development policy. The title of this thesis is concerned with the *effectiveness* of policy making for sustainable local food networks. Policy *effectiveness* is an area that scholars outside of economics and monetary policy have been relatively quiet about. As I have shown, the practices of policy making are contingent and slippery, with the policies in a process of churning so that it is difficult even for the people closely involved in policy making to keep abreast of them. Also, what one body or organisation views as being effective can be seen by another as ineffective (perhaps for reasons of value for money, or in terms of end outputs). LEADER is a case in point. On the one hand it has many advocates of the grass-roots, capacity-building approach. On the other, it is criticised by 'pure' economic development professionals who want more concrete outcomes. So, effectiveness is difficult to 'measure', and many policy makers talked of combining the targets and performance indicators which they were required to 'count' with more visceral 'feelings' about whether something had, in their opinion, 'worked' (or been 'effective').

Thinking through the divergent policy processes in the two areas, LEADER can be instructive as an example. Although LEADER is a policy applied across rural areas of the EU in a relatively uniform way, local level flexibility is a feature of the programme, which can be a benefit as well as a challenge. LEADER varies in its local level implementation, and in particular in my two case study areas there are significant differences in how the programme is operationalised, as well as some similarities. In East Yorkshire LEADER is managed by the local authority which acts as the accountable body and manages the funding accordingly, although the Local Action Group have responsibility for project funding decisions; whilst in Italy the delivery of LEADER is through an independent body not linked to local government.

These details, although perhaps subtle, can influence the processes and people involved in delivering a programme of rural development, in particular LEADER's emphasis on innovation and experimentation can vary in institutional contexts which may encourage risk or may be risk averse. In both countries, the policy-makers involved in LEADER stated that responsibility

for developing and writing the rural development strategies identifying local issues to be addressed through LEADER had been allocated to them, rather than involving the LAG as originally intended by the EU, perhaps suggesting that local people find engaging with such programmes problematic. As such, my findings support those of Trabalzi and De Rosa (2012: 130) from LEADER in southern Italy which question the extent to which LEADER can create, everywhere in the European Union, virtuous rural development processes.

As has been shown through the empirical material, the original intentions of policy makers can sometimes be 'lost in translation' between the stages of policy creation to policy implementation and policies may turn out to represent something that had not been originally intended. Set-aside policies and the PDO / PGI / TSG policies demonstrate such translatory effects, with the former being intended to reduce production but often being construed as achieving biodiversity outputs, and the latter intended to protect production techniques and specialist processes but often being associated with 'quality' in the minds of consumers.

Answering the question of what makes for *effective* policy making is thus a complex matter, as what constitutes 'effectiveness' depends on who you ask. In terms of achieving 'effectiveness' for local food, it depends on one's perspective. For some, local food is the essential future in light of climate change and other associated problems, whereas for others local food, especially in some areas, is destined to remain small-scale (as a socio-technical niche). As one policy maker suggested '...the capacity for localness in this part of the world is quite limited' (East Riding policy maker 008). So, certain *places* are portrayed as being more apposite for local food while others are not. A blanket approach to '*effectiveness*' is therefore questionable. An 'effective' policy has to, therefore, be situated within the specific context for which it is intended. Programmes which encourage experimentation potentially offer scope for place-specific policies to be 'created', yet often such programmes are themselves based on a blanket approach (funding guidelines, frameworks within which the local-level 'experiments' need to sit) – programmes such as LEADER and the Defra Pathfinder thus create a tension between locally appropriate and communal, top-down frameworks.

How do policy makers deal with this complexity, what actions do they take to overcome the limitations? Formalised modes of assessing '*effectiveness*' of policy delivery, for example through targets and outputs, can vary depending on the organisation involved. These assessment modes can be dependent on whether certain targets or outcomes are stipulated by funders or other bodies, or if a more experimental approach is taken. Measuring progress and effectiveness through targets and outputs is viewed by some policy makers to be



inadequate, as some things do not lend themselves well to such 'measurement', and some approaches may end up measuring the 'wrong' thing. To counter such concerns, some policy makers talked of relying on gut feelings of success. This point is well illustrated by one respondent, who outlines her concerns about concentrating too heavily on targets or key performance indicators (or KPIs, part of the core lexicon of policy makers):

Interviewer: how would you know if these policies have worked or have been successful?

Respondent: Well some of them are fairly easy to measure and er some of them a lot less so, um and I think some of them, some of the things that were initially identified in some existing rural strategies were almost always going to be impossible so to find a measurement for and...,and I think what we've been in danger of is almost designing strategies that can be measured rather than just having a strategy that was providing some broad framework for people to work to, er, so I er have a little bit of caution around being able to always measure the performance of your delivery because that's not always what the document should be about (policy maker 001)

Evidence in the form of outputs and targets is often used as the basis for establishing the 'success' or 'effectiveness' of particular policies (Barrett 2004). The use of evidence, and in particular 'scientific' evidence, in policy making has come under close scrutiny from the public following the mismanagement of the BSE crisis, which undermined the credentials of scientists, national governments and EU institutions (Skogstad 2003: 329). The idea of scientists as 'objective' and 'independent' was undermined (Joerges and Neyer 1997: 612, quoted in Skogstad 2003: 330). This general distrust of the evidence policy-makers use in making policy may have created cynicism about such processes.

The next two sections both advance thinking on the processes of policy maker. The first of which discusses the subjectivity of policy makers themselves, and the ways that they are able to use this to influence the direction of policies (or not). The subsequent section specifically discusses the ways that policy processes have been conceptualised and offers a contribution towards thinking of policy as a contingent and subjective process, rooted in particular geographical locations and in particular times. I discuss how the models presented in Chapter 3 might be rethought taking into account the 'realities' described by the research participants.

### ***Policy-maker subjectivity***

Much of the political science literature on policy-making and policy-makers assumes that there is a singular process of policy making that is straightforward and logical, occupied by rational and objective policy-makers. In my research I have examined how policy makers bring something of themselves into their work, both in their ways of working with and building relationships with other policy makers and organisations, but additionally in bringing their personal interests and motivations 'to work'. This acknowledgement of a more involved and subjective role for policy makers illustrates how certain ideas become embedded within policy themes.

The role of implementers on the ground, in addition to the policy entrepreneurs can be seen as having an important influence on the outcomes or final shape of a policy in delivery, which may differ somewhat from original intentions. As Elmore (1980, quoted in Barrett 2004) and Hjern and Porter (1981, quoted in Barrett 2004) in particular argued, due to the complexity of relationships and interactions in the implementation process, action cannot necessarily be directly related to, or evaluated against specific policy goals. So the role of the actors involved in all parts of policy making and delivery affect the translation from original idea to final delivery, which in turn affects how a policy can be determined to be 'effective' as the multiple twists and translations cannot necessarily or easily be traced.

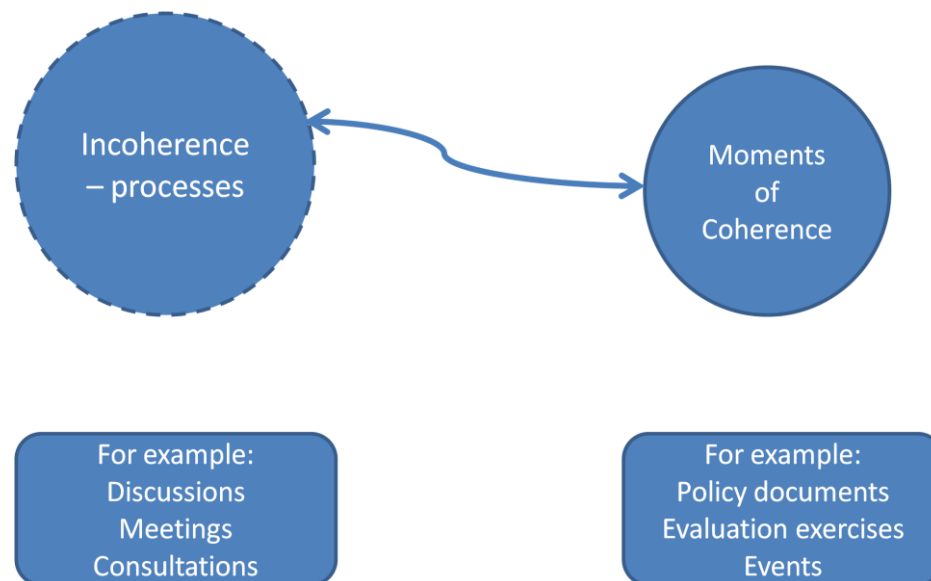
No policy makers that I spoke to referred to either themselves or other policy makers as following their own ideas against the wishes of others, yet no doubt such behaviour does exist. For instance, Morgan (2007) describes John Prescott and the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister as pursuing city region policies single-mindedly, despite some evidence of flaws in thinking about the potential for such policies. A particularly insightful point is made by Morgan (op. cit.) that even central government (and, by inference to other organisations like local authorities or regional development agencies) are not single, undifferentiated actors.

If the people involved in 'making and doing' policy are subjective and act in diverse ways, this has a subsequent impact on how policy materialises. One of the key outcomes of the analysis of the complexities involved in, and experienced by, those 'doing', 'making' and 'writing' policy was a change in how processes of policy making might be reconceptualised as a constellation or assemblage of chaotic relations, negotiations and moments of coherence. The next section will address these findings in more detail.

### ***Non-linear policy processes***

In thinking about the experiences of those involved in (and those absent from) processes of policy making, the indication was of something far removed from the neat, linear diagrams introduced at the start of Chapter 3, yet more in line with later conceptualisations of policy processes. Instead I had been told of processes that were complex, messy, and fluid, involving a great deal of ‘churn’ in the broader policy landscape on a regular basis. Even for those involved directly in policy making and delivery, talking about how things worked and why was challenging.

**Figure 21. Policy-making as a relational and messy constellation**



Chapter 5 on policy messiness concluded with an alternative way of viewing policy making that challenged the orderly process-based diagrams introduced in the literature review. Based on the experiences of the policy makers, businesses and consumers involved in my research, I conceptualised a representation of policy making as a constellation of complexity, messiness and fluidity, as shown in Figure 21.

The diagram is purposefully simple. The boxes underneath the spheres of ‘incoherence – processes’ and ‘moments of coherence’ are suggestive and not exhaustive; many other processes or moments could be included occurring both at the same time and in varying combinations at different points in time and space. The arrow between the two spheres represents how the moments of coherence and processes of incoherence relate to one another and is intentionally curved to illustrate that these processes are not always straightforward or linear. The line is also double arrowed showing the movement between the two moments is constantly evolving and in a process of becoming (coherence / incoherence).

Situated within this re-conceptualisation of policy and policy making as a much looser and relational assemblage of people and things (see Figure 21), it is possible to critically evaluate what an 'effective policy' might look like or mean. In many ways, 'effective policy' is an ephemeral term as what is effective for one person or group of people may be much less so for other groups. The transience of policy processes illustrated in Figure 21 suggests that within the incoherence of policy processes, a moment of coherence (or effectiveness) might emerge, however fleetingly. Yet these moments of coherence might actually represent moments of incoherence for other groups with different perspectives. For example the EU's scheme for protecting certain products and place specific production methods was suggested by one policy maker (section 5.4) as being helpful for the producers accorded such designations but exclusionary for those that not awarded the label. This has recently emerged regarding the award of a PGI to Cornish pasties in the UK: Devon based producers were outraged as their products could no longer be called a Cornish pasty (see Kavanagh 2011 for controversies over PDOs and PGIs). Most of the UK businesses that I interviewed felt that it *was* the responsibility of the local authority to support the development of the local food sector, yet without external funding such as LEADER it is unlikely that councils will be able to do this. Two elected representatives of one local authority felt that it *was not* the role of the council to be providing this support, especially in times of financial constraint. So, 'effective' can mean many things to many people, and what is effective in one place may not be so in another. A core theme running through this thesis is the situated nature and specificity of policy, local food systems, identities, meanings, and Figure 21 is intended to capture this fluidity and to move away from the prescriptive models of policy making outlined in Chapter 3.

In challenging the ordered and linear models of policy processes in Chapter 3 (Figures 5 and 6), the messy, fluid and situated experiences of policy processes described in this thesis contextualises the networks that policy makers and their policies are enmeshed within. Rather than clarifying or simplifying these processes for policy makers, my research may, therefore, add to moments of incoherence. Whilst this might be troubling for some, this research has illustrated the shifting patterns of policy making navigated by the research respondents. Mapped over this new way of thinking about policy the research produced specific ideas about place and local food as adding extra layers of complexity to an already complex rural development policy making constellation.

***RO4. Critically analyse the key factors involved in the success of local food systems, with reference to a bulk commodity producing area in the UK and an Italian region.***

Although the two case study areas are diverse in many respects, there are similarities which enable comparative research such as this, focusing on the ways in which space affects the actions and thinking of core actors involved in local food and rural development in each area. In particular, the contingent nature of the processes of 'making' and 'doing' policy, and the subjectivities of those involved in these processes emerged in both countries are shaped by the ways that rural space is conceptualised in each country, and how local food is framed as a policy driver for local development. The specificities of rural development, local food and rural areas in general in the two case study areas resulted context-dependent ways of thinking about and practising policy. Moreover, many of the Italian research participants confirmed what I had found in the UK research phase. Specifically, in both countries the role of a motivated and passionate person was cited as being key to navigating and understanding policy processes. The Italian producers were aware of their fragile position in being in such a remote and unknown part of Italy, even within Italy – not the Italy that most people imagine, being mountainous and wild. There was, as a result, greater awareness of promoting their produce and area to people outside the area. Whether this was targeting tourists or selling to buying groups in the North of Italy, or international sales using technologies such as the Internet, it was much more prevalent in the Italian research than in the UK research phase. Accordingly, most producers I spoke to had lots of marketing material and brochures to give away, which on the whole UK producers didn't offer.

In addition, by taking two areas which appear to have little in common, it has been possible to challenge some essentialised images of what works and what doesn't work in establishing local food systems. It is often assumed that Italy has a strong local food culture with committed (or 'discerning') consumers who reject global, standardised food – in fact, Vecchio (2009) reports that the consumers in his farmers' markets focus groups did not express desire to purchase local produce. For many, these assumptions would lead to a further assumption that local food systems do not experience difficulties or challenges in a country like Italy.

In addition, and in contrast to East Yorkshire, the Abruzzo has more in common with the areas that were seen to be more successful for local food in the UK – the upland areas with national park designations like Cumbria, Devon and North Yorkshire. Yet in Italy, the most successful area for local food was widely agreed to be Tuscany, an area with only minimal land designated as high environmental value (as well as being one of the more advanced

agricultural regions, Partridge 1998). So, despite the assumptions of many UK respondents, perhaps attractiveness and landscape quality are not the only important factor in establishing local food systems. Italy is a varied country and the research respondents illustrated the difficulties and challenges that they faced, such as not being known as an area, remoteness and a lack of potential customers. Despite such apparent differences, both areas are part of the EU's LEADER programme, and organisations in both areas are interested in supporting and expanding the local food economy.

One of the starkest points from the Italian research that also was apparent in the UK, was the frequent comparison of the case study areas to other rural areas which were seen to have the 'right' conditions for local food, as a result of being more idyllic and attractive to tourists. This was often used as an explanation of why local food was easier to deliver or support in places like Tuscany in Italy and Devon, Cumbria and North Yorkshire in the UK. Only one respondent had reflected on this, suggesting that the appearance of the landscape affected the types of people who wanted to live there and that they might be more 'open' to alternatives, in contrast to places like the East Riding of Yorkshire which were 'flat and boring'. However, the Abruzzo is anything but flat and boring, yet at least half of all the Italian respondents referred to Tuscany as being the ideal location for local food. As highlighted in the literature review, Dickie (2007) suggests that Tuscany holds special meaning for Italians in terms of being idyllic. These geographical comparisons led me to explore the contemporary use of notions of a rural idyll in the consumption of local food as well as the types of policies and activities that can take place in the differing idylls (or anti-idylls).

Although many have argued that food is important and different to other products, whether as a result of its organic properties, its cultural significance (Lupton 1996) or that the act of ingestion makes food corporeal,<sup>128</sup> little has been said about the combination of these characteristics in multiple and diverse places. Montanari (2004) reports that food played a greater role in Italy's unification than politics did, how a shared identity could be built from food. Montanari (2009: 91) also suggests that 'food is not merely a source of nourishment but also one of survival for human beings'. Interview respondents have presented food as a myriad of things and meanings. Food is something that rural people know about while urban people are seen as being less likely to, according to respondents. Food relates to the identity of an area, and can be used to promote an area, to protect an area from modern infiltrations, and the lack of such an identifiable food can lead to a lack of knowledge about, or interest in, an area.

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<sup>128</sup> For Wendell Berry (1990) 'eating is an agricultural act'.

Knowledgeability concerning food was an important point through the research, from knowing the 'right' questions to ask at farmers' markets, linked to how food is produced, where which types of food came from, what food is in season at what time, how to use certain foods. Seasonality, and the role of supermarkets in eroding knowledge of season food, was viewed as important. Television programmes were presented as having influenced people about food and rural areas, as well as being argued as having misled some consumers about the realities of farming, whereas consumers felt that they knew *more* about the processes of food production from programmes such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and the Great British Menu. However, programmes such as these (and drama series such as Heartbeat) also contribute towards a national imaginary of the rural idyll, as they promote an imagery of idyllicism through bucolic country scenes and quality local food products. For consumers, certain products had significance relating to these issues, with livestock animals suggested as performing local food (in that areas without livestock were not seen to be local food producing places). Specific food types were raised in relation to supermarkets, for instance chickens were frequently raised relating to animal welfare and taste, while strawberries were strongly related to seasonality and localness.

***RO5. Develop conceptualisations of the role of consumers and consumption in the emergence of local food economies.***

This research objective aimed to respond to calls in the academic literature to locate the consumer more centrally in research and to overcome the almost exclusive focus on production rather than consumption. Consumers have been involved in my research via the three focus groups.

The original intention had been to ascertain consumers' concern for, and knowledge of, rural development strategies. For the most part, this was predominantly expressed in terms of supporting local farmers maintain a viable livelihood (Morris and Buller 2003; Winter 2003; Weatherell *et al* 2003; Hinrichs 2003) and keeping jobs and money in the local area (akin to 'use it or lose it' schemes, see Allen and Hinrichs 2007), rather than a broader knowledge, or concern for, of rural development. As has already been mentioned, research participants found talking about policy quite difficult and during the focus groups when I raised rural development strategies there was a general unease and silence on the matter. In response to questions about what the participants at the focus groups might do to support local food economies in East Yorkshire, most said that they didn't know, nor did they have many ideas for what they would spend any money on if they were in control of a budget for such matters.

This is an interesting point in itself, that consumers are generally not aware of, nor involved in, processes of policy development or the resultant strategies. However, the consumers at the focus groups had plenty to say about other issues relating to local food, and many businesses also reflected on consumers during interviews, and I shall discuss these issues below.

A particularly interesting point arising from discussions with consumers was that they utilised a range of criteria in their food shopping habits, which they largely not reflected on until being asked such a question at the focus group. These criteria varied by product, place of purchase, and whether it was part of a mundane shopping experience or for a special occasion. Above all, these criteria could be overruled by a politics of pragmatism (see Anderson 2011). For example, most of the consumers knew about organic production methods and fair trade principles. Fair trade was particularly supported, yet could be dispensed with to suit other preferences, for example bananas were cited by one consumer for whom colour and size was more important than organic or fair trade. Also, consumers were aware of debates on self-sufficiency versus global trade as means of supporting the incomes of farmers in the third world. Green beans from Kenya and roses were mentioned, and although in general it was felt that food trade over such distances could be justified more than superfluous items like roses, the consumers all agreed that they liked being given roses and would suspend their principles or criteria in favour of being given roses.

I have referred throughout this thesis to the discourse of connection and reconnection that has been popular with policy makers and academics alike. However, empirical material from the research has suggested that the ways in which this connection between producers and consumers takes place is messy and situated. For example, farmers' markets are often posited as providing a space for close relations between producers and consumers, whereas some respondents in my research suggested that this was not necessarily an easy relationship to cultivate and negotiate. It was also suggested that the relationship included more than consumers and producers – for example, many suggested that the relationship is mediated by celebrity chefs, cookery programmes and cookery books in helping people know about and understand food production. Despite this, many consumers and producers felt disconnected from one another, primarily due to a lack of knowledge (see section 6.3) which prevented them (from having the confidence) to ask the 'right' questions.

The next section explores how local food is linked to ideas about place, and how these ideas about food, place, and identity can be translated into policies and practice. In particular, how



ideas about the 'local' fit into the 'global' as complementary rather than contradictory processes.

## **7.2. Place specificity – understandings of place and policy through local food**

Writing seventeen years ago, Amin and Thrift (1994: 1) declared that globalisation is seen as an all-pervasive force in the modern world. They suggest that for some globalisation is viewed as a threat to local diversity (which might include local food) and local autonomy, whereas for others it represents a change in the context within which local development paths are situated. Academics within geography have grappled with the continued relevance of place and space over the last couple of decades. Amin and Thrift (1994) conclude that globalisation does not represent the end of territorial distinctions and distinctiveness, but an added set of influences on local economic identities and development capabilities. For them, localities are part of, not separate from, the global, and, importantly, they challenge the idea of local as meaning homogenous or authentic in contrast to an inauthentic and unrooted global world (p8). Amin and Thrift (1994) also suggest that the future for local areas relies upon their successful articulation of local specificity with(in) globalisation. In the context of local food production this suggests that localised niche markets may extend beyond the immediate locality via global trade networks. For example, one of the businesses involved in the research in Italy has already developed such networks which build on the local specificity of their product (traditionally produced cheese, specific animal breeds, high quality local environment and biodiversity) via relationships nurtured via the Internet (see Holloway *et al*'s 2006 discussion of the Adopt a Sheep scheme) and an export programme taking their products as far afield as restaurants in New York. Atkinson *et al* (2007) found similar experiences in Campania, Italy where local food was being sold and promoted at overseas markets and food fairs. Although cities and regions are the focus for Amin and Thrift (1994), I have shown throughout this thesis that for the rural areas involved in this research, *place* has important impacts on how people construct meanings and how they think about issues such as local food.

In both the UK and Italy, images of rural areas and the relations between rural areas and other areas (both urban and rural) were important. However, there were important differences between the two research areas. In Italy, the city was viewed as an opportunity, both for selling food to urban consumers keen to learn about traditional production methods, as well as for providing a labour pool of people who wanted to work on the land but could not find employment within the city. Despite this, the city was still represented as a dangerous place,

meaning that city dwellers would appreciate the quality of life offered by rural parts of Italy like the Abruzzo. Some Italian respondents suggested that (Italian) rural residents did not wish to work in agriculture, a sector that had long been seen as a punishment rather than a career. One respondent reported that although people were returning to agriculture during the economic downturn, this would not continue once employment options in factories and other places returned (Italian respondent – 003). However, there was also evidence in the Abruzzo of people from outside of Italy working in agriculture, for example there were shepherds from Macedonia and other parts of Eastern Europe, and cheese-makers from America. The roles in Italian agriculture appeared to be split, with Italians preferring activities like farm education and agriturismo work compared to the Eastern Europeans who were ‘doing’ agriculture. As Montanari and Staniscia (2011) found, a revival of agriculture in the Abruzzo was being led by complete outsiders to the Abruzzo or by those of Abruzzian origin returning to the area, partly, they suggest, attracted by ‘the beauty of region and by its age-old cultural traditions’ (p63), but perhaps also by the comparatively cheap cost of living in such areas. These new residents were involved in an ‘invention of tradition’ as found by Sonnino (2007), Cox *et al* (2011), Bowen and De Master (2011), Holloway *et al* (2006) and Corti (2009). These invented traditions build upon images of the rural as idyllic and embed this message in food, through packaging, promotion and ‘folklore’.

In East Yorkshire, respondents saw urban areas and urban people as being ‘different’ to people from rural areas, and in some instances as a threat. For East Yorkshire respondents, people from urban areas did not understand country ways, including food production. This was presented by some as having particular repercussions in terms of policy making, where ‘urban bureaucrats’ were not familiar with rural areas and therefore not empowered to make policy for such areas. This included not understanding the extra costs of doing things in rural areas (the so-called ‘rural premium’) or how places work (particularly in response to partnership working and having a smaller pool of people to include – the ‘usual suspects’). These representations of urban and rural differences may be specific to East Yorkshire as a result of the local ‘urban’ area being Hull which East Yorkshire has traditionally not wanted to be associated with, and perhaps contrasts with other rural areas close to cities like Bristol or Brighton (see Goodman 2002; Seyfang 2007).

To concentrate on rural areas as idyllic, and representative of a life free from modern encumbrances, a life lived in more traditional ways, is to erase the difficulties and hardships often experienced by people living in rural places in the past (see Williams 2011, 1973). Peasant agricultures and ways of living can be reified whilst excluding the historical suffering

that many endured. Bessière (1998: 22) states that present day rurality cannot be associated with the former 'peasant' society, due to processes of in-migration from urban areas and 'rurbanisation'. Yet she goes on to note that images of 'the mythical countryman', whose image was for centuries negative and derogatory, is now idealised, quoting Burguière *et al* (1993):

...The image of country people, deprecated for so long, has been completely reversed and has gradually gained in nostalgia as rural dwellers have left the countryside for urban centres. In this manner, peasant life has become the sanctuary of people's origins, their lost roots, and the source of an improbable authenticity. (Bessière's translation)

Although I have focused on the ways that some rural areas are seen as being somehow more idyllic than other (rural and urban) areas, it has been in no way my intention to reinforce or essentialise such dichotomies or dualities. Rather I have wanted to explore how such images continue to be relevant and applied by policy-makers, businesses and consumers in their interactions with local food and rural development practices. None of my interview questions asked respondents to think about the relationships between urban and rural places or about ideas of the rural as being idyllic. These issues were all raised by respondents independently. Although for some people East Yorkshire and the Abruzzo may exhibit elements or particular spaces which are idyllic, overwhelmingly research respondents suggested that other areas were more idyllic and thus more suitable for local food economies. In the UK, Wales and counties such as Devon, Cumbria and North Yorkshire were most cited, whilst in the Abruzzo the only place referred to by respondents was Tuscany. Tuscany has special significance for Italians in terms of a construction of a rural idyll, as shown in Chapter 3. East Yorkshire with its intensive agriculture was seen by some as being part of the 'anti-idyll' in Bell's (2006) heuristic. Yet others referred to the peace and tranquillity of East Yorkshire, how it is a hidden gem, and that the particular landscapes (including intensive agriculture) have provided inspiration for artists including David Hockney. In the Abruzzo, some places could be called idyllic on the surface (for example the Medieval perched hill towns) yet underneath they concealed less idyllic images relating to depopulation and decline, and the hardships of agricultural work. As such, my research has illustrated that not only are impressions of rural idylls still relevant but they are used to inform ideas about which areas can and should produce local food, and that far from being a singular rural idyll, the concept is fragmented in space and time.

Although notions of rural idylls can draw on images of rurality as unchanging and as offering a harbour from modernity, I have shown how people make use of their understandings about rurality and urbanity in a contemporary way, not necessarily reifying the historical. Such imaginations are deeply ingrained yet constantly being challenged, contested, added to and revised.

### **7.3. Reflections on the research process**

The nature of undertaking doctoral research allows an indulgent exploration of a subject of interest over a number of years. During this time however, changes occur in the 'external' environment within which the research subject is situated, meaning that the study subject is in a continual process of 'becoming'. This has certainly been true with regard to the complex policy landscapes of rural development, (local) food, and broader political representations of rurality. The next section will discuss in more detail the changes as they have influenced the CASE partner (and other reflections on 'doing' a CASE studentship) before moving on to what some of the changes in the policy landscape have involved.

For me personally there have been a number of challenges encountered during the research. In particular, the literature review has been a constant challenge in thinking about how to bring together a number of research areas that were deemed relevant to the thesis but which often stand isolated, and meshing that with the 'grey' literature that needs inclusion within a thesis concentrating on 'policy'. A number of discursive strands have enabled the literature review to mesh together, and these include complexity as a core theme, a strong discourse of enterprise, innovation and diversification, a discourse of (re)connection between consumers and producers, as well as the influence of notions surrounding the rural as being in some ways more idyllic or authentic than other areas.

A more obvious challenge is that of undertaking research in a country where you are not fluent in the language. I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to learn Italian, and hope to continue to build on the skills I have gained, but the difficulties of setting up the research in Italy and managing the research 'in the field', not to mention dealing with the data during analysis, must be acknowledged.

#### ***CASE studentship relationship***

This research has been a CASE studentship, in collaboration with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Rural Policy team. Below I observe some of the difficulties that may be experienced

in such a research relationship and how these have impacted on my research. There can be tensions between expectations of the partner organisation and those of the academic institution, which can be difficult to marry up. Local authorities are relatively familiar with commissioning research and reports from consultants to deal with specific issues, yet are perhaps less familiar with qualitative academic research (see Burgess 2005: 277). Such reports and research commissioning often stipulates the measuring of a certain phenomenon to establish a 'baseline' against which progress can be monitored. To some extent, these are at odds with one another, in that the academic research outputs will not necessarily meet the needs of the collaborative partner, and instead require a separate report. In this specific case, the results of the postal survey may overcome these issues and as such this aspect of the research may be of greater interest to the CASE partner, although my CASE partner has been engaged and interested throughout the process so this may be less of an issue.

Also interesting is the emphasis of CASE studentships on collaborative working with policy based organisations like local authorities and charities. While policy research *per se* has fairly low standing in social science research, CASE studentships specifically encourage such work. CASE studentships may be problematic in terms of managing the relationship with the CASE partner (which may be a government department, a local authority or health trust, or a charity / non-governmental organisation) as the CASE partner may be left feeling 'out-of-pocket' in terms of the goods they receive, and the research may result in criticism that they aren't ready or willing to hear. It may be that partner organisations are expecting, for example, an evaluation of their specific policies or delivery activities (as some consultants do for bodies like local authorities), rather than a broader philosophical reflection of the ways the policy making processes work or don't work. Producing a separate report for the CASE partner, rather than a copy of the full thesis, should overcome any potential difficulties and having good contact throughout the research programme means that they are aware of the direction my research has taken.

Eden (2005: 284) describes difficulties that may arise for researchers when critiquing the work of such organisations, and is clear that the academic output is different to what organisations external to academia might be expecting – that they are looking for expert, credible, understandable, accessible, usable and free information. This can be hard to deliver as part of a PhD project as the PhD student is seen by external partners as an 'expert' when in reality this person may be relatively junior in their experiences. However, despite these criticisms, working with a CASE partner can lead to valuable experiences that can be helpful in applying later research and in disseminating results to wider audiences.

Despite its low standing in academic circles, Eden (2005: 282) argues for policy-relevant research's continued relevance for geographers as issues like climate change, animal disease such as BSE and Genetically Modified (GM) crops have put policy advice on the agenda. Policy has generally been ignored as regards local food, but most academics acknowledge the critical role of policy to the future success of local food networks. Barrett (2004) encourages policy research from outside of political science disciplines as a way of bringing different perspectives and ideas together. I concur with Eden (2005) and would add that policy plays a large role in how local food and rural development works in practice, and to ignore it results in a partial perspective. As regards the future of local food and rural development, there are many changes taking place contemporaneously, including a new UK government, food inflation, and continued challenges to how we farm to produce food. I will briefly detail some of the changes in the next section.

Overall, this relationship has worked well, and I have had a productive and supportive relationship with the members of the team. However, the partner team at the Council have been subject to the same pressures and changes as other bodies and these have included a reorganisation to align the rural team with Sustainable Development, highlighting the importance of this concept to public sector bodies. Inevitably this involved some distraction for the CASE partner which has impacted on the relationship between the research and the sponsoring body. This reorganisation led to the LEADER programme being moved from the rural team to another team within the Council, which had impacts regarding the involvement of the LEADER delivery team in the research.

### ***A continually evolving policy landscape***

In May 2010, the 'New Labour' government lost the election, being succeeded by a Conservative – Liberal Democrat coalition government. This new coalition government was elected after I conducted the policy phase of the research. Some of the bodies involved in my research will either no longer exist (regional development agencies) or will have a much changed role (as in the change from Rural Affairs Forums covering the regions to Farming and Rural Networks covering different geographies). The new government has detailed its proposals for changing the policy framework, both nationally and regionally, although it has confirmed neither its rural policy nor its food policy (see SDC 2011). The local level potentially will see fewer changes, although bodies such as the East Riding of Yorkshire Council will be operating within the new policy landscape as well as with financial constraints. The general landscape of rural development policy will no doubt change significantly as bodies like the Commission for Rural Communities are mothballed. The regional development agencies are

being replaced by sub-regional Local Enterprise Partnerships established by local authorities and other partners, although not all areas are currently covered by such a partnership. This will no doubt lead to further complexities in the geographies of policy interactions and relationships. Rural Growth Networks are proposed to deliver growth in rural areas, linked to the ERDP funding scheme and will further embed discourses of enterprise and diversification for rural areas. The coalition government have made claims that as well as 'being the greenest government ever' they will continue to expand the discourse of enterprise, competition and innovation, as they stated early following the election win:

The Government believes that business is the driver of economic growth and innovation, and that we need to take urgent action to boost enterprise, support green growth and build a new and more responsible economic model. We want to create a fairer and more balanced economy, where we are not so dependent on a narrow range of economic sectors, and where new businesses and economic opportunities are more evenly shared between regions and industries.

(The Coalition: our programme for government, May 2010) (quoted in CRC Releasing Economic Potential of England's Rural Areas 2010<sup>129</sup>).

Debates are also taking place regarding the future of food production in a world with a changing climate and growing population. As seen in the earlier chapters, a new discourse of food security may allow space for those in favour of a continuation of agri-business to promote it as the way forward, perhaps with a 'green' or sustainable tint to it. 'Sustainable intensification' has emerged as productivism in a new guise (Marsden 2010) and may pave the way for genetically modified products to become part of the 'mainstream'. Evolving debates surrounding the need to meet growing demands for food from a potential global population of 9 billion by 2050 may usurp the potential for alternative and quality food networks as food multinationals, agricultural suppliers and some policy makers adopt a discourse of food security and sustainable intensification. A new discursive framework of sustainable intensification and neo-productivism may challenge ideas of alternative food networks, especially in places like the East Riding of Yorkshire which has a long tradition and commitment to the ideas of successful farming being efficient, modern and scientific, all of which are not terms traditionally elided with the concept of the rural idyll.

Conversely, however, there is a strong counterculture in the organic and low-input movements, who posit that organic and agro-ecological approaches are more relevant in a

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<sup>129</sup> <http://www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/downloads/agendaforchange.pdf> accessed September 2010

world facing resource constraints. As a result, some people, especially organic proponents, suggest that the broader changes taking place will mean that organic farming becomes more competitive on price compared to conventional produce. As two farmers (one organic and one not) respondents involved in my research suggested:

It'll change in the end, I mean it, it's quite interesting to speculate because erm the whole thing about local and organic both of those things erm the more expensive oil becomes the more expensive conventional agriculture becomes erm fertiliser inputs tractor use all of those things pesticides they all consume vast amounts of energy, and so does transport, so relative to local stuff, imported stuff is going to get more expensive isn't it? (East Riding organic farmer 006)

nobody uses more sprays than they have to or fertiliser, in fact we're all guilty of, well I am, of not using enough actually you know cos they're so expensive, I have to cut back...fertiliser is terrible yeah...last year was really high and we couldn't say we can't buy it cos we all use it erm and we've all had to spend so much on seed and tilling the land that you have to go the whole hog and use the fertiliser as well to get, cos if you don't get anything like an expected yield you obviously lose money...I mean I got some slurry off a local pig farmer but it didn't cost me anything but he only did two fields you know he can't, he can't do it all...I mean it might come to the point where we have to leave fields fallow put cover crops in you know like organic system or something which would probably half our you know cropping you know what I mean? But it hasn't quite come to that (East Yorkshire farmer 015)

A particularly important question to consider is what would it mean if we want to see an extension / expansion of local food networks in the East Riding of Yorkshire given the differences between this area and other parts of the UK? Although policy and policy making have been highlighted as having an important role to play throughout this thesis, to some extent answering questions such as this are not the responsibility of one organisation alone, nor even of one country alone. It is likely that global circumstances will influence such future directions and the debate will be a long and contested one, leading to new geographies of food but also some reinforcing of the 'old' geographies of food. Developments will no doubt remain complex and uneven, within, between and across places.



### ***Future Research***

Needless to say, the research undertaken for this thesis resulted in more 'data' than could be included in the actual thesis. As such there remain a number of topics that merit further exploration and analysis, including the importance of seasonality, defensive localism as it relates to local food but also supermarket food, and the role of a politics of pragmatism (Anderson 2011) in informing and influencing consumer shopping practices.

Consumers were one of the most difficult research groups to access, as outlined in the methods chapter. However, the consumers who were involved in the research said that they had greatly enjoyed the experience of the focus group and being able to explore in a friendly atmosphere a subject that they were interested in but had not necessarily reflected on to that extent. Consumers are largely recognised as an underrepresented group in academic research on local or alternative food networks. As such, more work could be undertaken to explore consumers' relationships with local food, especially in places like the East of England and places where consumers might not be so 'discerning' (Morris and Young 2000; Murdoch *et al* 2000). Interesting themes have emerged from my research with consumers, especially regarding a politics of pragmatism as well as a politics of defensive localism, and these are areas which I would like to explore further in the future.

An alternative approach that could be explored in future would be to investigate the possibility of a 'worlds of consumption' as a counterpoint to the criticisms that Conventions Theory focuses too heavily on production rather than consumption. Although I haven't developed this yet, (beyond initial thoughts of a 'world of consumption', for example, based on convenience and value for money, and another based on quality, experience and taste) I think there is scope to consider this in further analysis of my research data or through further research (see below).

As outlined earlier in the thesis, I have concentrated on policy making at the regional and local levels; further research work could explore the issues extricated here at the national level. Additionally, the fluidity and messiness of working 'in' the policy landscape could be explored to ascertain whether other policy sectors are comparable to the experiences of those involved in this research. Although my research is situated within two specific localities, and concentrates on two closely related areas of policy (food and rural development), it may be that my findings are generalisable to other situations. However, care is needed in making this leap, as qualitative data as presented in this thesis are not primarily obtained to make such inferences.

As a personal reflection on the process of undertaking a CASE studentship and some of the tensions outlined above, I feel there is merit in further considering the methodological issues surrounding such research projects. Methodologically, overseas research work presents another layer of complexity, and it forms an important step in overcoming what could be argued to be an Anglo-centric focus in the academic literature, the complexities of qualitative research in countries where the language is not one's first language need acknowledging. In particular, what had seemed like a generous package in terms of learning support for Italian language training, research budget and three extra month's stipend for carrying out the Italian research seemed less generous once overseas research expenditure had been incurred. I have enjoyed opportunity to learn Italian, to live life in Italy during the research and explore the research topic in Italy. With more time, funding and resources I would have liked to extend the research phase in Italy, yet given the constraints of these things I feel that the research worked well.

This thesis has addressed a number of core gaps within the alternative food networks and rural development research literatures, specifically by focusing on an area of intensive agricultural production, by including policy-makers, businesses and consumers together within the same research framework and by looking specifically at the practice of policy-making. These are all areas which have been of great interest, to me, the CASE partner and to most of the people involved in the research, and offer opportunities for future research.

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Date

Dear,

**Research on the local food sector in the East Riding of Yorkshire**

I am researcher based in the Department of Geography at the University of Hull, where I am investigating the local food sector and policy-makers' support for the local food sector as part of my PhD research. The aims of my research are to gain a better understanding of why policy-makers wish to support the local food sector, how policy-makers see local food fitting into rural development more broadly, and how policy-makers feel the local food sector can best be supported. For your information, a summary of the research questions which I am intending to address is included at the end of this letter. I am contacting you as I understand you have responsibility for policy-making relating to local food, and as such I hope that you would be able to provide valuable insights into the policy process (I will also be undertaking interviews with businesses and consumers). To this end, I would very much like to interview you for my research – I anticipate that interviews would take approximately 1 hour. I will follow up this letter within two weeks with a telephone call so that we might be able to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet.

If you feel that you are not the right person within your organisation, or if you do not wish to be interviewed, then please feel free to pass this request on to someone else. Please be assured that all interviews will be treated in the strictest confidence and individuals will not be identified in the outputs of the research.

My research is sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council (the national funding agency for Social Science Research in Higher Education) in collaboration with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council. The results of my research will be used to inform policy-makers wishing to support the local food sector, as well as being used in the writing of my PhD thesis. The project conforms to the Ethical standards of the Economic and Social Research Council and the University of Hull. The research is supervised by Dr. Lewis Holloway ([L.Holloway@hull.ac.uk](mailto:L.Holloway@hull.ac.uk); tel. 01482 466759), and he can provide further information about the project if you are interested.

With best wishes, and thanks in anticipation,

Kirstie O'Neill  
PhD project – *Effective Policy Interventions for Establishing Local Food Systems*

*Effective Policy Interventions for Establishing Sustainable Local Food Systems*

The project will:

- a. Examine how and why the idea of promoting a 'local food economy' has become a key aim within rural development policy making.
- b. Examine how the term 'local food' is constructed by policy makers, food businesses and consumers.
- c. Critically examine the notion of 'effectiveness' as it relates to sustainable rural development policy-making and practice in relation to local food systems.
- d. Critically analyse the key factors involved in the success of local food systems, with reference to a bulk commodity producing area in the UK and an Italian region.
- e. Develop conceptualisations of the role of consumers and consumption in the emergence of local food economies.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONING STRATEGY FOR POLICY-MAKERS

Outline structure of interview  
Any questions?

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please could you introduce yourself for the tape and what your role and background is? Length of time?

Please tell me a little bit about your organisation – what are its key aims / function / role?

Please could you outline the role / function of your particular section?

In terms of policy making, which would you say are your most important partner bodies or organisations?  
What is the nature of the relationship? How do these work?

### LOCAL FOOD GENERAL

Where are the opportunities for local food to contribute to rural development in this area? To the local economy? Social and environment?

Probe: so what is local food?

What are the barriers to increasing contribution of local food businesses?

Role of supermarkets and other retailers. Positive / negative.

How do you view the relationship of such retailers to local food? Why?

Probe: current economic climate and local food.

Probe: local food and East Yorkshire with its intensive, large-scale agriculture.

### POLICY: LOCAL FOOD

Could you tell me about your organisation's support for local food businesses / organisations?

When did local food started to become a policy priority for your organisation? Why was this?

Probe: relation to national policy.

How do you see local food fitting into rural development? Are there any specific benefits or problems with this?

### POLICY: RURAL DEVELOPMENT

What do you see as the main contributions of agriculture to rural development? How important?

#### LEADER

Have you had any personal experience with the LEADER programme? Details.

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of programmes like LEADER?

LEADER Local Action Group?

How important do you think programmes like LEADER are in encouraging local food businesses? Probe: strength / weakness of LEADER in developing local food specifically.

#### Policy Process

## Appendix 2. Research Questions – UK Policy Makers

Please could you tell me the main factors involved in policy-making in your organisation as regards local food and rural development?

Who is involved in this agenda-setting? Where does the impetus for change come from?

What are your priorities for support in rural development? Why is this?

How are these priorities decided upon?

How would you know if a policy has been successful?

What do you think the future holds for local food?

**CLOSE**

Suggestions of other policy-makers that I should contact for interview?

Any questions?

Thanks!

### **Trigger words:**

Alternative

Quality

Natural

Sustainable

Traditional / typical

Health

Ethics

Consumers / consumption



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF HULL  
CONSENT FORM

I, .....

of .....  
[Address]

representing .....  
[Institution]

hereby consent to be interviewed for a research project being undertaken by Kirstie O'Neill of the University of Hull.

The project is entitled, *Effective Policy Interventions for Establishing Sustainable Local Food Systems*. It is funded by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council and the Economic and Social Research Council.

The purpose of the research is to examine how policy-making bodies might better support local food businesses and networks.

**I understand that:**

1. The aims and methods of the research study have been explained to me.
2. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the interview, in which event the interview will immediately cease.
3. The names of interviewees and the institution they represent will not be released.
4. Interviews will be recorded so that a full record is kept, but these recordings will not be released.
5. Responses may be used for research purposes and cited in academic journals, at academic conferences and in project publicity, including via the Economic and Social Research Council's website and publications. However, these responses will **not** be attributed to particular individuals or institutions.

Signature:..... Date: .....

The contact details for this project are:

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Dear ,

**Local food in the East Riding of Yorkshire – survey**

Your business has been identified as part of the food sector in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The enclosed survey is part of a research project looking at local food businesses in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and how they market their produce locally. The survey findings will be especially useful for local policy-makers, including East Riding of Yorkshire Council, to help better understand the food economy in the area and to identify the support the sector needs.

This research is part of my PhD research at the University of Hull, which is looking at policy-makers' support for local food businesses. It is sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council (a Government research funding body) as well as the East Riding of Yorkshire council.

I would be extremely grateful if you could spare some time to complete the enclosed survey and return it in the freepost envelope (also enclosed). **Please return it by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009.** I would be very interested in interviewing you about the specific issues which are important to you in relation to local food production and marketing. If you are willing to participate please indicate this by completing your contact details at the end of the survey. I would, of course, arrange to meet with you at a time and location that is convenient to you.

All results from this survey will be completely anonymised before being made available to other people / organisations.

If you would like further information please do not hesitate to contact me using the details above; alternatively my supervisor at the University of Hull, Dr Lewis Holloway, can be contacted on 01482 466759.

Yours sincerely,

Kirstie O'Neill  
PhD Researcher – *Effective Policy Interventions for Establishing Sustainable Local Food Systems*



EAST RIDING  
OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

### **3. BUSINESS INFORMATION**

#### **3a. Please provide the following information:**

Name (optional)

Job title (optional)

Business name (optional)

Postcode (please complete)

#### **3b. How many people does your business employ (full-time equivalents)?**

☐ Sole trader

☐ 20 – 49

☐ 2 – 4

☐ 50 – 99

☐ 5 – 9

☐ 100 – 199

☐ 10 – 19

☐ Other (Please state):

#### **3c. How long has your business been operating?**

☐ Under 12 months

☐ 6 – 10 years

☐ 12 – 36 months

☐ 11 – 15 years

☐ 37 months – 5 years

☐ Over 15 years

#### **3d. What was the approximate annual turnover of your business for the financial year 2007/08?**

£ .....(sterling)

**If you would be interested in taking part in an interview to discuss issues relating to the local food economy in more detail please provide a telephone number or email address below:**

 Telephone:

 Email:

☐ Please tick here if you would be interested in receiving feedback from this work

**Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey – your answers  
are greatly appreciated!  
Please return this survey in the Freepost envelope provided.**

Kirstie O'Neill, PhD researcher, Department of Geography, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, HULL, HU6 7RX  
[k.j.oneill@2007.hull.ac.uk](mailto:k.j.oneill@2007.hull.ac.uk)

# Local food in the East Riding of Yorkshire – Questionnaire Survey



THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

## 1. YOUR BUSINESS AND THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

**1a. How would you describe the main activities of your business?** Please give details of produce grown / raised / processed

**1b. Do you sell your food produce at any of the following outlets?** (Please tick as many as applicable)

**If NOT please indicate why not below**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers markets         | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet sales  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm shops              | <input type="checkbox"/> Food festivals  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct sales            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other retailers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Box schemes             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |  |

**If yes, what motivated you to do so?**

**If no, please indicate why not:**

- ☐ Concern about food miles
- ☐ Better financial returns
- ☐ Opportunity to build local trust
- ☐ Responding to consumer demand
- ☐ Rising distribution costs
- ☐ Business threat
- ☐ Other (please state):

**1c. As a food business, do you identify specifically with any of the following geographic areas?**  
(please tick as many as applicable)

- ☐ Yorkshire coast
- ☐ Yorkshire Wolds
- ☐ Parish / town (please state):
- ☐ County – East Riding of Yorkshire
- ☐ Yorkshire and the Humber
- ☐ England
- ☐ Britain

**Do you use specify these locations for marketing or labelling purposes?**

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |



## 2. BUSINESS SUPPORT

### 2a. Have you received business support from any of the following organisations in the past?

	If so, how useful was this support? Please circle: 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Defra	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> East Riding of Yorkshire council	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Link	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire Forward	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> National Farmers' Union	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Country Land and Business Association	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5

### 2b. Out of the following, what type of business support would be most helpful to you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Networking with other similar businesses
<input type="checkbox"/> Information and Communications Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial (e.g. grants or loans)
<input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Branding and labelling
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please state):	

### 2c. Are you a member of any of the following Accreditation schemes: (tick as many as applicable)

	If so, how useful are these schemes? Please circle: 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> RSPCA Freedom Foods	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Organic (e.g. Soil Association / Organic Farmers & Growers)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Red Tractor	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):	1	2	3	4	5

**2d. Are you a Member of any of the following organisations: (tick as many as applicable)**

	If yes, how useful is this membership? 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire and Humber Regional Food Group	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> National Farmers' Union (NFU)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Soil Association	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):	1	2	3	4	5

**2e. Have you received public funding\* to help develop your business? (\*excluding Common Agricultural Policy)**

If YES, please tick as many of the following as applicable:

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Development Programme England(RDPE) | <input type="checkbox"/> Defra  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural England                           | <input type="checkbox"/> LEADER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):                     |                                 |

**2f. Please could you indicate what your current challenges are?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic climate    | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of raw materials      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessing customers | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical issues    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):    |

**2g. What challenges or opportunities might you face in future?**

The **East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network** is a partnership of businesses from the East Riding who are committed to local food production, processing, retail and catering. Their aim is to encourage the local food sector in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

**2h. What types of activities would be of greatest benefit from the East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network? Tick as many as applicable**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing               | <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation and product assurance         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training                | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing updates on policy and legislation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals and events    | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessing funding                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |  |

### **3. BUSINESS INFORMATION**

#### **3a. Please provide the following information:**

Name (optional)

Job title (optional)

Business name (optional)

Postcode (please complete)

#### **3b. How many people does your business employ (full-time equivalents)?**

☐ Sole trader

☐ 10 – 19

☐ 2 – 4

☐ 20 – 49

☐ 5 – 9

☐ 50 – 99

☐ Other (Please state):

#### **3c. How long has your business been operating?**

☐ Under 12 months

☐ 6 – 10 years

☐ 12 – 36 months

☐ 11 – 15 years

☐ 37 months – 5 years

☐ Over 15 years

#### **3d. What was the approximate annual turnover of your business for the financial year 2007/08?**

£ .....(sterling)

**If you would be interested in taking part in an interview to discuss issues relating to the local food economy in more detail please provide a telephone number or email address – many thanks!**

 Telephone:

 Email:

☐ Please tick here if you would be interested in receiving feedback from this work

**Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey – your answers  
are greatly appreciated!  
Please return this survey in the Freepost envelope provided.**

Kirstie O'Neill, PhD researcher, Department of Geography, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, HULL, HU6 7RX  
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# Local food in the East Riding of Yorkshire – Questionnaire Survey



THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

## 1. YOUR BUSINESS AND THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

1a. How would you describe the main activities of your business?

---

1b. Do you offer local food produce at your business? (Please tick as many as applicable)

If NOT please indicate why not below:

---

If yes, what motivated you to do so?

- ☐ Concern about food miles
- ☐ Better financial returns
- ☐ Opportunity to build local trust
- ☐ Responding to consumer demand
- ☐ Business threat
- ☐ Other (please state):

If no, please indicate why not:

1c. How do you find out about the local food on offer in the East Riding of Yorkshire?

---

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local food directory           | <input type="checkbox"/> Word-of-mouth                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internet                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting farm shops or farmers' markets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yellow Pages / Phone Directory | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):                 |

1d. As a business, do you identify specifically with any of the following geographic areas?  
(please tick as many as applicable)

---

- ☐ Yorkshire coast
- ☐ Yorkshire Wolds
- ☐ Parish / town (please state):
- ☐ County – East Riding of Yorkshire
- ☐ Yorkshire and the Humber
- ☐ England
- ☐ Britain

Do you use specify these locations for marketing or  
labelling purposes?

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

## **2. BUSINESS SUPPORT**

### **2a. Have you received business support from any of the following organisations in the past?**

	<b>If so, how useful was this support? Please circle:</b> 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Defra	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> East Riding of Yorkshire council	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Link	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire Tourist Board	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire Forward	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Visit Hull and East Yorkshire (VHEY)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5

### **2b. Out of the following, what type of business support would be most helpful to you?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Networking with other similar businesses
<input type="checkbox"/> Information and Communications Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial (e.g. grants or loans)
<input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Branding and labelling
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please state):	

### **2c. Are you a Member of any of the following organisations: (tick as many as applicable)**

	<b>If yes, how useful is this membership?</b> 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire and Humber Regional Food Group	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> National Farmers' Union (NFU)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Soil Association	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome to Yorkshire (formerly YTB)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> East Riding Local Food Network	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):	1	2	3	4	5

## 2d. Have you received public funding to help develop your business?

---

If YES, please tick as many of the following as applicable:

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Development Programme England (RDPE) | <input type="checkbox"/> Defra  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural England                            | <input type="checkbox"/> LEADER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):                      |                                 |

## 2e. What challenges currently face your business?

---

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic climate    | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of raw materials      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessing customers | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical issues    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):    |

## 2f. What do you expect to be the main challenges you will face in future?

---

The **East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network** is a partnership of businesses from the East Riding who are committed to local food production, processing, retail and catering. Their aim is to encourage the local food sector in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

---

## 2g. What types of activities would you find to be of greatest benefit from the East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network? Tick as many as applicable

---

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation and product assurance         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing updates on policy and legislation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals, markets and other events | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessing funding                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):             |  |

### **3. BUSINESS INFORMATION (all information is confidential)**

#### **3a. Please provide the following information:**

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Job title (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Business name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode (please complete) \_\_\_\_\_

#### **3b. How many people does your business employ (full-time equivalents)?**

☐ Sole trader

☐ 10 – 19

☐ 2 – 4

☐ 20 – 49

☐ 5 – 9

☐ 50 – 99

☐ Other (Please state): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **3c. How long has your business been operating?**

☐ Under 12 months

☐ 6 – 10 years

☐ 12 – 36 months

☐ 11 – 15 years

☐ 37 months – 5 years

☐ Over 15 years

#### **3d. What was the approximate annual turnover of your business for the financial year 2007/08?**

£ .....(sterling)

**If you would be interested in taking part in an interview to discuss issues relating to the local food economy in more detail please provide a telephone number or email address below:**

 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Please tick here if you would be interested in receiving feedback from this work

**Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey – your answers  
are greatly appreciated!  
Please return this survey in the Freepost envelope provided.**



**THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL**

## 1. YOUR BUSINESS AND THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

**1a. How would you describe the main activities of your business?**

---

**1b. Do you sell your food produce at any of the following outlets?** (Please tick as many as applicable)

**If NOT please indicate why not below**

<input type="checkbox"/> Farmers markets	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet sales
<input type="checkbox"/> Farm shops	<input type="checkbox"/> Food festivals
<input type="checkbox"/> Direct sales	<input type="checkbox"/> Other retailers
<input type="checkbox"/> Box schemes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	

**If yes, what motivated you to do so?**

**If no, please indicate why not:**

- ☐ Concern about food miles
- ☐ Better financial returns
- ☐ Opportunity to build local trust
- ☐ Responding to consumer demand
- ☐ Rising distribution costs
- ☐ Business threat
- ☐ Other (please state):

**1c. As a food business, do you identify specifically with any of the following geographic areas?**  
(please tick as many as applicable)

		Do you use specify these locations for marketing or labelling purposes?			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yorkshire coast	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yorkshire Wolds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parish / town (please state):	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	County – East Riding of Yorkshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yorkshire and the Humber	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	England	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Britain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No



## 2. BUSINESS SUPPORT

### 2a. Have you received business support from any of the following organisations in the past?

	If so, how useful was this support? Please circle: 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Defra	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> East Riding of Yorkshire council	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Link	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire Forward	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> National Farmers' Union	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Country Land and Business Association	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5

### 2b. Out of the following, what type of business support would be most helpful to you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Networking with other similar businesses
<input type="checkbox"/> Information and Communications Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial (e.g. grants or loans)
<input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Branding and labelling
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please state):	

### 2c. Are you a member of any of the following Accreditation schemes: (tick as many as applicable)

	If so, how useful are these schemes? Please circle: 1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> RSPCA Freedom Foods	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe and Local Supplier Approval (SALSA)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Organic (e.g. Soil Association / Organic Farmers & Growers)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Red Tractor	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):	1	2	3	4	5

**2d. Are you a Member of any of the following organisations: (tick as many as applicable)**

	If yes, how useful is this membership?				
	1 = very useful and 5 = not at all useful				
<input type="checkbox"/> Yorkshire and Humber Regional Food Group	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> National Farmers' Union (NFU)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Soil Association	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> East Riding Local Food Network	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):	1	2	3	4	5

**2e. Have you received public funding\* to help develop your business? (\*excluding Common Agricultural Policy)**

If YES, please tick as many of the following as applicable:

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rural Development Programme England(RDPE) | <input type="checkbox"/> Defra  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natural England                           | <input type="checkbox"/> LEADER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):                     |                                 |

**2f. Please could you indicate what your current challenges are?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic climate        | <input type="checkbox"/> Cost of raw materials      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessing customers     | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation and regulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technical issues        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |   |

**2g. Please could you suggest what some of your future challenges might be?**

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating new channels to market | <input type="checkbox"/> Rising costs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff with the right skills     |                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):         |                                       |

The **East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network** is a partnership of businesses from the East Riding who are committed to local food production, processing, retail and catering. Their aim is to encourage the local food sector in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

**2h. What types of activities would be of greatest benefit from the East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network? Tick as many as applicable**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing               | <input type="checkbox"/> Accreditation and product assurance         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training                | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing updates on policy and legislation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Festivals and events    | <input type="checkbox"/> Accessing funding                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |  |

## RESEARCH QUESTIONING STRATEGY FOR LOCAL FOOD BUSINESSES

Outline structure of interview – any questions?

### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- a. Please could you introduce yourself for the tape: role and background? Length of time?
- b. Please tell me a little bit about your business – key activities, size, number of employees, history etc?
- c. Do you retail your products mainly locally? Do any of your products go through more conventional channels? What motivates you to access local and / or distant food markets?

### 2. LOCAL FOOD GENERAL

There has been a lot of discussion in the media and by governments and other organisations about local food – I am trying to get a sense of what you feel local food is (me – there are a number of definitions in circulation, from specifying distance from purchasers, e.g. 30-50 miles, or limiting to a county or other region. Also means of retailing, are independent shops different to supermarkets.)

- a. What do you think local food means (how are your products 'local')? Probe: so what is local food?
- b. Abuse of the term? Can everyone call their products 'local'?
- c. Role of supermarkets and other retailers. Positive / negative.
- d. Media attention to local food – awareness of, how viewed (positive / negative)?

Probe: current economic climate and local food.

- e. Are there any specific barriers for local food businesses in the ERY?
- f. Is there anything about the ERY that is particularly good for local food businesses?

Probe: local food and East Yorkshire with its intensive, large-scale agriculture.

### 3. RELATIONSHIP WITH CONSUMERS

- a. Who are your customers? Where are they based?
- b. How do you appeal to your customers? What works well / not so well?
- c. Do consumers influence the activities of your business?
- d. How would you like your consumers to view you?

### 4. SUPPORT FROM OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- a. Are you a member of Y&H Regional Food Group? Are your needs being met by YHRFG?
  - If not, which needs are not being met?
  - How could these be more successfully addressed?
- b. Are you a member of the East Riding of Yorkshire Local Food Network?
- c. Are you a member of any other organisations? Do they work? If not, what should they be doing?
- d. Are you included in any local food directories (online / hard copy)? How did you access these (payment / criteria)? Do they work for your business?
- e. Are farmers' markets helping support the local food sector? Food festivals? British Food Fortnight?
- f. What is successful in promoting local food if not FMs?
- g. What do you think about schemes to certify producers as local, similar to organic certification? (e.g. SALSA?)
- h. Are accreditation schemes too much of a burden / helpful / exclusive?
- i. Are there any effects from other forms of regulation?

## 5. POLICY AND LOCAL FOOD

- a. Are you aware of policy-makers' support for local food? How? What? (In general or you in particular).
- b. How effective do you feel this is? What could be improved?
- c. Have you had any involvement in policy-making processes, e.g. responding to consultations (govt, other orgs?) or attending meetings, lobbying through membership of trade groups/other institutions (NFU, CLA, Business Organisations), feedback to funders?
  - How do you get involved in these processes?
  - How successful do you feel this is?
  - Do you feel like you have any influence through these processes?
- d. Is there a difference between the proposed intentions of policy-makers and the actions on the ground?
- e. Have any particular policies helped you in your business?
- f. What other help should be provided, if any?

## 6. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*Rural development is a process by which the EU and national governments aim to combine economic development whilst also safeguarding the countryside as well as the social and cultural aspects of rural areas. This is a shift from past policies which tended to focus solely on agriculture in rural areas.*

- a. What do you see as the main contributions of agriculture / local food businesses / hospitality businesses to rural development? How important?
- b. Have you had any personal experience with the LEADER programme? Details.
- c. How important do you think programmes like LEADER are in encouraging local food businesses? Probe: strength / weakness of LEADER in developing local food specifically.

## 7. CLOSE

What do you think the future holds for local food?

How do you see your business developing over the next 5 years / what does the future hold?

Any questions? Thanks!

### Trigger words:

Alternative  
Quality  
Sustainable

Local  
Natural  
Traditional / typical

Consumers / consumption  
Ethics  
Health



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# Have you got something to say about local food?

If so, I'd like to hear from you!

My name is Kirstie O'Neill and I am a researcher at the University of Hull doing a project on local food in the East Riding of Yorkshire. I would like to discuss issues of local food with a small group of people like you who buy local food from this area, preferably during June 2010.

If you are interested in taking part (or would like more information), please get in touch with me by email or phone:

[k.j.oneill@2007.hull.ac.uk](mailto:k.j.oneill@2007.hull.ac.uk)

0774 708 2650

Many thanks and I look forward to meeting you!



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www.marktoon.co.uk

# Have you got something to say about local food?

If so, I'd like to hear from you!

My name is Kirstie O'Neill and I am a researcher at the University of Hull doing a project on local food in the East Riding of Yorkshire. I would like to discuss issues of local food with a small group of people like you who buy local food from this area, preferably during June 2010.

If you are interested in taking part (or would like more information), please get in touch with me by email or phone:

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0774 708 2650

Many thanks and I look forward to meeting you!

## **Introduction (5 minutes)**

Thank you for allowing me to come this evening.

My research is looking at understanding local food markets and how these can contribute to rural development – as part of that I think it is critical to find out how consumers relate to and engage with them, and I would therefore like to tap into your personal experiences and opinions about local food. By speaking to consumers I will gain information that can help policy-makers develop appropriate support and I will also be using the information in my own research thesis.

I am particularly interested in the East Riding of Yorkshire as it is generally seen as an area that produces commodities for a global market, yet there are examples of foods and drinks that are available locally, through farm shops, farmers' markets, supermarkets and other places.

I would like us to have a group discussion and I have some themes that I would like to cover but I'm particularly interested in your views. I'm sure that there will be different points of view, and I am interested in hearing what all of you have to say, so please feel free to share your point of view even if this is different from what others have said. There are no right or wrong answers, and both negative and positive comments are useful. Please respect everyone's point of view, but do feel free to challenge and query each other. Hopefully it can be fun and informative for us all.

I would like to record our conversation if that is OK so as not to miss any comments, but I would like to stress that your comments are entirely confidential. For the benefit of the recording, where possible, could only one person speak at a time?

For some of the questions I'd like to split you into groups and then have a group discussion about your thoughts, whereas others we'll just have a group conversation about the topic. Any questions about all this?

By way of an introduction can each of you say who you are (first names only), where you live and what your favourite food is!

<b>Brainstorm exercise: (5 minutes)</b> Where do you currently buy your food from?  Do any of these outlets specifically sell local food?  Any examples of local food...	<b>Group discussion: (10 minutes)</b> Has this changed over the last 5 years? What reasons for changes?  How do you know that the food is local? / What makes 'local food' local?  Do you think that it makes a difference to local businesses where you buy your food?
---	--

<b>Group discussion: (10 minutes)</b> What motivates you to buy local food? How important is it to you that the food is local? Organic? Fair trade?  <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To feel good</li> <li>• To support local producers / businesses</li> <li>• Tastes better</li> <li>• Like meeting / knowing the producer</li> <li>• Like feeling more connected to the natural environment</li> <li>• Reduces my impact on the environment</li> </ul> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheaper than buying from other shops</li> <li>• Knowing how the food is grown</li> <li>• Eating more healthily</li> <li>• Don't like supermarkets on ethical grounds</li> </ul>
What stops you from buying local food?	

<b>Brainstorm exercise: (10 minutes)</b> In your opinion, what are the issues facing local food producers and sellers in this particular area?  Can you identify any particular difficulties that this area faces?	<b>Group discussion: (10 minutes)</b> If you had more influence over decision-making / policy / planning what would you do to address these issues?  Are there any simple changes that you feel could help the local food sector?
---	--

*Jot down on a piece of paper a phrase or sentence that best describes how your position on this topic.*

**Finally – what would encourage you personally to buy local food?**

**SUMMARY**



**Domande di ricerca – politica**

<b>1. Background Information</b>
----------------------------------

- a. Mi potrebbe parlare un po' della sua organizzazione. Quali sono i suoi ruoli e gli scopi principali?
- b. Qual'è in suo ruolo all'interno della organizzazione?
- c. Per quanto riguardano i processi decisionali nelle politiche agricole secondo Lei quali sono gli enti partner più importanti? Che tipo di rapporti avete e come vengono?

<b>2. Prodotti Tipici in Generali</b>
---------------------------------------

- a. In che modo i prodotti tipici possono contribuire allo sviluppo rurale in questa zona?
  - In termini dell'economia?
  - In termini sociali ed ambientali?
- b. Per Lei cos'è un "prodotto tipico"? Perché?
- c. Quali barriere esistono all'aumento del numero di aziende alimenti locali?
- d. Com'è la situazione economica attuale e la situazione dei prodotti tipici? In che modo il terremoto d'aprile ha modificato i numero di presenze nel Parco e il suo indotto?

<b>3. Le politiche che riguardano i prodotti tipici</b>
---

- a. La sua organizzazione appoggia in qualche modo aziende locali, del settore alimentare (aziende agricole)?
- b. I prodotti tipici si possono considerare una priorità politica per la vostra organizzazione? Se sì, come mai?
- c. Questo crea dei problemi specifici oppure presenta delle opportunità?
- d. Politiche per lo sviluppo rurale
- e. Quali sono i principali contributi che l'agricoltura può dare allo sviluppo rurale? Pensa che svolge un ruolo importante?

**LEADER**

- a. La vostra organizzazione ha avuto esperienza del programma europeo LEADER? Quali?
- b. Nel suo parere quali sono i vantaggi e gli svantaggi di programmi come LEADER in particolare per quanto riguarda lo sviluppo di aziende alimentari locali?
- c. Collobrate con i GAL?

<b>4. Processi decisionali</b>
--------------------------------

- a. Come vengono prese le decisionali che riguardano politiche per lo sviluppo rurale e quello verso i prodotti tipici? Fino a che punto coinvolgete i produttore della zona?
- b. Quali enti partecipano a questo processo?
- c. Dove nasce l'impeto per i cambiamenti?
- d. Quali sono le vostre priorità nello sviluppo rurale? Perché questi priorità?
- e. Chi stabilisce queste priorità?
- f. Come misurate il successo o meno di una politica specifica?
- g. Come vede il futuro dei prodotti tipici e l'agricoltura in questa zona?

**Grazie mille per il tempo che mi ha dedicato nel rilasciare quest'intervista.**

**Domande di ricerca – imprenditori**

<b>1. Informazioni che riguardano la Sua azienda</b>
--

- a. Si presenti per il dittafo – il Suo ruolo e il Suo background. Da quanto tempo opera nel settore?
- b. Potrebbe dirmi un po' della Sua azienda – tipo di attività, numero degli impiegati in azienda, la storia dell'azienda?
- c. Vende i Suoi prodotti principalmente nell'area locale, oppure via canali convenzionali? Perché vende i prodotti in locale (oppure a mercati alimentari distanti)?

<b>2. Prodotti tipici</b>
---------------------------

In Inghilterra, c'è molto interesse per i 'prodotti tipici' - ai giornali, le tv e il governo piace l'idea del 'local food' (prodotti tipici). Vorrei che Lei mi spiegasse la sua interpretazione del concetto di 'local food'. Per esempio, in Inghilterra per 'local food' si intende un prodotto legato ad una regione o area precisa (spesso fino a 45-80 chilometri).

- a. Qual'è la sua interpretazione del concetto di prodotto locale? Lei per 'prodotto tipico' cosa intende – in che modo sono 'tipici della zona' i suoi prodotti?
- b. Pensa che ognuno dovrebbe potere chiamare 'locali' i propri prodotti? Si usa la parola 'locale' in modo scorretto?
- c. Che cosa pensa del ruolo dei supermercati ed altri dettaglianti – positivo o negativo?
- d. C'è benefici esistono per le aziende nel settore alimentare in questa regione? E quali problemi?

<b>3. Rapporti con i Vostri consumatori</b>
---

- a. Chi sono i Vostri consumatori? Dove abitano? Sono principalmente turisti o persone che vengono dalla vostra regione?
- b. Come attirare i Vostri consumatori? Che cosa funziona bene? E cosa non funziona tanto bene?
- c. I Vostri consumatori influenzano le attività della Sua azienda?

<b>4. Il sostegno di altre organizzazioni / enti pubblici</b>
---

- a. È membro di organizzazioni come la Coldiretti, CIA, Slow Food o simili?
- b. Queste organizzazioni lavorano bene per Sua azienda?
- c. La Sua azienda fa parte di un consorzio?
- d. La sua azienda partecipa nelle sagre, fiere alimentari o mercati di vendita diretta (Farmers' Markets)?
- e. Quali sono le strategie che funzionano meglio nel promuovere i prodotti locali?

**5. La politica e i prodotti locali**

- a. Siete al corrente di un eventuale appoggio da parte dei responsabili dei processi decisionali per le politiche nel settore alimentare? Es. Comunità montana, la Regione, la provincia?
- b. Quanto ritiene siano efficaci questi processi decisionali?
- c. Avete avuto modo di partecipare nei processi decisionali attraverso degli incontri con gli enti pubblici?
- d. Ci sono delle politiche particolari che hanno aiutato la vostra azienda?
- e. Quali altri aiuti si potrebbero fornire alle aziende?

**6. Sviluppo rurale**

- a. Quali sono i contributi principali dell'agricoltura / delle aziende di prodotti locali / turismo (per esempio hotel, ristoranti ecc.) per lo sviluppo rurale?
- b. Avete avuto esperienza personale del programma LEADER? Che tipo?
- c. Quanto è importante il programma LEADER per le aziende 'prodotti tipici'? Punti forti /punti deboli

**7. Fine**

- a. Come vede il futuro dei prodotti tipici?
- b. E poi la vostra azienda nei prossimi 5 anni? È ottimista?

Grazie mille per il tempo che mi ha dedicato nel rilasciare quest'intervista.

**Parole importanti**

Alternativa  
Traduzione  
Qualità

Locale  
Naturale  
Sostenibile

Consumatori  
Etica  
Salute