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Center on Institutions and Governance Presentation No. 8



Shifting political economy of EU Agri-environmental Policy

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February 2005

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Center for Institutions and Governance Working Papers Series:
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Shifting political economy of EU agri-environmental policy

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Economics is all about telling how many choices you have got

Sociology is all about telling you that you really have no choice at

Bertrand Russell

Structure

- Introduction: the failure (?) of co-production and stewardship
- Agri-environment as new countryside politics
- Agri-environment as inter-governmentalism
- Agri-environment and subsidiarity: the challenge of multi-level governance
- Agri-environment and consumer politics
- Agri-environment as European exceptionalism
- Conclusions

The idea

- **Co-production**
- **Stewardship**

“The cheapest, indeed the only way of preserving the countryside in anything like its traditional aspect would be to farm it. (Scott, 1942)

“Sufficient numbers of farmers must be kept on the land. There is no other way to preserve the natural environment, traditional landscape and a model of agriculture based on the family farm as favoured by society generally” (CEC 1991, pp. 9-10)

The reality

- Environmental damage resulting directly or indirectly from intensification and specialisation

- Recognition of the role of CAP in driving intensification and associated elements
- Manifest failure of CAP to sustain and support the more 'traditional' modes of agriculture
- Expanding financial costs of CAP

1. Agri-environment as element of the new countryside politics

- Original assumption of homogenous and coherent interests of EU rural population
 - Social, economic and political change in rural areas
 - Increasing internal differentiation of European countryside at national and sub-national level
 - New organisations and agencies respond to emerging social demands
 - Agri-environment as a key interface of these changes
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- Early and continued focus on amenity, landscape and wildlife corresponding to the new residential demands on the countryside
 - Encouragement of benefits rather than dis-benefits as arena of negotiation between farmers and new social formations
 - Increasing involvement of non-agricultural actors in local and national policy formation
 - Shifting moral agenda of pollution
 - De-agriculturalisation of rural policy and emergence of 'post-productivist' agendas
 - Gradual shift away from agri-environmental concerns to rural development

2. Agri-environmentalism as inter-governmentalism

- Centralisation essential for harmonisation of CAP regimes
 - Unanimous voting and 'path dependency' has hindered reform
 - Key role of the Commission in driving policy agendas
 - Agricultural bargaining needs to be seen within the context broader paths of European integration
 - Pillar 2 and 2078 mark the entry of electoral politics into EU policy implementation
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- Enlargement has succesively favoured inter-governmentalism, creating blocs of interests:
 - Green bloc states
 - Liberalising states

- Pillar 1 states
- Southern States
- Scandinavian States and Austria
- CEEC

CAP as new intra-European geopolitics
Competing agendas

3. Agri-environment and Subsidiarity

- 2078 and agri-environmental measures a key element in subsidiarity
- Several mechanisms set up (co-funding, national envelopes) for increasing national discretion
- Growing regionalisation (sub-national subsidiarity) of Pillar 2 (including drawing up and implementation of Rural Development Plans)
- Commission driven subsidiarity with respect to agri-environment

4. Agri-environment as consumer politics

- Relative decline of agricultural corporatism
- Alliance between environment, public health and food quality interests – an effective counterbalance
- Growth of retailers as actors in food chain politics
- New forms of private regulation (labels, certification, farm assurance schemes)
- CAP inequalities provoking challenges within the agricultural organisations
- EU enlargement and the development of new alliances (eg. Animal welfare and organic farming)

5. Agri-environment as European exceptionalism

- Landownership (Settler states and Doner states: from country to town)
- What natural environment ? Nature as co-produced
- European model of multifunctional – integrating the social (CAP as a social project)
- Particularities of European social demand (animal welfare, GMO, Beef hormones, landscape aesthetic)

End points

- CAP for who: towards a demand led agro-rural policy ?
- The place of agriculture in the rural economy
- Commodification versus market failure: rationales for intervention
- Challenge of multi-level governance

- Complexity or simplicity
- Whose T shirt to you wear: the competing agendas of contemporary agro-food politics