

Variations in rural development: a comparative analysis of the application of the Rural Development Regulation Framework in France and the Netherlands

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Abstract

This paper reviews the ways in which France and the Netherlands applied the European Rural Development Regulation Framework during the programming period 2000–2006 by examining the two cases and mapping out the main lines of their respective trajectories. It is based on institutional understanding of the policy-making process. The Dutch application was shaped essentially by a nature conservationist view of the countryside, whereas France had a predominantly farmer-oriented implementation. These variations are obviously due to the differences in the national issues at stake, but also to the political clout of the agricultural sector. In the Netherlands, a small and densely populated country in search of space for 'nature', farmers have to deal with a rurality made of other claims, whereas in France the farmers have managed to maintain an agricultural countryside.

Additional keywords: Common Agricultural Policy, multifunctional agriculture

Introduction

Since the Cork conference in 1996, rural development at European level has asserted itself as a new policy orientation for rural areas. It has largely influenced the constitution of the so-called second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the principles of which are detailed in European Council Regulation 1257/1999, also known as the Rural Development Regulation Framework (RDRF) (Lowe *et al.*, 2002). It is not clear yet whether the objectives of the second-pillar complement or contradict the existence of the first pillar, but in any case its policy lines strongly differ from those of the earlier

pillar (Perraud, 2003). Some orientations that differ from the mere reinforcement of agricultural production have been introduced. The idea is to set up a new ‘paradigm’ of development for rural areas, which, in the long run, would probably reposition the basic European agricultural subsidies. Renewed legitimacy is thus required for another generation of subsidies that mainly concern environmental issues, like landscape and quality of the production process. Everything that strengthens a sustainable rural development enters into the regulation. The principle of multi-functionality of agriculture is officially recognized and a possibility to promote some broader changes in rural areas is also stipulated (Laurent, 2000; Delorme, 2004).

As the national application of the regulation is a social and political process, it may be characterized by some variations in the different European countries. The aim of this paper is to describe the application of the RDRF in France and the Netherlands during the former programming period and to examine the respective specific institutional paths in relation to the particular period of their national application. In order to do so, the RDRF will be presented briefly to better introducing the objectives and methodology of our research. The policy processes at stake during the application of this European regulation will then be presented. Finally, some analytical comments will be made with emphasis on both natural and social processes, to further our understanding of the structural national differences between these two cases.

The Rural Development Regulation Framework

Rural development is not a new category of public intervention. According to Houée (1989), it started to take shape as an historical movement in concert with the industrial and urban revolution and the diffusion of technical progress. In rural areas this brought about “*some new modes and relations of production, a new organization of activities and spaces, a lasting transformation of the mental, social, and cultural structures of society*” (Houée, 1989). Our objective is not to discuss this notion and its different forms of political, social and institutional materialization in the course of time, although concepts of both ‘development’ and ‘rural’ have constantly triggered some questioning in the literature. Instead, this paper focuses on the new embodiment of rural development in the particular case of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy of the 1990s. As Houée (1989) pointed out, rural development policies have, from the outset, varied considerably amongst regions as far as their sources and objectives are concerned.

The RDRF is not the only policy instrument of rural development, nor is it genuinely new. In reality, the regulation aggregates several other previous policy instruments such as agro-environmental measures, pre-retirement aid, subsidies for young farmers, and compensations for the less-favoured areas. In all, it is composed of 22 measures, potentially applicable in the whole European territory. From its adoption by the European Union in 1999, the member states had to build up a Rural Development Plan (RDP) that would serve as a formal application of the regulation. The way in which the RDP was socially constructed tells us something about the national realities of rural development. The starting point of this reflection is that the national comparison is likely to yield some interesting elements of understanding of what rural development is all about.

Depending on the national stakes, countries are likely to make different choices concerning the content of the measures as well as the organizational aspects of the application of the regulation. As this particular policy domain needs certain proximity with the territory if local specificity is to be taken into account, the policies of rural development and their subsequent administrative processes have to take these different contexts into consideration. Concerning the production of the national RDP in particular, the public management choices made in that domain do not stand to reason, and the institutional organization of rural development is likely to be shaped differently among the European members. Keeping it within a multi-level governance context, the sharing of responsibilities between the different levels of government (EU, central national government, local government) is a key issue. As a result, the analysis of the RDP is likely to give us a relevant picture of these different choices. They not only reveal some specific political and social contexts as to the preceding instruments and options (agro-environment, young farmers, subsidies, less-favoured areas, and compensations), they also challenge the researcher regarding the reasoning behind those choices and the subsequent institutional trajectories taken by each country.

Only two countries were chosen for this research, namely France and the Netherlands. Rebuilding the national trajectories involved collecting a large volume of empirical material, much of which was gathered through the storylines of the people who observed or participated in these processes. Some interviews were conducted in 2004 with the main stakeholders involved in the application of the regulation: ministries of agriculture, regional authorities, state agencies in charge with the application of the policy, European Commission, agricultural organizations and environmental organizations¹.

The research does not claim to be representative of all of Europe. Instead, it offers a detailed picture of a certain country profile. Both countries are marked by a period, in the 1970s and 1980s, of intensification and modernization of their agriculture, the most successful in Europe and partly export-oriented. The readjustment to a more 'integrated' development is likely to bring some contradictions to the fore. This comparative approach is therefore interesting as it allows us to question the rural development category in both countries in relation to some relatively similar circumstances. What does the RDP embrace and how has it been implemented in these two western EU countries?

In France: a centralized trajectory

Policy-making processes are embedded in national contexts in which former arrangements have shaped the way European regulations have been implemented.

In France, a few months after the adoption of the RDRF at European level, the national assembly passed the Orientation Law on Agriculture of 9 July 1999, which instituted a new kind of contract between farmers and the state: the Territorial Management Contract (CTE)². This contract was designed to encourage an active recognition of the multi-functionality of agriculture (Brun, 2006), as farmers could henceforth voluntarily commit themselves to achieving some non-productive objectives and, in exchange, be paid to do so. The bill had obviously already been tabled before the adoption of the EU Regulation, and the idea had come through different governments of

the right and the left. But this final version stemmed mainly from the earlier reflection of the young farmers organization and, above all, the so-called Seillac Group (Rémy, 2000). This group of personalities from a different background had previously made a plea for amending agricultural policies so that the territorial dimensions of agriculture would be allowed more consideration (Anon., 1994) ³. At the time, the June and July 1999 meetings of the Superior Orientation Counsel ⁴, which consisted mainly of administrative services and professional organizations, was asked to prepare the French version of the RDP. Not surprisingly, it concerned the articulation between the CTE and the 22 measures of the European regulation. In that respect, the representatives of the professional organizations unanimously insisted on selecting as many measures as possible to guarantee the French farmers a wide range of financing possibilities. The state administration, together with the chambers of agriculture and the local and professional organs of agricultural development, would take care of the local application of the CTE.

This way of organizing the allocation of rural development funds was not unanimously supported, especially in the case of some of the regional authorities. Since the decentralization laws at the beginning of the 1980s, the Regions have been in charge of territorial economic development. Yet, when it comes to agricultural affairs, the legal frame is somewhat blurred (Berriet-Sollic, 2002) – even though some of the Regions have, to a large extent, developed competencies in this domain. That holds in particular for the European Single Programming Document ^{5b}, which is implemented partly by the Regions. With their current experiences in this domain, some of them wrote to the central government, explaining their disappointment and pointing out that the planned RDP was neglecting the interventions of the local authorities. The idea to install some regional plans was not on the agenda. As an official at the Ministry of Agriculture commented, the claim stemmed mainly from the managers of these co-existing European rural development programmes: “*There were people from the Single Programming Document 5b saying: you cut the ground from under our feet. The CTE is very good, but there are still a lot of other things to do!*”

Finally, an agreement was reached concerning the budget sharing of the total amount of European funds for rural development. In 2000, the Regions discovered a circular of the Ministry of Territorial Planning and Environment that clarified the articulation between the RDRF and the Single Programming Document. The 22 measures of the RDRF were distributed between the central state and the Regions according to their domain of preliminary jurisdictions, and the budget was shared in accordance with this agreement. For the 7-year programming period, 85% of the budget was assigned to the national RDP (€ 4.55 billion), whereas 15% would be co-financed by the agricultural section of the 21 Single Programming Documents of the Regions (€ 0.768 billion) ⁵.

This budget agreement was reached at the expense of a genuine regionalization of the programme as implemented in other European member states, like Italy and Germany. The RDR was almost exclusively the concern of the Ministry of Agriculture, which submitted only one national plan. However, the territorial authorities were invited to co-finance the CTE. Some of them simply refused, arguing that the procedure was completely under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture. As an official of one of

the Regions commented: “*that is contrary to decentralization*”. In fact, most of them also encountered some difficulties with Brussels, concerning the notification of aid, which explained to a large extent their distance from the subsidizing procedures. They could hardly even spend their entire assigned budget for the Single Programming Documents. On the whole, there was no room for a real regional plan. The policy remained basically national and agrarian.

In the Netherlands: a semi-decentralized application

The standpoint of the Netherlands differed from that of France in the sense that there was no particular preliminary judicial framework that would specifically fit with EU regulations like the CTE. A supplementary programme would have increased expenditures on agriculture, which was not really acceptable for the Netherlands at that time.

In June 1999 a monitoring committee had been set up. It was composed of the different administrations that would potentially be concerned with rural development issues, that is, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries (LNV), the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (VROM), the Ministry of Transport and Water Management, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Even the provinces with their national lobbying organization were consulted. The purpose was to find, within existing policies, that what would be ‘available’ and would fit with the requirements of the European Commission, so as to benefit from European financial support from the beginning of the programming period. As a manager of the Ministry of LNV commented, it could not be taken for granted that the money would go to the farmers only: “*We look at the countryside as an important area for the quality of living, the quality of working and for leisure. [...] It is not the exclusive area for farmers, but also for the people who need that space for quietness, beauty. [...] that doesn’t mean that there is no future for farmers in the Netherlands.*”

The 12 provinces concerned with the future national programme were invited to draw up their own regional plan. They were also candidates for the co-financing in so far as they already presented some existing rural and agricultural policies. Finally, only four regional plans were drawn up, encouraging the provinces to work together in clusters. In this way the Dutch territory was split up into four geographical zones: South, North, West, and East. The provinces themselves, which were already used to working together, particularly in the north of the country, proposed this division. From April onwards they started to work jointly on the production of some regional rural development plans. Apart from that, the Ministry of LNV and, to a lesser extent, the Ministry of VROM agreed to include some of their national schemes in the programming. So in all, about 20 schemes were integrated, in addition to the four regional plans.

At this stage of the construction of the RDP, the Netherlands had a programme composed of some inherited national and provincial plans. Then, on the insistence of the European Commission, the Ministry of LNV finally chose to present only one national programme in order to simplify the procedure. As the Netherlands is small compared with the other EU countries, it was argued that the issues of rural development could fit into only one document. Finally, the provinces were forced to accept this idea, albeit not without frustration. But they demanded, in exchange, the possibility to

control the daily administrative implementation of the programme with the Ministry of LNV. An agreement was finally reached on the creation of an *ad hoc* management institution composed of both civil servants of the central government and officials of the provinces. The so-called *Regiebureau* (administration centre) would be located in Utrecht, a 'neutral' place at a respectable distance from The Hague. This new institution was henceforth in charge of the implementation of a single national RDP and had some direct contacts with the European Commission while discussing the RDRF, which gave the provinces a rather powerful position. They could control, *inter alia*, the financial shape of the plan. In all, 40% of the budget was allocated to the provincial programmes, which speaks volumes for the involvement of the Dutch regional authorities.

In autumn 1999 the various social partners, environmental organizations and the farmers' union were consulted through the Consultative Platform for Rural Areas ⁶, and the programme was adopted and validated by the European Commission in September 2000. In fact, it was obvious from the very beginning that this European regulation would involve a large set of interests and administrations, and that the provinces would represent the local ones. Consequently, as shown in the following chapter, the plan contains a rather broad definition of rural development. The application of the RDR is semi-decentralized and does not focus only on agriculture.

Comparative analysis of the main national orientations

The implementation of the RDRF is the last phase of an historical process. The full understanding of this process would enable us to investigate the constitution, nationally, of the different measures, that is, the national and provincial schemes in the Netherlands and the policy instruments in France from before the CTE. This is beyond the scope of this paper as it would require a considerable additional effort. However, an examination of the measures chosen could give an indication of the orientations of the two countries. In fact, their budgets were quite different. For the programming period 2000–2006, France had € 5.32 billion, which represented 17.5% of the total second-pillar budget, against € 0.372 billion for the Netherlands, which was only 1.22% of that budget. These differences were obviously justified by the respective importance of the rural areas in terms of surface area. But despite the significant budgetary differences between the two countries, the nature of the challenges encountered by the respective rural areas as well as the different orientations opted for can be seen in the content of the plans and the choices among the 22 measures (Figure 1, presenting only 12 of those 22 measures).

Not surprisingly, France has adopted a farmer-oriented RDP, basing its policy-line on some previous and existing national measures. A large part of the budget was earmarked for continuing the financing of mountainous farms with the 'Less-favoured areas' measure (e; Figure 1), which accounted for 33% of the budget. A large part of the other financially significant measures served to finance the national policy CTE. It was composed of an environmental section (f; Figure 1) supposed to trigger the adjustment of farming systems to environmental concerns and to develop some new functions on farms (environment, biodiversity, landscape, organic farming). The CTE was also

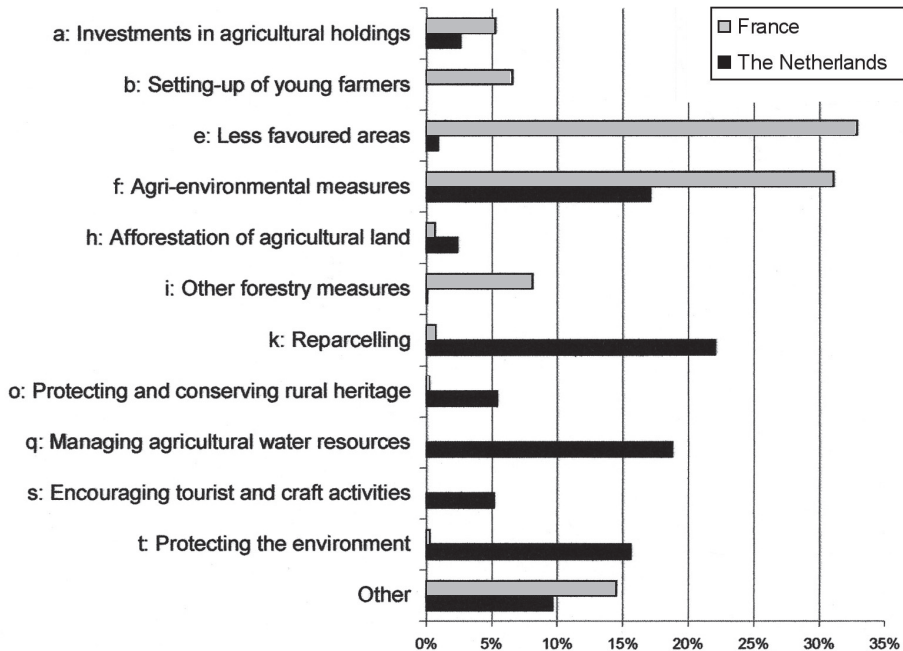


Figure 1. Percentages of rural development funds spent during the programming period 2000–2006. Source: adapted after Anon. (2006a, b).

composed of a socio-economic part, which corresponded to the measure ‘Investments in agricultural holdings’ (a; Figure 1) and was meant to reinforce farms socially and economically. In fact, these choices were based on continuities within the French policy orientations. It is a form of renewal of some existing intervention policies launched previously by the central government to accompany the modernization of the agricultural sector with a certain environmental development. In this respect, the ‘Setting-up of young farmers’ measure (b; Figure 1), which does not exist in the Netherlands, is representative of the French will to maintain the productive capacity with some economically healthy enterprises but also, in some cases, to assist financially the concentration of farm enterprises in the rural areas. This budgetary orientation is at the heart of the application of the precepts of multifunctionality *à la française*, that is, intervening in the structure of its agriculture by participating in the reproduction of farms throughout the national territory.

Unlike France, the Netherlands has not concentrated all its efforts on the agricultural sector. To begin with, about 75% of the money was spent on some measures of Article 33 of the RDRF (measures j–v; not all indicated in Figure 1). The measures of this article are not necessarily oriented towards the agricultural sector. In reality, that does not mean that the full three-quarters of the budget went to other stakeholders,

but rather that the aim of the Dutch government was not to intervene in the restructuring of the sector. Basically, this was left up to market mechanisms. There are no particular measures, not for young farmers (b; Figure 1) nor for pre-retirement (d; not indicated in Figure 1), or for improvement of the processing and marketing of agricultural products (g; not indicated in Figure 1). The only sector measures are probably the investment measures for the 'modernization of horticultural glasshouses' (a; Figure 1) considered a very promising economic sector. But that represented only about 3% of the rural development funds. Actually, the shape of the budget lines of the Dutch RDP was strongly influenced by the implementation of a vast and ambitious project of rural restructuring. At the beginning of the 1990s, the Dutch government adopted a project called the Main Ecological Structure (EHS). Its purpose was to create, before 2018, a network of natural areas all around the Netherlands that combined biodiversity protection with recreational sites. This network project was composed of existing nature reserves and parks as well as areas of agricultural land that had to be converted into 'nature'. In fact, some of the measures of the RDP were meant to achieve these objectives. The public authorities have to purchase the land (k; Figure 1), compensate the landowners (k; Figure 1), and convert the land into nature areas (t; Figure 1). As for the Agri-environmental measures (f; Figure 1), apart from the funds given to encourage the conversion to organic farming, they guarantee the management of the nature and landscape elements outside but also inside the EHS. The Dutch RDP is strongly influenced by this current conservationist transformation and, as a consequence, there is no proper structural intervention in the agricultural sector equivalent to that encountered in France. Instead, financial priority is given to this 'renovation of nature'. Initially this exasperated the main farmers' union, which could not understand that part of the money of the Common *Agricultural* Policy would be used for some *non-agricultural* purposes.

If the regulation gave rise to such differences in its application, it is certainly because from the outset it was designed to match the diversity of the issues encountered throughout European rural areas. In fact, this rural development regulation contains some inherent ambiguities that permit the countries to fit into the framework of the regulation without abandoning their priorities. Article 33 of the RDRF in particular, which is entitled 'promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas' and comprises measures j–v (not all in Figure 1), has a strange purpose. A rural development article within a rural development regulation: it seems to make little sense! In fact, most of the regulation is concerned with the agricultural sector: only this article can be considered as a non-farming exception. As a result, each country can implement its own RDRF, using this administrative ambiguity to suit its purposes. It offers sufficient room to manoeuvre for countries such as the Netherlands that have priorities other than agriculture alone. But as the category 'rural development' is predictably in keeping with the reality of the policy-making processes, what are the factors that in both countries have influenced the scope of its definitions?

The evolving position of the agricultural profession

The purpose of this paper is not to give a complete answer to these fairly difficult questions but rather to propose a lens through which to see the policy-making processes in rural development. The fact that the French application was almost exclusively oriented towards the agricultural sector is of particular interest. Is there a deficit of administrative democracy that might express a certain over-representation of the agricultural profession? Or is the Dutch case a glaring example of misinterpretation of the regulation, in which the agricultural funds were deviated from their initial purpose? Finally, are the choices in terms of role distribution among the public authorities relevant? In this last chapter we shall propose some elements of analysis concerning the national applications of the EU regulation.

In the Netherlands the symbolic status of both rural areas and farmers in the countryside has unquestionably changed a great deal over the past 30 years. Although all the rural territory can hardly be considered as peri-urban areas in itself, the common representation of the countryside has been drastically shaped by urban concerns. With over 400 inhabitants per km², the Netherlands' population density is one of the highest in Europe. Accordingly, in addition to the specific issues the farmers face while coping with urbanization (like the tremendous increase in the price of land), the peri-urban zones are seen more and more as recreational spaces. This new function assigned to rurality, together with a strong environmental conservatism (Van Der Heijden, 2002), helped to legitimize the adoption of the EHS in the early 1990s (Van Der Heijden, 2005). One can therefore easily imagine that the agricultural profession no longer has the monopoly on the public effort concerning rurality (Frouws, 1998). On the contrary, regulation of the structure of agricultural holdings – understood as a compromise between the state and the profession as it still exists in France – is simply absent in the Netherlands. Small-scale farms are considered a drawback for the requirements of competitiveness as well as for environmental objectives⁷. The market dynamic itself, in terms of land, milk quotas and even manure exchanges, is supposed to solve these contradictions more efficiently. This liberal management, together with a strong conservationist movement within a peri-urban context has, in particular, opened rural concerns to some non-farmers' claims. It has resulted in the weakening of neo-corporatism with the arrival of the liberals at the Ministry of LNV in the mid 1990s. Meanwhile, it has increasingly given rise to the idea that rural contradictions have to be overcome locally. The provinces have been presented as the appropriate agents to do so, which explains to a large extent their involvement in the application of the RDRF. This could have created some rather complex and blurred institutional situations, because concerning rural development issues the responsibilities are finally not clearly defined. Some provincial plans more or less overlap with the national schemes. But the difficulty has been cleverly overcome with the establishment of the innovative *Regiebureau*, a hybrid institutionalized structure to deal with these kinds of administrative problems and contradictions on a daily basis.

In France, although the definition of rurality is also discussed and questioned, the symbolic place of farmers and its current readjustment have taken a different trajectory. The fate of rural areas is still considered to be strongly linked with the development

of agriculture, and the changing rurality implies to a large extent the readjustment of the agricultural sector to some new functions. With the Orientation Law of 1999 the profession has officially embarked on a process of reformulating its role and legitimacy within society. The multiple functionalities of agriculture could be recognized – that is to say, paid by society – as if the farmers were responsible for new activities. This rather active recognition and retribution is linked with the evolution of the structures and their relation to the environment (like deterioration of the landscape, environmental pollution, and abandoned lands). But the particularity of the French case is that it is embedded in an inherited context in which farmers could regulate their farm structures themselves. It represents a strong continuity with the modernization period during which the state administration, together with the profession, would assist the modernization and concentration of agricultural holdings. By giving the profession the authority to control the process of norm production, the CTE entered into this logic of development. Its legitimacy was reinstated through a contract between the state and the republican agricultural institutions. But this raises some questions in terms of political co-construction of the new agricultural functions and the local compromise that it requires. Concerning the CTE in particular, one may wonder about its capacity to suitably build-up these compromises. The former system of agricultural regulation, which mainly associated the state administration with the agricultural profession (Coulomb & Nallet, 1980; Billaud, 1990; Coulomb, 1990), is gradually groping its way towards plurality of agricultural representation and co-decision-making with organized non-farmers groups. That is true especially for the departmental farmer's assemblies such as the Departmental Agricultural Commissions and some national committees such as the CSO⁸. But the technical complexity of the issues, the institutional weakness and exclusion of other groups (environmental organizations, in particular) and the still very dominant professional organizations make the other claims unsystematically well represented (Boulongne, 2000). However, this does not mean that French agriculture is doomed to corporate conservatism. The local authorities' involvement in reaching local compromises and sometimes the politicization of the issues at stake could be a window of opportunity. However, as we noted for example for the application of the RDRF, the eroded French 'agricultural republic', to use the expression of Hervieu & Viard (2001), did not bet on decentralization.

To sum up, the strong environmentalism together with a liberal turn has placed the Dutch agricultural corporatism in a rather powerless position. In France, on the contrary, there is continuation in the co-management of the sector. These national situations imply a different logic of professional readjustment. In the French case the challenge is mainly that of the institutional capacity of the externally organized groups to co-transform their production practices together with the farmers. That is what Rémy (2001) calls the co-institution. In the Netherlands the challenge for the farmers is to establish their lost legitimacy as a profession and thus to constitute themselves as valid representatives. They have to convince and to be a relevant working partner in the management of some new agricultural functions.

Conclusions

Lessons can be drawn from the respective trajectories of both countries. The transformation of the CAP in rural development policy is paving the way for some variations in the scope of what rural development means locally and nationally. Its definition depends on the way in which the agricultural component is approached and on its variable enlargement to a broader interpretation of rural development. The two cases studied raise questions on two major points. First, they challenge rural territories in the sense that they are not uniquely productive spaces meant only for agricultural activities. This broader definition comprises a risk for farmers because some other stakeholders can thereby appropriate the definition of rural development and take advantage of a formal and exclusively agricultural policy. Rural spaces are hosting other activities that can also be recognized as having a positive impact on development, and the representatives of these issues are eligible for funds. The threat to the farmers is to have their funds 'misappropriated' from their initial purpose, i.e., the development of the sector. The Dutch case is an example of this continuous battle by farmers to regain this lost legitimacy (Van Der Ploeg, 2003). The French case represents a different situation, as the farmers were the ones who took most of the decisions on how European money would be spent, that is, mainly for the agricultural sector.

But the modalities of application of the RDRF, which are essentially confined to the agricultural profession, bring us to our second question. The challenge for farmers is to have the non-productive components of their profession recognized, but if the definition of these aspects remains essentially in their own hands, the game can be fake from the beginning, and a sham application of the policy is likely to occur. How to ensure more democracy in the policy process still is a relevant question. Two major failures must be avoided in the near future. On the one hand, it is important not to deny the non-productive roles of agriculture in its own territory. On the other hand, it is essential not to blindly trust farmers in their capacity to effect their own professional adjustment. As these non-productive aspects of farming (e.g., environmental practices) are not only the concern of the farmers, they have to be discussed democratically. The involvement of the local authorities as a way to politicize the local challenges of rural and agricultural development is likely to yield some interesting results. In this respect, the semi-decentralized Dutch arrangements seem quite likely to enhance more democracy locally, to administer the tensions between the local and the global, and to orchestrate the variations of rural development.

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Notes

¹ 20 interviews were conducted.

² In French: *Contrats Territoriaux d'Exploitation*.

³ At the European level, a similar group came into existence under a name inspired from the place where they first met: the 'Bruges Group'.

⁴ In French: *Conseil Supérieur d'Orientation*. The CSO is an advisory committee on the agricultural sector at the national level.

⁵ As for the section Guarantee of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Funds (EAGGF) of the programming period 2000–2006, the Single Programming Document only concerned the Objective 2 regions. In each region, the agricultural section of these programmes is shaped through a commission composed of the prefectures and the regional authorities. This commission validates applications for subsidies.

⁶ In Dutch this national platform is called *Landelijk Overlegplatform Groene Ruimte*. It is composed of the farmers' union LTO, some environmental and conservationist associations, the landowners organizations, as well as an association meant to improve recreational activities in the rural areas.

⁷ See for instance the position of some senior managers at the Ministry of LNV (Kampstra & Van Leeuwen, 1998).

⁸ Both consultative commissions are under the control of the French Ministry of Agriculture and have recently opened their meetings to some interested non-farmers organizations.