Endogenous Rural Development within the South West of England: A Governance Narrative of LEADER+

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PhD Thesis

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I certify that all material in this *thesis* which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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Abstract

The global political system forms the backdrop to the changing function of the state and the emergence of new governing systems. This thesis develops a particular governance narrative in relation to endogenous rural development within the South West of England through the European Union's (EU) LEADER+ rural development programme. This programme is important because it sits firmly within a wider set of discourses on the 'new governance'. This discourse spans wider debates over emerging forms of deliberative democracy, European governance and globalisation. The LEADER programmes approach to governance is framed as a means to facilitate enhanced deliberative practice through 'partnership' arrangements at the local level, and in turn ensure 'local people' and their 'communities' develop in line with their strengths. This approach to governance, developed through the regional studies literature, is seen as a means to meet those challenges presented by the global economic epoch. There is a strong rhetoric on the potential of the LEADER approach, but this rhetoric does not result in effective deliberative processes and outputs. The LEADER programme fails to break free from its wider political contexts and the governmentalities of the state. These enable powerful actors to manipulate the political system and its objectives. This is possible through the even wider context of global governance, which helps us understand that relations of power no longer follow linear channels, that gateways once closed are now open (and vice versa), and that policy networks now stretch both horizontally and vertically beyond the traditional confines of state power.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAPS	Arable Area Payments Scheme
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
COPA	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DG Agri	Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
EAGGF	European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund
EEC	European Economic Community
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
LEADER	Liason Entre Actions pour le Developpenment de L'Economie Rurale
LAG	Local Action Group
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
RDA's	Rural Development Agency's
RDP	Rural Development Plan
RDS	Rural Development Service
RDR	Rural Development Regulation
RegCo	North Devon and Exmoor Regeneration Company
SPS	Single Payment Scheme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> Sometimes the older ones among them racked their dim memories and
> tried to determine whether in the early days of the Rebellion, when
> Jones's expulsion was still recent, things had been better or worse than
> now. They could not remember. There was nothing with which they
> could compare their present lives: they had nothing to go upon except
> Squealer's lists of figures, which invariably demonstrated that
> everything was getting better and better. (George Orwell, *Animal Farm*)

The Westminster model of government stands as a great epitaph to the British state. It is still seen as the basis from which we should understand the way state power operates within Britain. Hierarchy, centralised power, and the importance of this state structure to our national identity are just some of the precursory elements to this model. However, despite the importance we attach as a nation, to this mode of state power, there have been a number of changes underfoot over the last two decades that have ensured the sanctity of the Westminster model is no longer a certainty. We stand at a crossroads in terms of the British state; we know from where it has come, but many commentators are unsure as to where it is heading. Internal devolution, the growth of the EU and other supranational power agencies, global economic pressures, big business, and invariably neo-liberalism are ensuring that the British state faces a number of new challenges. These challenges are quite different to when Margaret Thatcher took power in 1979, although undoubtedly she did her bit to start the undoing of the Westminster model through her market reforms.

The political project enacted by New Labour since it came to power has been shaped by the inadequacies of the market, and the realisation that state/society interaction is an important enabling force within the realm of public policy, and for the good of the wider economy.

The challenges faced by the state over the last two decades have spurred the appearance of new and emerging mechanisms of 'rule' or governing, whereby an ever increasing contribution to the governing of the state by multiple non-state actors and agencies has taken place, alongside more traditional governing bodies. This is seen as a means to bring about more consensual policy making between the state and society, breaking down the inequalities produced through market mechanisms and the rigidity of the Westminster model. This represents a shift from coordination through hierarchy, and less emphasis on competition; to coordination through networks and partnerships (Rhodes, 1997; Pierre and Peters, 2000). The hierarchical mode of government associated with the Westminster model, has been replaced as the defining narrative of the British state by the notion of governance. Governance is perceived to represent the bringing together of market, network and hierarchical modes of coordination. The focus within governance is increasingly upon networks and partnership, and although the market still sits squarely within the governance framework, the former have been enrolled more widely through public policy, principally in areas where the market finds it hard to reach effectively. For example, the formulation and implementation of specific policy initiatives have been coupled with attempts to bring policy closer to communities and citizens.

This thesis looks to explore these changes within the political system through a case study of the EU led rural development programme *Liason Entre Actions pour le Developpenment de L'Economie Rurale*. This translates as 'links between actions for the development of the rural economy', but is more widely known by its acronym: LEADER. LEADER aims to promote bottom-up forms of rural development and is made up of a series of 893 Local Actions Group's (LAGs) across the EU**.** These give the programme a community based focus by seeking local participation in the decision-making process. I chose to focus on the North West Devon LAG in the South West of England, which will hereafter be termed the focus LAG. I chose this LAG firstly, because it was the closest to my home in Cornwall and could be reached within two hours; and secondly, because it was managed by the North Devon and Exmoor Regeneration Company (RegCo), which offered an interesting insight into how a private organisation implemented the LEADER approach and handled public funds within the new governance.

It is made clear over the following chapters that the LEADER policy programme reflects the changing political system in many ways. Not only can it be deemed a policy framed by new actor interactions across a multilevel governance framework, and developed around global policy influences that impact upon rural issues, but it is also a policy implemented at the ground level through a partnership form of governance. The LEADER approach to governance is evidence of new mobile interactions of power across a policy network, and the changing sites at which these interactions take place within this new system. The focus of this research is to ascertain how the LEADER approach to governance, set out in official discourse, is affected and conditioned by a set of socially

contingent processes. These processes have been identified as the means by which linear flows of power are displaced, resulting in contradictions between policy discourse and policy practice. The level of control collectivities have over network interactions, and the mechanisms they employ in their attempts to manipulate power, provides the primary focus of this research.

Under New Labour, the state has placed itself as an *enabling force*, as a *protector of communities and voluntary organizations* alike, as the promoter of *partnership*, and through partnership *consensual and participative* forms of 'democratic' decision making at the local level (Blair, 1998: 4). As such New Labour presents the state as having the ability to command the tools of governance. However, within the governance literature there is much debate as to how much power the state has to coordinate its own territorial affairs. The emergence of governance is seen by some as a sign of the waning power of the state, with the pressures of the global political economy inducing new centres of power (Held, 1991, Brenner, 1997; Macleod, 1999). However, despite these power shifts there are some commentators who still believe strongly in the ability of the state to reconfigure power to its own advantage, whereby the tools of governance are very much still directed by the state through the art of steering (Pierre and Peters, 2000; Newman, 2001: 13; Schout and Jordan, 2005).

This debate is very much a part of the wider debate and narratives that exist in relation to the emergence of governance. Newman (2001) focuses on three narratives that draw out some of the key theoretical arguments in relation to its emergence. The first of these

narratives explores the global political and economic shifts that have limited the capacity of nation states to govern (ibid: 12). Rhodes (1996) is a strong advocate of the belief that governance is a result of the 'hollowing out' of the state, which implies that power has shifted outwards from the machinery of 'big government' to international financial markets, to global companies able to move capital and other resources from one site of investment to another, and to supra-national entities such as the World Bank or the European Union (also see Jessop, 1994). Within this conceptualization power has also shifted downwards to the sub-national level of cities and regions (Newman, 2001: 12). These changes have taken place within an ideological post-Fordist climate that is adverse to big government and all it implies in terms of policy failures, the growing complexity of the policy process and through the increasing importance of global economic trends. Ideologically the position of the 'government machine' had become untenable, especially in terms of economic governance, and so its fragmentation was top of the political agenda (ibid, 12).

In sum, globalisation, internal devolution and the growth of supranational bodies has challenged the capacity of nation states to govern effectively, which has led to alternative governing strategies whereby governments have increasingly sought to influence a multiplicity of institutions and actors (ibid, 13). New strategies based on informal governmentality, means of enabling and regulation have become important to governing the modern state (see Dean, 1997; Jessop, 2002). Whether these new strategies are directed from new centres of power is open to debate, but it would be naïve to discount the role of the state in steering the new governance model. Governing still takes place

along hierarchical and traditional institutional lines, along side new forms of governance (Newman, 2001: 13). For some, governance represents an adaptation by the state to the challenges within the post-Fordist political economy, and as such should not be seen as a diminution of its power (Pierre, 2000; Pierre and Peters, 2000).

The second key narrative identified in relation to governance is linked to the idea that markets, hierarchies, and networks form alternative strategies of coordination and governing within the post-Fordist world (Newman, 2001: 13). This shift has taken place against the backdrop of a post-war welfare settlement based on the conception of the British state as a direct service provider, resulting in large bureaucratic state led institutions forming a public sector predominantly based on hierarchy (ibid, 13). This state centric government machine came under attack ideologically under the neo-liberal project of the 1980's and 1990's (ibid, 13). Market mechanisms brought more fragmented and dispersed patterns of service delivery and regulation that required new forms of coordination (ibid, 13). This saw the engagement with privatization, contracting out, quasi markets, the removal of functions from local authorities, and the proliferation of quangos, and the separation between the policy and delivery functions in the civil service. As a consequence new control mechanisms have been employed by government in the form of framework documents, contracts, targets, performance indicators, service standards, contracts and customer charters (ibid, 14). These changes were not only felt centrally. Local government has also been identified as site where network-based modes of interaction have been enrolled to the extent that it may now be more appropriate to talk of local governance involving a plurality of organizations across the public, private and

voluntary sectors (ibid, 14). This form of coordination through inter-organizational networks and partnerships can be seen as a response to the decrease of local government powers, but it can also be argued that this form of coordination enhances the ability of local agencies to respond more flexibly to local need and their communities (ibid, 14).

The final key narrative of governance called upon here draws on the idea that governance reflects a response to the challenge of governing complex and fragmented societies, replacing direct forms of state intervention which have failed in the past (ibid, 14). According to Kooiman and van Vliet (1993) governing the modern state is primarily a process of coordination, and requires the ability to influence social, political and administrative interactions. Governance is seen as a means to provide the basis for more interactive governing processes and as such more appropriate forms of coordination for the modern state. Within this understanding no single agency, public, private or voluntary has all the knowledge necessary to coordinate state mechanisms effectively (Newman, 2001: 15). Governments are increasingly engaging in co-regulation, co-steering, co-production, cooperative management, public/private/voluntary partnerships within and across inter-state/state boundaries, along with other mechanisms that focus on the coordination of diverse networks of actors and bodies as a means to deliver an effective governing framework (ibid, 15).

The preserve of governance, within this theoretical conception of the term, is coordination. Coordination takes place at different levels of analysis, and within different domains (i.e. the local level, the regional level, the national level, the supranational level,

civil society, local economies, policy areas, democracy, political projects etc.) (ibid, 15).

Within the governance framework, tools of coordination are constantly adapted and reconstructed as one tool is surpassed by another when one tool is deemed more effective than another, often as ideological perspectives change. This can be seen in the UK literature with the idea of a shift from markets and hierarchies towards networks and partnerships as more effective modes of coordination (ibid, 16). Governance then provides the framework for reflexivity; the tools of coordination are adaptive, but the focus remains the coordination of social processes, as a means to ensure effective governance. As such, within this understanding there is greater engagement with all aspects of social coordination. The focus is no longer on economic structures, or simply coordinating the private and public sectors together, but extending the concern for coordination to broader issues of citizenship, concepts of community, and social and cultural formations (ibid, 16). This is seen as a means to ensure coordination reaches out further than had been previously realized under state centric approaches to government or those focusing on the economy as a means of coordination. This new approach to governance is seen as fit to meet the challenges posed by the diversity and complexity in the post-Fordist world. This is what Kooiman terms 'cross modern' societies, which require state/society modes of interaction and coordination[1] (ibid, 16).

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[1] As former Prime Minister Tony Blair states "In deciding where to act on behalf of the national community, whether as regulator or provider, governments must be acutely sensitive not to stifle worthwhile activity by local communities and the voluntary sector…The truth is that freedom for many requires strong government. A key challenge to progressive politics is to use the state as an enabling force, protecting effective communities and voluntary organizations and encouraging their growth to tackle new needs, in partnership as appropriate." (Blair, 1998: 4)

Partnerships and networks have been enrolled in the paradigm shift associated with governance, and as such they form an important element to any understanding of rule by governance. Partnerships, along with networks, are a primary form of coordination within the governance framework, representing the shift away from coordination through hierarchy and competition (Newman, 2001: 105; see Jessop, 2000: 11). The notion of partnership fits squarely within government rhetoric, inspired by the Third Way, on representation and inclusion (Newman, 2001: 105). Partnership governance is seen as a means to increase state/society interaction. This form of coordination is married to governance through networks and partnership and has found its way to the local level through various community governance initiatives. These initiatives are linked to the increasing privatisation of local level services and the need to ensure strong line between new service providers and government.

The focus of my research is on the governance of the LEADER rural development programme. The LEADER programme is an interesting case because it subjects traditional state-power configurations to new challenges through its multilevel character. The formulation of the programme and its general oversight take place at the EU level; and its implementation takes place at the local level through the notion of a 'community' led rural development partnership. The rhetoric attached to LEADER sits squarely with New Labour discourse on inclusivity and partnership as a means to form a more consensual basis for state/societal interaction and exchange of ideas (ibid, 23). Yet, despite the closeness of this rhetoric with LEADER, the programme was put together by the Commission at the EU level and has since been passed to the member states to

manage within their own territories. This has set the basis for a set of power relations that fit squarely within the governance framework through the programmes engagement with a diverse set of actors from a multitude of spaces. These actors and their organisations occupy vertical and horizontal networks characteristic of the new global order, or a new polycentric world (See Hirst and Thompson, 1995; Amin, 1997; Rosseneau, 2006)

The LEADER programme draws heavily upon the problems facing people working within the rural economy. Via the local partnership process, the inherent complexities of a post-Fordist rural economy are seen to be dealt with in a more effective manner through this governance framework than that offered solely through the market, or through direct government coordination. For example, a series of dominant trends have been identified in relation to the changing character of the rural economy, such as: the problems facing the agricultural industry; growing urban-rural migration; increasing economic diversity and land–use practices; and concerns over social exclusion (Marsden 1998; Gray, 2000; Shucksmith, 2000; Donaldson et al., 2002; Evans et al., 2002; Lobley and Potter, 2004). Nevertheless, government is keen to express the diversity of rural areas and the different problems they face. Development programmes such as LEADER are designed to promote and develop diversity to ensure that rural areas have a more sustainable future, built on local strengths. As such, the LEADER programme appears to be built heavily on state/society interaction and coordination as a means to deal with the diversity and challenges within the rural economy. The LEADER programme fits into the governance framework through its multilevel 'power play'; and its concern for community led,

'bottom-up' rural development through partnership. Both of these characteristics represent forms of coordination that sit squarely with the governance literature.

Through my research I aim to develop my own particular governance narrative based on the LEADER programme, by showing how the programme is governed, and why this is significant in terms of wider issues in relation to the perceived changes within the structure of the state. As a means to achieve this I will be focusing on the character of LEADER's 'multilevel' governance, giving specific attention to the power relations that exist at nodal points across the LEADER network. This will help identify how power operates and which power-centres across the network are the most influential. I also want to look at how effective governance is at the coordination of state/society interaction through LEADER and explore the claim that it offers a means to bring together private, public and voluntary actors and agencies to tackle complex socio-economic problems together. Finally, I want to position my governance narrative against those that dominate within the academic literature as a means to show that governance can only offer a framework for coordination, and that the tools attached to this framework vary between different programmes and policies; governance is then always in a state of becoming, and as such it is very difficult to build normative theories upon the notion of governance. As such this thesis focuses on the varied nature of governance, and attempts to stay clear of 'model-making' by presenting governance as narrative.

1.1 Key Questions

I have identified four key questions with respect to my research, which I hope will help me achieve these aims. These are as follows:

1. What is governance, and how is it significant in terms of changing state structure?

2. How effective is governance in the coordination of state/society interaction in the context of LEADER?

3. What is the character of LEADER's multilevel governance system and the power relations that exist?

4. How should we position the LEADER governance narrative in terms of those wider narratives that exist within the academic literature?

1.2 Chapter Outline

The thesis is structured as follows:

1. *Introduction*

2. *Methodology*: this chapter begins by introducing the network approach that is at the heart of my research, not only shaping the way I go about collecting my data, but also in the way power relations are perceived to play themselves out within the new governance framework. Following this my data collection methodology is introduced. This was

primarily made up of semi-structured interviews, workshops, and the collection of official documentation. In this section some of the problems associated with the data collection process are discussed, and how these were overcome. This discussion focuses on the problems and pitfalls of employing a snowballing method in building my sample of interviewees. I then go on to discuss the principal modes of analysis within my research: discourse analysis and narrative analysis. Discourse analysis is important to my research as it offers a means to develop an understanding of the functioning of the network and the power relations that exist through the way the discourse moves across the network and the function it serves. Narrative analysis is used to ensure that my research does not fall into the trap of seeing empirical study as the basis for normative conclusions on the functioning of the state in the post-Fordist world, and ensuring that governance is seen as a framework for control and not a model. The chapter is concluded by looking at the modes of political analysis that best support this kind of approach to the social sciences.

3. *LEADER: basic principles and structure*: This chapter introduces the LEADER programme and its underlining objectives. It begins by introducing the structure of the LEADER programme, and introduces the locally based partnership responsible for implementing the area based approach. These partnerships are referred to as Local Actions Groups within the programme. The chapter moves forward by looking at the impetus behind the bottom-up approach within an EU setting, and the theoretical underpinnings of this approach by drawing upon the regional development literature. The chapter concludes with an overview of previous academic research into LEADER, which

provides a critical perspective on the LEADER approach. The focus of which is those critiques that relate most strongly to governance issues.

4. *Governance: A new world order?*: It is in this chapter that a contextualisation of governance takes place. The notion of governance is developed in terms of changing state structure, neo-liberal policy agendas, globalisation/glocalisation, democratic governance and community engagement, among other factors. It begins by looking at the birth of governance, and develops by critically exploring where the governance 'project' is heading, where it might end and whether it spells the emergence of a new world order. The attempt is made to relate these notions of governance to the LEADER programme. This is done by attempting to position the LEADER programme within the context of widely acknowledged changes to the structure of the state. It is argued that LEADER represents a valuable example of the wider changes to state structure, specifically in terms of rural governance and its new and emerging epoch. The chapter is concluded with some words of caution, principally in relation to the limits of the governance framework and the speed of which the governance project has taken root, the risks this poses to some of the positive principles found under the Westminster model relating to representative democracy, and the important sense of identity that it carries, both institutionally and symbolically, which could be linked to the national psyche.

5. '*Post- agricultural' policy, New Labour and the new rural governance*: This chapters looks critically at the evolution of rural policy in both the UK and EU context, and gives some context to changing state structures as part of the new governance. It does so by

looking closely at the policy networks that have come to define rural policy, and the influence they continue to play. The history of rural policy across Europe has been shaped largely by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) over the last thirty years, and its most recent reforms in 1999 and 2003 suggest that a more heterogeneous rural policy is emerging. The rise to power of New Labour in 1997 helped reinforce the idea that policy was 'modernising'. However, this chapter explores how a number of domestic issues, most specifically the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) 'crisis', have brought about retrenchment in domestic rural policy. In the shadow of this, New Labour's project of modernisation is critically reflected on, and related to the LEADER programme, and its governance.

6. *'Bottom-up' rural development: 'spin' democracy?*: This chapter looks critically at the notion of 'bottom-up' rural development comparing government rhetoric with my own governance narrative as a means to explore the democratic credentials of 'partnership governance' within this 'bottom-up' mode of rural development. To start with, the meaning of 'bottom-up' rural development is explored through the narratives within the LEADER discourse and my interview data. Diverging understandings are identified, and whether these divergences relate to different nodal points along the LEADER network. I go on to look critically at how notions of inclusion, participation and partnership have been enrolled as a part of the governance project, and whether these tools should be seen in a positive light, offering a genuine alternative to representative democracy. This will be done by focussing on the mechanisms enrolled within the LEADER programme, and the narratives that my interviewees and the participants at the workshops draw from

these. These mechanisms will then be related to those narratives on governance mechanisms found within the academic literature. This is to show that although these mechanisms are perceived to be a means to ensure effective control in the face of the global governance epoch, these attempts are at the expense of state power, and still further representative democracy. This argument is developed by arguing that government rhetoric may represent a smokescreen hiding the long term effects of the governance project.

7. *Multilevel governmental power play*: This chapter seeks to identify the particular relationship that exists between the different levels of government across the network(s) of actors followed through my research. It aims to explore where power lies and how governmentalities operate to transfer this power both vertically and horizontally. The focus in this chapter is undoubtedly the LEADER network and how that operates. There is no doubt a tendency to predetermine the levels of governance that are the most important in terms of the situation of power (i.e. regional, national, and supranational). I hope to avoid this tendency by explicitly tracing the LEADER network, and focusing on the nodes of power along it as a means to get a more reflective understanding of power and power relations along the LEADER network. Nevertheless, there will still be an important focus on the role played by the institutions at the regional, national and supranational territorial levels, and how power travels through these institutions at these levels, and whether these relations produce significant nodal points. I finish this chapter by attempting to summarise the power play within the multilevel governance framework,

and what is significant about it in terms of wider assumptions made through other governance narratives.

8. *Conclusion: Positioning 'bottom-up' rural development in the 'new world order'*: This chapter aims to develop what has been identified in chapters three to seven, through the governance narratives of LEADER. This provides the means to unpack and explore some of the tensions that exist within these narratives and an opportunity to try and understand some of the peculiarities of the LEADER case in the context of the wider governance literature. In a sense this chapter is a means to bring my analysis together and to think critically about broader governance issues relating to changing state structure and power relations through the LEADER case. The crux of this chapter seeks to use some of the conclusions drawn here on the governance of the LEADER programme, as a 'bottom-up' approach to rural development, to explore how the notion of bottom-up rural development or community governance fits squarely within the notion of multilevel governance and beyond this the new world order, as a means to meet some of the perceived challenges within the post-Fordist political economy.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This study is based on a set of qualitative data, made up principally of a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews, and the analysis of political discourse at the EU level downwards. In this chapter I want to explain the specificities of the data collection process I employed, the reasons behind this process and the problems I faced. I will then explain how the data were analysed. I also aim to develop a philosophical and theoretical argument in relation to my decision to employ narrative analysis as the principal mode of interpretation within my work, and show how this mode of interpretation is employed in my study on the governance of LEADER. These narratives will be explored through a set of interpretative methods that underline my approach to political analysis. Before beginning this outline, I first want to outline the conception of power employed in the research, and the importance of a network approach to the study of public policy, and more specifically the new governance.

2.1 Power

Within the history of the social sciences, power has been perceived in a number of different ways (See Mills, 1956, 1959; Dahl, 1957, 1958, 1961; Lukes, 1974; Foucault, 1975). Power is an important tool of government and governance, the oil between the wheels in terms of government, or the expression of flows and mobility within the new governance. It is important, given the nature of this research, to outline how power is

understood in this work and show how this conception of power supports a network approach to the study of the new governance.

Lukes' (1974) conception of power, in which he develops three dimensions, is often cited as a classic approach to the subject. The first dimension is associated with the work of Robert Dahl, and to "the study of concrete, observable *behavior*" (Lukes, 1974: 17). As Polsby makes clear 'In the pluralist approach . . . an attempt is made to study specific outcomes in order to determine who actually prevails in community decision-making' (1963: 113). In Merelman's opinion the pluralist methodology 'studied actual behavior, stressed operational definitions, and turned up evidence. Most important, it seemed to produce reliable conclusions which met the canons of science' (1968: 20).

The second dimension of power is underlined as the result of political scientists Bachrach and Baratz's (1970) critique of Dahl's pluralism. This critique points to the 'values, beliefs, rituals, and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to prevent potentially controversial issues from generating "observable conflicts" (ibid, 43-44). Consequently, in order to grasp this second dimension of power, "it is crucially important to identify potential issues which non-decision making prevents from being actual" (ibid, 23). They write:

> Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and

institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences. (1970: 7)

Lukes accepts that the two-dimensional view of power represents an important advance over the one-dimensional view. 'It incorporates into the analysis of power relations the question of the control over the agenda of politics and of the way in which potential issues are kept out of the political process' (2005:24). Nevertheless, the third dimension of power is developed by Lukes as a critique of both views behavioural focus. He moves away from 'the study of overt, 'actual behaviour', of which 'concrete decisions' in situations of conflict are seen as paradigmatic', towards the study of hidden forces that constrain the agenda and keep '*potential issues'* out of politics (ibid, 25).

It is important to acknowledge that although Lukes three dimensional view of power lends a great deal to our understanding of who holds power, it does not provide the basis from which a conceptual understanding of power relations and the 'powers of association' can be formed. I now want to turn to Foucault and show how his conceptual ideas on power, principally through his ideas on governmentality, offer students of governance a conceptual understanding of power, and how power relations are dominated by 'technologies of the self'.

Foucault's (1978, 1980a, 1980b, 1980c, 1982, 1987) writings have been highly influential in discussions over the subject of 'power', to the extent that his approach is said to have revealed 'a fourth dimension' (Digesser, 1992). Garland provides an excellent summary of this conception of power. It starts, 'It is not to be thought of as the property of particular classes or individuals who "have" it, nor as an instrument which they can somehow "use" at will". Instead Foucault's conception of power connotes to

> the various forms of domination and subordination and the asymmetrical balance of forces which operate whenever and wherever social relations exist. These power relationships, like social relations which they invest, display no simple pattern since, for Foucault, social life is to be thought of as taking place not within a single overarching 'society', but instead across a multiplicity of fields of forces which are sometimes connected and sometimes not. His special focus is always upon the way these power relations are organised, the forms they take and the techniques they depend upon, rather than upon the groups and individuals who dominate or are dominated as a consequence. (...) power is a pervasive aspect of social life and is not limited to the sphere of formal politics or open conflict. It is also to be thought of as productive in its effect rather than repressive in so far as power shapes the actions of individuals and harnesses their bodily powers to its ends. In this sense power operates 'through' individuals rather than 'against' them and helps constitute the individual who is at the same time its vehicle (Garland, 1990: 138).

Foucault's ideas on power have become increasingly important to social scientists, raising our awareness of the subtleties of 'power', the important role of social discourses in advancing 'power', and the role of the individual in expressing and advancing it. His most important work on power, as far as this thesis is concerned, comes from his work on 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1978). His ideas here come from the notion that power 'is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms' (1980c: 18). As such, 'governmentality' develops ideas on the 'technologies of power', and the 'technologies of the self' through looking at how populations are administered within society by certain organisations and groups (including business), the way individuals shape their own selves and their own actions, and the invariable alignment of these processes. This notion of governmentality has been developed succinctly by a number of social scientists in recent times, and firmly related to the 'powers of freedom' and the liberal and neoliberal techniques and rationalities of government (Barry et al., 1996; Rose, 1999; Dean, 2007). The notion of 'governmentality' is increasingly been mixed up with notions of 'governance', and although both terms refer to distinct ideas, together they represent a set of intertwined governing processes and structures that enhance our understanding governance and power.

Finally, Latour offers some important ideas on power, despite writing that 'the notion of power should be abandoned'. He writes, it as 'a convenient way to *summarise* the consequences of collective action' but is critical of it on the grounds that it does not help

'*explain* what holds the collective action in place' (1986: 266, 265, 278). Nevertheless, Latour's ideas on power are crucial to our understanding of how power is modified as it passes across the network, and importance of every individual in ensuring an order is followed and given the energy to succeed. Unlike Foucault, Latour does not refer to 'technologies of the self' or the 'invariable alignment of these processes', but focuses on the 'powers of association', to which we might add the conceptual framings offered by Foucault.

Power, as set out by Latour, is based on the idea that the spread, in time and space, of claims, orders, artefacts and goods is dependent on a chain of people (Latour, 1986: 267). Latour uses a token to metaphorically depict power. Each individual has the capacity to act in a range of different ways – 'letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it' (ibid, 267). Once the chain is broken, either because an individual chooses not to pass on the token, or there is no one there to take up the token, then the token simply stops (ibid, 267). The token begins life with no impetus, and displacement is only made possible through the energies of those people along the chain who choose to do something with the token (ibid, 267). As a consequence the initial force of the first in the chain is no more important than any other person within that chain, if the token is going to move then it is dependent on new sources of energy all the time (ibid, 267). The final important aspect of this perception of power is that 'since the token is in everybody's hands in turn, everyone shapes it according to their different projects' (ibid, 268).

The obedience to an order given by someone would require the alignment of all the people concerned by it, who would all assent to it faithfully, without adding or subtracting anything. Such a situation is highly improbable. The chances are that the order has been modified and composed by many different people who slowly turned it into something completely different as they sought to achieve *their* own goals. How can we be sure of this? Simply because if it were not the case, then the order would not have been 'obeyed' in the first place, and the person who gave the order would be said to be powerless! (ibid, 268).

Power is a consequence of social action and not the cause. This perception of power turns common assumptions of power on their head. Orders are not obeyed because the first person in a chain has power; on the contrary power is given energy through a chain of faithful association. Networks and a network approach to the study of governance encourage us to look beyond the power of governments and their institutions toward the power that result from network interactions.

2.2 Network approach

Our terrains aren't territories... They're networks, rhizomes (Latour, 1996: 46)

Follow the actors: that is the Law and the Prophets (ibid, 204)

Networks have come to be an important concept in the way we think about society and how it operates, and this is reflected widely in social science research. The interest in networks began with social network analysis dating back to Simmel (1908/1971), and has been developed through the works of White (1961), Mitchell (1969), Granovetter (1974), and Wellman (1998) (among others). Social network analysis takes a generic understanding of a network ('a specific type of relation linking a defined set of persons objects or events') (Knoke and Kuklinski, 1991), and highlights how the nature of relationships across a network are important because they shape perceptions, beliefs and actions. In addition, social network analysis seeks to account for both relations that occur and those that do not exist across a network, and seeks to question why certain structures or norms may not be present within specific social relations (Mitchell, 1969). The interest in networks has more recently been extended through actor network theory (ANT). ANT has expanded upon how we think about network relations, towards the idea of a heterogeneous network in which subjects and objects are intertwined and carry equal significance. The theory rests upon the idea that social interactions have both human and non-human causes, brought about by the integration of both material and semiotic influences across a network (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1996; 2005; Law, 1992).

In political science, networks have been discussed predominantly in terms of policy networks[2]. Policy networks are discussed in detail in chapter four, but it is important to understand how they emerged and developed within the British literature. A great deal of the early British literature drew upon Heclo and Wildavsky's (1974) work on British public expenditure decision making within the Treasury (See Richardson and Jordan, 1979; Wilks and Wright, 1987). This work focuses upon 'the personal relationships between major political and administrative actors – sometimes in conflict, often in agreement, but always in touch and operating within a shared framework' (1974: xv). The result is a micro-level analysis of the Treasury, contending that policy is made within a community by a limited number of actors who interact on a regular basis and share common values (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). The idea of a policy community is adopted by Richardson and Jordan (1979) who see policy making taking place within sub-systems made up of government agencies and pressure groups, with each 'segment inhabited by a different set of organised groups and generally impenetrable by 'unrecognised groups' or by the general public' (1979: 74). Like Heclo and Wildavsky they stress interpersonal or micro-level relationships over the structural basis of these relationships. Richardson and Jordan also emphasise the disaggregated nature of the policy process due to divisions evident in government and the fragmented nature of society more generally. This notion of fragmentation, as we will see in later chapters, has been widely applied to policy making within the new governance.

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[2] The focus here is on the British literature, but for a good account of the American literature on policy networks and its influence on the British perspective see Jordan (1990). The American literature tends to focus on the micro-level, such as the personal relations between key actors as opposed to the structural relations between institutions (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992).

The concept of a policy network was first developed by Rhodes (1981), who in a move away from American influenced ideas on sub-governments and interpersonal relations, developed a set of ideas that placed the structural relationship between political institutions as the central element within a policy network. He also places networks at the sectoral or aggregated level, as opposed to the sub-sectoral or disaggregated level (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992: 9). Since his first writings on policy networks, Rhodes has developed his ideas to account for the changing role of the state within the new governance (See Rhodes, 1997; Bevir and Rhodes 2003). However, it will become clear that although the work of Rhodes still holds an important place within political studies, ideas on governance and networks relating to policy making are becoming far more heterogonous, taking into account a wide range of disparate views and ideas that represent the complexity and disaggregated nature of the new governance.

The network approach to governance has developed in line with the changing structure of state power and the increasing fluidity of interactions between actors. As indicated in the previous chapter, the new governance signifies a shift away from the well established notions of politics and brings in new sites, new actors and new themes.

> There is a move away from the familiar topography of formal political institutions to the edges of organizational activity, negotiations between sovereign bodies, and inter-organizational networks that challenge the established distinction between public and private. The disparate actors who populate these networks find nascent points of solidarity in the joint

realization that they need one another to craft effective political agreements. Their efforts to find solutions acceptable to all who are involved (and expand the circle of involvement) nibble and gnaw on the constitutional system of territorially based representative democracy. Notions of politics itself change as new themes occupy centre stage (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 3).

In order, to have a better understanding of these relations it is necessary to look at the 'micro-sociologies' of the actors behind these practices, and other actors within the same network(s). These different actors form parts of the same coalitions and alliances that stretch extensively along the network(s) through different nodes and across multiple scales (Gardner, 2004: 67). It is only through focusing on these actors and their practices that we start to comprehend the complex power relations that exist across the LEADER network.

The study of networks as a means to explore the new governance illustrates the growing importance of informal policy networks, and the need to understand how they operate (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 2). Within the politics of the EU, the importance of informal policy networks has been acknowledged, with analysts characterising the EU as a laboratory for the development of alternative forms of public policy (Wallace and Young, 1997: 16).

Within the context of these changes, and through situating LEADER within this system of new and mobile interactions and interdependencies, it begins to become clear why a network approach to the study of governance is relevant to this research. Such an approach to governance does not follow the systematic boundaries and rules of the traditional constitutional political system. This is important for the study of the new governance as it enables more effective explanations of the interactions between actors and organisations, while also including those deliberative practices and mechanisms that are such a key feature of the new governance. This is important for my work on LEADER as I begin to explore a set of complex network relations, including what Mark Warren terms the secondary reality of 'expansive democracy' (Warren, 1992). This denotes the open-ended, legitimately opaque, ad hoc decision making arrangements that have come to characterise the new governance, such as partnership arrangements (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 3). These arrangements go some way toward creating a 'secondary reality' in terms of 'democratic' decision making, and operates in conjunction or competition with the traditional hierarchical institutions of government based upon representative democracy (ibid, 3).

Network interactions induce a whole host of complexities. These complexities are embedded within a set of socially constructed rationalities that vary in time and across space, and in accordance with cultural, institutional, locational and historical contexts (Amin and Hausner, 1997: 11). The quality of networks and their design are important to the quality of the outcomes they shape, as we shall come to see in the following chapters.

Network design operates at a series of different levels across a supranational programme like LEADER.

Amin and Hausner draw upon a number of features that allow for successful network outcomes.

> '[S]uccessful' networks are distinguished by at least three features: a high level of self organisation among specialised actor circuits; strong ground rules of governance which bind agents into a common frame of action; and a precarious balance between independence and interpenetration between state and non-state governance structures. Functional flexibility, diffuse reflexivity, strategic orientation and collective adaptability seem to be some of the key qualities of successful networks, allowing a course to be steered by governance by deliberative associations and by strategic leaders (ibid, 13).

In contrast, in those networks associated with criminality or democratic and economic transition we are more likely to see forms of interaction that favour reinforcement or resistance, rather than adaptation to change. These kinds of networks are more likely to be non-deliberative, hierarchical, centralised and fixed (ibid, 13).

In drawing upon these ideas Amin and Hausner (1997) develop a broad typology that distinguishes between regressive and progressive networks, closed and open networks,

adaptable and non-adaptable networks, deliberative and non-reflexive networks, and centralized and decentralized networks. The features that come to define such networks are shaped by the rationalities that frame them.

> [T]he rationalities of networks will have a direct effect on the cognition, behaviour and capabilities of agents, which in turn, will have a direct bearing on the reflexive, strategic and adjustment properties of networks. Similarly, the strength of ties within and between networks will influence the degree of openness to new influences, the extent to which ties are a real source of organizational efficiency and cohesion, and the evolutionary or regenerative qualities of networks. The nature of power relations, too, has a bearing on the spread of authority and responsibility across networks, and therefore also the architecture of decision-making. Deliberative networks are likely to be flatter, more discursive and more democratic than command-based networks in which the main role of interaction is to transmit information and orders rather than to share power and duties (ibid, 14).

In conjunction with the influence of these rationalities, the institutional set-up of networks, or 'the enduring collective practices' and organizations within networks are also important. 'This includes formal rules and institutions of regulation and governance, as well as the embedded cultural and social practices, and conventions which constitute the reproductive framework of networks' (ibid, 14). The enduring qualities of networks

can be explored through 'their stability and degree of coherence, their collective efficacy, and above all their overall governance structure' (ibid, 14). However, despite the potential for these 'enduring qualities' to exist, networks are embedded within a set of socially contingent processes and mobile interactions that require a reflexive mode of interpretation. In other words, although a network may contain a set of familiar social processes, rules and norms, it is still important from an interpretative point of view to remain open to those changes that occur due to social interactions that are governed by a wider set of social processes and individual interests. Interpretative methods ensure that we are mindful of these 'micro-sociologies' and I would now like to outline those interpretative methods that have been employed in this thesis in more detail.

2.3 Modes of interpretation

Having outlined the importance of taking a network approach to my work, it is important that the modes of interpretation used to explain my data reflect the mobility of those interactions across the network and the varied and unstable nature of these interactions. A positivist[3] approach to the new governance should be neglected in the following regard:

> [P]ositivism is not just a set of methodological principles, but (...) above
>
> all an attitude towards knowledge, with deeply intertwined ramifications

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[3]The notion of positivism used here is particularly broad, and offers a convenient way to group together a set of methodological arguments that purport to offer pure facts in line with strict positivism or atomised facts in line with modernist empiricism (Bevir, 2001). It should be acknowledged that since Comte first coined the term 'positive philosophy', very few philosophers or social thinkers have willingly called themselves 'positivists', and there are clear differences between Comte's views and the views of others to whom the label has since been applied (Giddens, 1974: 2).

that range from the barely articulated ontological understandings of reality, via methodological principles of how to collect data in a proper way, to a rhetoric of accepted ways of talking about knowledge and policy. In practice this means that positivism does not restrict itself to the conduct of the social sciences, but also, and more importantly, including normative beliefs and habits of governance and policy making. Far from being a straw man, positivism is above all a practice of policymaking that is deeply rooted in the institutions of modern government (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003: 6).

It then comes as no surprise that the classical-modernist conception of the political system and its institutions is viewed like a set of Russian dolls. This metaphor highlights the way the government system is conceived to fit into one another (local fits into regional, fits into national, fits into international containers) and how political space is directly related to this system (ibid, 8). A typical example of positivism in political science is the Westminster model, defined as follows:

The characteristics of the Westminster model ... include: strong cabinet government based on majority rule; the importance attached to constitutional conventions; a two party system based on single member constituencies; the assumption that minorities can find expression in one of the major parties; the concept of Her Majesty's loyal opposition; and

the doctrine of parliamentary supremacy, which takes precedence over

popular sovereignty except during elections. (Verney, 1991: 637)

In the words of Bevir and Rhodes the 'notion of a model evokes a monolithic and unchanging object of study that fits well with positivist attempts to ignore meaning, difference and contingency' (2003: 25).

The new governance is characterised by a search for 'multilevel governance', 'regimes', or 'transnational policy discourses', configurations that do not relate to the classical-modernist conceptions of systematic politics (ibid, 8). To reflect this I have chosen a set of anti-positivist methodologies based upon interpretative theory, hermeneutics and ethnology and post-structuralism. The basis for choosing these modes of interpretation will now be expanded upon, giving special attention to why I think they offer the most suitable insight to the fluid and hierarchical interactions across the LEADER network.

2.4 Interpretative theory

'Nothing here but trees and grass', thinks the traveller, and marches on.

'Look', says the woodsman, 'there is a tiger in that grass.' (Collingwood,

1939)

Interpretative approaches to political science begin from the insight that to understand actions, practices and institutions we need to understand the significant meanings, the

beliefs and preferences of the people involved (This and the following paragraph are paraphrased from Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: pp1-21). It is these beliefs that frame actions, practices and institutions. This means that to study political life effectively we have to engage in the interpretation of the beliefs and desires of those we study.

Interpretative theory since the Second World War has taken a back seat to positivist approaches to political sciences. However, arguments have remained for the unavoidable importance attached to interpretation, based on strong criticisms of approaches which attempt to see political science modelled on the natural sciences. Interpretation has hung on, according to Bevir and Rhodes, because 'people choose to act on some of their preferences in accord with beliefs they adopt for their own reasons'. Present day interpretative theory currently has two main strands. Firstly, there exists the more traditional mode of interpretation rooted in the humanities, predominantly history. This mode draws on hermeneutic and phenomenological philosophies. The second approach has developed out of the criticisms of positivist approaches to political science, most notably behaviouralism and structuralism. This approach draws on post-structuralist and post-modern philosophies. Hermeneutics and ethnology is associated with attempts to understand meaning, while post-structuralist and post-modernism forms of interpretation shift the focus from individuals and mind to systems of signs and how they work in society. I will now attempt to explain each of these in a little more detail.

2.4.1 Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Ethnology

Husserl (1970), the forefather of phenomenology, considered it to be an epistemological concept concerned with the nature and grounds of knowledge. The emphasis is on reflective intuition to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in consciousness (Husserl, 1970). For Husserl, consciousness represents a realm of absolute being, as a consequence the starting point for philosophical reflection is not through theory or history, but 'a description of the presence of man in the world, and the presence of the world for man (Stapleton, 1983: 9). This understanding developed out of Husserl's interest in the ideal of philosophy and its potential as a rigorous science (Ray, 1994: 119). He claimed that by using the method of bracketing (holding in abeyance) one's presuppositions and ideas, and by deep reflection, one could seek the roots or beginnings of knowledge. Husserl (1970) believed these processes lay deep within the consciousness of the knowing subject to whom these phenomena appeared. Herein lay the roots of transcendental phenomenology.

> The transcendental subjective process is achieved by seeking to attain the genuine and true form of the things themselves. The realm of the transcendental being, thus, is that of pure ego and what it knows. It is called transcendental because of its presuppositionless relationship to the world (bracketing or suspended one's presuppositions about the world) so as to come to know what makes a thing what it is, thus providing the basis for the world's existential status (Ray, 1994: 120).

Phenomenology was reinterpreted by Heidegger as hermeneutical or interpretative, underlined by the ontological search for the nature and relations of being (Cohen and Omery, 1994: 136). The key difference between the Husserlian and Heideggerian approaches is that Heidegger argues presuppositions are not to be bracketed or suspended, but provide the possibility of meaning (Ray, 1994: 120). This suggests the basis of meaning should not be founded on transcendental notions in which we place ourselves *of the world*, but on our prior understanding, that can only come by *being in the world*. The meaning of Being is important within Heidegger's work, and it is important to distinguish between Being, as presence in the world, and being, as 'being there' (Ray, 1994).

For Heidegger, hermeneutics must take as its starting point the everyday mode of human being, as a means to recover and make apparent the sense of Being (Langan, 1970).

> Hermeneutics goal is discovery of meaning that is not immediately manifest to our intuiting, analyzing, and describing. Interpreters have to go beyond what is given directly. Yet in attempting this, they have to use ordinary, everyday given as a clue for meanings that are not given, at least not explicitly (Cohen and Omery, 1994: 146).

Gadamer (1990), inspired by Heidegger, has since articulated hermeneutics in the context of temporality and the historicity of human existence. Central to this idea is the universality of language (text) as the carrier of those cultural-historical influences that

people incorporate in the process of understanding. Understanding thus originates in the linguistic experience of the world (Gadamer, 1990). In line with this hermeneutic theorists, typically, explore the existential nature of understanding through the interpretation of texts and actions, while also recognising that the nature of understanding is embedded in tradition.

An underlying feature of the hermeneutic interpretative approach is an appropriation of 'the unknown with the known through a process of constructive understanding' (Gadamer, 1976: 15).In other words, 'we understand things by fitting them into patterns of knowledge, events, and actions that we already posses, typically in narrative form, or that are at least available to us as members of a particular society (Fischer, 2003: 124).

Greenleaf (1983a, 1983b, 1987) provides a good example of the application of hermeneutic theory to political science. Greenleaf plots the rise of collectivism, the ideological tensions that then surround the growth of government, and the impact of this growth on the political system. His analysis moves from the intimations of a tradition to the practices and institutions it inspires.

Ricoeur's (1981) conception of phenomenology and hermeneutics brings together Husserlian, Heidggerian and Gadamerian ideas by showing that belongingness to the world is the interpretative experience itself and that all understanding is mediated by interpretation. He states, 'Phenomenology remains the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics. On the other hand, phenomenology cannot constitute itself without a

hermeneutical presupposition' (Ricoeur, 1981: 101). In a similar vein, van Manen (1990) has explicated a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach that advances the notion that human science research can not be separated from the textual practice of writing. His research has influenced social science research broadly by articulating the relationship between phenomenology, hermeneutics and semiotics, and the importance of textual reflection in contributing to our understanding of social action.

Phenomenology provided sociologists and anthropologists with the means to try to understand the meanings people in their own or other societies attach to social practices (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 21). It is this approach which is said to have inspired the ethnology of Berger and Luckman (1971) and Geertz (1973). For anthropologists such as Geertz (1973) ethnology provided the means by which meaning could be better understood. This is made possible through 'thick description' that helps reveal how we make constructions of others people's constructions of what they and others are doing. In simple terms ethnology aims to see things from somebody else's point of view by following social goals and values closely. For example, local cultural inferences may be deemed to have shaped or influenced a particular policy output. Ethnology commonly builds on ethnographic study by comparing and contrasting different cultures.

Ethnography first emerged in biblical scholarship, but has since evolved most prominently in cultural anthropology through its initial focus on small-scale societies (Boyle, 1994: 160). Two important ethnographies produced within anthropology are Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1961) and Framz Boas's *The Kwakiutl*

Ethnography (1966). As anthropology increased in popularity and the number of tribal peoples declined, anthropologist began to look at other suitable social units, and ethnography began to be more widely applied (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987).

Due to the constant (re-)constructions made in any given social setting it is not surprising that the ethnographer cannot hope to be able to fully explain any form of social reality. Geertz acknowledges the difficulty of ethnography, while also highlighting the ability of this type of approach to help explain the constructions of social reality.

> Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of construct a meaning of) a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound and behaviour but in transient examples of shaped behaviour (Geertz, 1973: 10).

There are, of course, no grandiose claims of un-shrouded 'truth' made through this approach. However, Geertz does speak up in defence of objectivity, on the grounds that otherwise "one might as well let one's sentiments run loose, while he remains hostile to the idea that objectivity beyond our individual reasoning is possible (1973: 30). This philosophy resonates clearly through the following passage.

> The essential vocation of interpretative anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others,

guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include

them in the consultable record of what man has said (*ibid*, 30).

2.4.2 Post-structuralism and postmodernism

Post-structuralists and postmodernists provide the most recent opposition to positivism to have emerged. The interpretative theories inspired by post-structuralists and postmodernists represent a broad range of theorists. These theories are strongly associated with the work of Foucault (1991) (among others, including Derrida, 1976; Lacan, 1977; Lyotard, 1984: Rorty, 1980; and White, 1973, 1987). Foucault is opposed to the claims of the 'modern project' that assert that human experience and subjectivity are pure in nature. In this sense, Foucault is opposed to two modern concepts – the subject and reason. It is at this point where postmodern and post-structuralist varieties of interpretation differ from hermeneutics (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 31). Foucault rejects the idea of the autonomous subject. Foucault does not believe the subject has its own foundation or meaningful experiences, reasoning, beliefs and actions outside a social context. Instead, Foucault contends that 'the subject is inherently a contingent product of a particular discourse, a particular set of techniques of government and technologies of the self' (*ibid*, 24). Discourses are then a social product rather than a product of individual beliefs. Furthermore, his rejection of reason leads him to decentre discourses to show how they develop out of a series of random interactions of different micro practices (*ibid*, 24).

Foucault believes we have experiences only within the context of a preceding discourse. For Foucault the best way to understand an object or action is to interpret it within the context of this wider discourse. Foucault suggests that discourses develop at random as products of time and chance. In this context, political scientists must interpret objects and actions through their historically specific circumstances (*ibid*, 23). These discourses consist of meanings that are endlessly multiplying, and are characteristically unstable (*ibid*, 23). Bevir and Rhodes state that "Human life is understandable only in a framework of meaning, and this framework of meaning cannot be reduced to an objective process or structure" (2003, 23). This statement clearly reflects the post-structuralist and postmodernist concern for the 'web of meaning' as opposed to the objective, positivist search for truth.

This does not imply that within the post-structuralist approach there are no human actors in politics or that political analysis must avoid talking about agency (Gottweis, 2003: 254). There is still the need to follow the actions of individuals.

> There is no question, for example, that a particular high-level administrator in the European Commission is in a powerful position and can act to mobilize support for his goal to impose strict regulations protecting the environment from hazards related to genetically modified organisms. And we can, and should certainly analytically, follow his actions. But we have to understand that this administrator does not act independently from European policy discourse which in many ways

provides critical influence on how this administrator views the world, defines his goals and structures his actions (ibid, 254).

A similar argument can be made in relationship to political entities, such as institutions. There is, for example, no need to deny the importance of the structure of a parliament in shaping a particular legislative act (ibid, 254). But how can we explain the strong involvement of a parliament in the shaping of the legislation in the first place? What created the dynamics for a policymaking process leading to legislation? These are the type of questions through which post-structuralism draws its analysis, and extends our 'focus beyond the organization of politics, but also to the politics of organization, not only to the actors of politics, but also to the politics of actors' (ibid, 254). It is the 'semantic struggles and discursive constructions which define who counts as an actor in a particular policy setting – and who does not; which institutions are legitimized and authorized to take part in the shaping or the implementation of policymaking – and which are not' (ibid, 254). Actors and institutions do matter in policymaking, 'but these processes need to be understood within the discourses where actors are constituted and institutions framed as relevant in any given policy field' (ibid, 254). After all, 'power is not only articulated in interactions between actors in institutional biases or ideologies', but in addition to discourses, representations, scientific statements or 'public philosophies' are critical articulations of power (ibid, 254). These 'articulations of power construct subjectivity and position individual or institutional actors in the socio-political field and thus deserve a prominent place in policy analysis' (ibid, 254).

These modes of interpretation offer an appropriate means to study the interactions across networks. These modes carry no predetermined assumptions on the structure of the new governance, and how it relates to the classical-modernist conception of the political system. Network interactions are conceived around social practices and discourses, and it is these that shape the construction of social reality. Within this context, structure and agency will be viewed within the light of those discourses that constitute and frame the interactions and structures across the LEADER network.

2.4.3 Narrative analysis

These discourses will be explored using narrative forms of analysis. This form of analysis represents a means to unpack the socially contingent processes that emerge out of those interactions between actors, their institutions, and the world in which they live. In other words, narratives represent a means to reflect upon the stories we tell, a means to break down and reflect upon the processes that shape our thoughts and the webs we weave in our everyday lives.

In political research, narratives are indicative of a shift from the old notions of 'preference' and 'institution' to new, more discursive and cultural understandings of the state (Bang, 2004:158). Narrative analysis is based on the belief that the world around us is interpreted and constructed through 'interactive talk' (Wiles et al., 2004: 90). Within this shift, rule is considered 'the contingent products of diverse actions and political struggles informed by the beliefs of agents as they arise in the context of traditions'

(Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 198). The power and knowledge inherent within the everyday construction of narratives has now been widely recognised, and as such it is important that political research moves beyond the concepts of government and state (Bang, 2004: 158) that hide the complexity inherent within these concepts, and the stories that help us unpack them. The narratives within my research relate strongly to changing state structure, community governance and the related notions of partnership, participation and representation. These form the basic framework to my research, while interconnected discourses shape the particular focus of the story I am telling.

The narrative approach employed here focuses on the *multilayered* and *contextual nature of talk* building on the basic *evaluative* mode of narrative analysis, which looks for patterns of difference and consistency in content and form (Wiles et al., 92-93). Viewing narratives as multilayered encourages an interpretation of narrative as something which operates on several interconnected levels (ibid, 92). Riessman (1993) refers to three interrelated levels at which we can understand individual narratives: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Ideational meaning refers to the informational content that people intend their words to express. Interpersonal meaning refers to the particular relationship and role between the speaker and the interviewer; and textual content describes the way things are said syntactically and semantically. These levels of meaning encourage interpretation of narrative that explores critically the way narratives are formed, by acknowledging the micro-sociologies at work between the speaker and the listener (or in my case the interviewee). However, these micro-sociologies are not always easily interpreted. For example, it is very difficult to understand how our own

positionality as the interviewee is seen by individuals telling the story, and although as the interviewee I may be able perceive my own position against that of the speaker, there is no certainty that the speaker views my positionality in the same way. Furthermore, although as the interviewee we can acknowledge difference in syntax and semantics, our own understanding of the meaning implied may easily be interpreted wrongly.

These levels of analysis are important, despite the fact that they are impossible to get to the bottom of, because of the need to highlight the complexity of the stories we weave, and remove any taken for granted notions of how these stories are produced. However, these are not the only levels at which we should try to consider meaning, and in my research the larger social context of what people say is highly important. The social discourses and politics that frame narratives are invaluable to my research, and must be included in any interpretation (Wiles et al., 2005: 92). Applying this social discourse and the politics that frame narratives is a subjective process on the part of the researcher. In the position of researcher we draw together to the best of our ability and knowledge, the social discourse and political influences we think have shaped a particular narrative. There is never any certainty that this is correct, but through this process we generate an understanding of complex social issues that may just help us understand in an ephemeral way the world we live.

The *contextual nature of talk* focuses on interviews and the particular context in which they take place. This builds on the idea that micro-sociologies take place between the interviewee and the interviewer. I have outlined above the difficulty in understanding our

own position against that of the interviewee, along with the fact that how we view our own position may differ markedly from how the interviewee views that position. I would now like to show how particular contexts can enhance or constrain a particular narrative. For instance, an interviewee and an interviewer may or may not have shared similar experiences, and this influences the way the interviewee is able to build a story, the kind of stories they can tell, and how easily they can convey their point or persuade the interviewer that what they are saying is knowledgeable and correct (Wiles, 2005: 93). In the same way, the presence of a recording device can affect the level of interaction within an interview (ibid, 92). During a number of my interviews, a number of interviewees found it very difficult to relax knowing that they were being recorded, while others saw the presence of a recording device as a signal for the need to perform, the consequence was undoubtedly a much enhanced narrative.

2.5 Data collection

2.5.1 Interviews

The focus of my research is the governance of the LEADER rural development programme. This programme is governed along a network that stretches from the supranational level to the local level. It is an EU led initiative, passed downwards to the national and sub-national level and finally implemented at the local level through area based partnerships. Given this multilevel framework, and the programme's boundary crossing network, it was important to use a snowballing method within the interview

process. The movement of power and its relations along the network is made up of key governing actors and the nodal points where these actors reside and governed by a set of official policy discourses. As a means to identify the key individuals within this network it was necessary to apply a reflexive approach in order to be able to adapt to the complexities of the network. Before I began my research I was not aware how far the network would stretch. Of course I had some inclination of the type of actors within the network, but the subtleties of the network, and the relations and discourses that determined its character needed to be followed. The predetermination of interviewees could well have taken my research on a path that was divergent and misrepresentative of these power relations. As such a snowballing method was the most suitable approach to identifying complex relationships of power across the multilevel spatiality of the network.

In total I carried out 26 in-depth interviews along this network. A majority of the interviews lasted between one and two hours. The interviews were semi-structured, and as such, I did ask numerous unstructured questions as a means to follow up interesting and diverging responses to my initial questions. The decision to use a semi-structured framework for the interviews was based on two factors. Firstly, it allowed me to trace the network interactions in a fluid way, reflecting a network approach, and; secondly, I felt it was appropriate given the widespread difference in the level of knowledge of the interviewees. For instance, the high level EU officials that I spoke to had a different kind of knowledge and understanding of LEADER, compared to the members of the LAG partnership. As such, although the basic framework and the subjects covered remained

the same throughout the interviews, I tended to change the direction of the questioning as the responses became less and less informed, while some areas of questioning were simply not applicable to some of the interviewees, especially those questions designed to explore power relations at particular levels of the governance framework, and those questions to EU level respondents that dealt specifically with the theoretical and historical influences behind the LEADER approach.

In the process of following the LEADER network, using a snowballing method, issues regarding distance and cost also became important concerns. On some occasions it was possible to arrange to have two or, at the most, three interviews in a day, but quite often this simply wasn't possible, as I was working around other people, not the other way around. This proved quite frustrating at times, and it was sometimes difficult to be motivated for a single interview knowing that I would spend the majority of the day to get to it. However, I understand that to fulfil the objectives for this type of research a prerequisite must be to follow any lead, however limited and time consuming it may initially seem, and I don't think I fell into the trap of selecting interviews on the basis of logistical ease.

Given the nature of the LEADER network it was also necessary to travel outside of the UK to Brussels. I only made this trip once, over a three day period, during which I carried out three interviews with different interviewees. This trip was very enlightening and crucial to the quality of my data. I left Brussels quite satisfied that I had spoken to the key people at the EU level along the network. However, I had hoped to secure one interview

with one other key individual at this level but I was not fortunate enough to hear from them until I returned from Brussels. As such, I faced a dilemma between securing an important interview and the cost involved to get back to Brussels. In this case I decided that a compromise was acceptable and I completed the interview over the telephone and recorded it using a telephone voice recorder. As this telephone interview and the recording tool did not seem to affect the quality of my data I decided to enrol it within my data collection methodology, and another four interviews were conducted in this way.

A few other problems presented themselves, although these were not necessarily related to snowballing or following the network, but simply more general issues in relation to the interview process. One of the biggest problems I faced within this process was gaining the trust of the LAG manager. Initially this individual was very defensive and slow in putting information forward. In fact, for some time there is no doubt that this individual operated as a 'gatekeeper' giving me limited access to the LAG meetings, while also giving me the contact details of only a limited number of the LAG members as a means to seek interviewees. This was, of course, frustrating but I understood that trust needed to be built, and I think that by the end of data collection process I had gone some way in achieving this, as the LAG manager was far more open about certain aspects of the programme than she had been in the past. However, at the same time, I did not expect to face this kind of barrier, in a programme that was funded through public money. In fact, I initially expected these meetings to be open to the public, and accessible to all, as I was aware that a number of other LAGs in the South West held open meetings. This was not the case in North West Devon, which I found disappointing.

A final observation about the interview process is related to dress code. I tried to dress in a similar code to the way I expected each individual interviewee to be dressed, as a means to help the interviewee feel at ease. This of course required guesswork on my part, and undoubtedly on occasion I got it wrong. On at least two occasions I felt as though I was somewhat over formally dressed, and not only did this appear to make the interviewees relate to me in a different way, but also made me feel uneasy and conscious of a position I did not feel comfortable occupying.

2.5.2 Problems and Pitfalls of a snowballing approach

Despite the fact that snowballing proved an effective means to trace the LEADER network, and collect data from actors along it, there were a number of problems and pitfalls with this approach that should be acknowledged. The most significant issue with this approach, and one that perhaps reflects the quality of the broader network, is that I found that individuals and organisations tended to operate in confined networks made up of actors who had mutual trust for one another, understood the rules of the game in a similar way, attached themselves to the same nodal points along the network, and had a long history of working together in various partnership organisations. These confined networks sat within the broader LEADER network, tending to cluster around nodal points, predominantly territorially based, which meant the relationships along the network were not always fluid or tangible.

Accessibility to potential interviewees often seemed governed by the nature of these networks, with each showing varying levels of openness. Those groups of actors or the organizations that were the most accessible throughout the snowballing process were undoubtedly those related to the EU and government. The European Commission, Defra, regional, and local government representatives were generally accessible through clear and direct channels. The same cannot be said for agencies employed at the European level to facilitate LEADER, local development agencies, members of local development partnerships, the LEADER management team and LAG members. In fact, many of those non-state actors and organizations now enrolled in the process of rural governance failed to show an adequate level of transparency and accessibility, and at times this made the snowballing process a rather testing experience. An adequate level of transparency would be achieved if there was a process or guidelines in place for making these new governance mechanisms accessible, as is largely the norm for traditional forms of governance, from parish councils upwards.

The actors and organisations within these confined networks tended to see the way LEADER was governed in similar ways, putting forward comparable narratives. I was aware that any form of significant difference in these narratives was missing, and this was a worry early in the research data collection process. As a means to overcome this problem, and search for those dissenting stories, which I felt as though were being hidden by these confined networks, I decided to search for new access points along the network. I did this by developing a new strategy whereby actors were enrolled who no longer played an active role in the network, but had once done so. Figure 1 represents the basic

shape of the North West Devon LEADER network. I also searched the documentation for names that had not been mentioned through the interview process, while I also looked to the authors of this documentation, and attempted to secure interviews with them. This documentation ranged from monitoring reports to official LEADER publications, produced within various levels of governance. Despite this attempt to find *dissenting voices* as a means to get a more overarching overview of the LEADER programme, these voices were not easily uncovered. This strategy did deliver in some instances, with some interviewees openly critical of aspects of the way LEADER was governed, but this criticism was never quite as strong as I expected. This was either because I was guilty of looking for something that wasn't there, as a means to be able to put together a governance story that was full of fierce social relations and conspiracy; or because of my failure as a researcher. However, I would defend against this latter accusation, as I feel as though I employed the most effective means available to follow the LEADER network and get to grips with its complexities in the time available.

Figure 1. North West Devon LEADER+ network
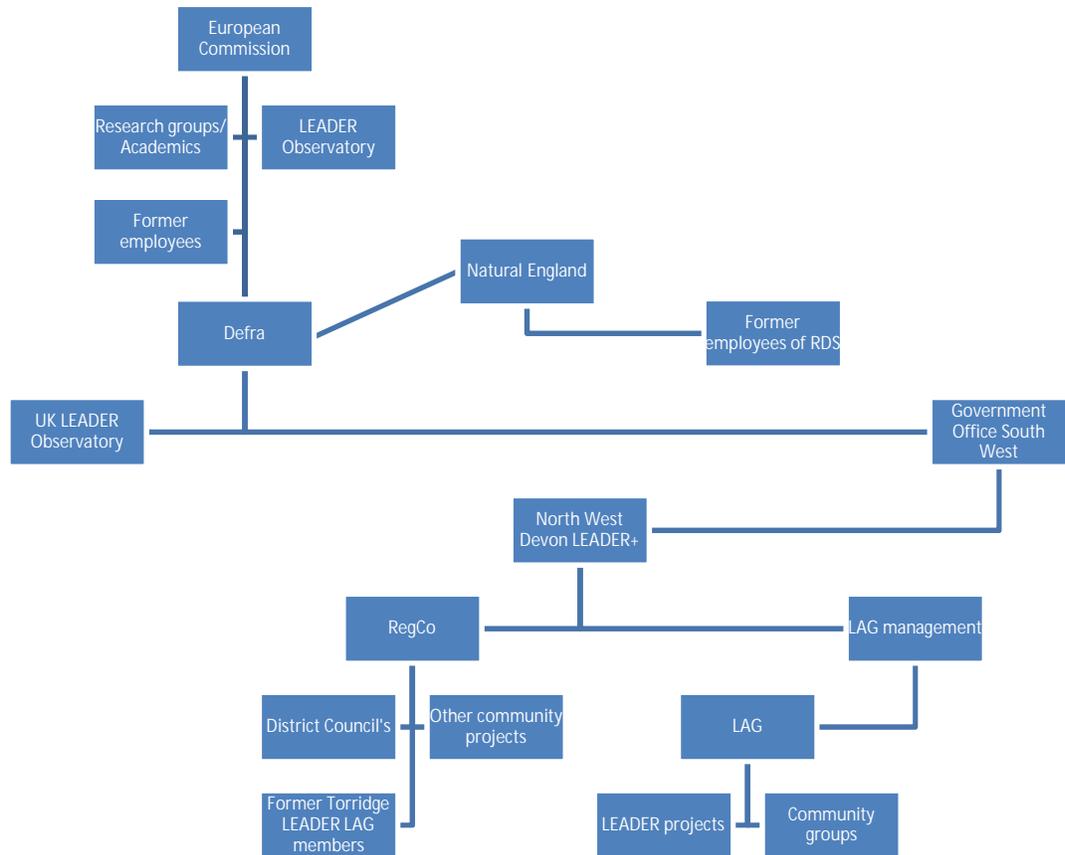
Time was an important factor in this process, because of the implications of following the network, principally due to the fact it has no agreed end to it. I have no doubt that I could have spent three years just tracing the LEADER network, but of course this would simply not have been possible. As such, I decided to give myself a ten month framework, during which I followed the network as far as I could.

2.5.3 Coding

Following the transcription of my interviews I began the process of coding the interview scripts produced through this process. As a means to do this I identified three key themes that corresponded with the first three research questions outlined in my introduction, and then broke these themes down into important sub-themes that represented the key areas of interest within my research. For example, in looking at the effectiveness of governance as a means of coordination (research question two) I made a list of the potential narratives and their related discourses that I felt existed or may have existed within the data. In this case narratives relating to partnership, governmentality, accountability and legitimacy were all related to this question, along with a set of related discourses on democracy, participation, endogenous development, political rescaling and so on, which frame and construct these narratives and their discourses in particular ways. In simple terms, sets of related themes and their discourses were used to codify my data, and start the process of constructing my LEADER narrative. Many of the themes in these narratives and the discourses present overlap with one another, and so themes and discourses were often cross referenced and intertwined in this process, which I felt was indicative of the way powerful discourses produced power, action and belief across the LEADER network, and through the narratives I set out to explore. From the list of narratives, their themes and discourses I began the coding process. I found that certain narratives and forms of discourse soon became prominent within my data. This had the effect of focusing the narrative that I was looking to form, and also remove, what can only be described as a set of presuppositions on what the key themes and discourses would be. This does not mean,

however, that the final narrative will not reflect my own positionality, in both unconscious and unashamedly conscious ways.

2.5.4 Workshops and partnership meetings

As an additional source of data for this research, I also attended a series of four workshops held by the LEADER partnerships in the South West where general issues regarding the governance of the programme were discussed. These workshops raised some very interesting issues, and I was fortunate enough to be allowed to record what was said. These workshops were led by a private consultancy company, and the areas for discussion were formulated by Government Office in conjunction with the LEADER groups in the South West. As such I had no control over the direction of the discussion within these workshops. However, I was fortunate in that these workshops focused on ways of improving the governance of LEADER and, as such, many of the areas of my research were covered. These workshops were useful because they provided a fascinating insight into the governance of other programmes within the South West in contrast to the programme I was focusing on, especially in relation to the process of putting the LAG together. I was also able to use the workshops as a means to trace the LEADER network vertically within the South West and build up contacts, a number of whom I interviewed at a later stage. These workshops were transcribed and coded in the same way as my interviews, outlined above.

As part of my research it was important for me to gain access to the LAG committee meetings, but as I mentioned above this proved quite difficult. After several months of frustrating e-mails and phone calls I was eventually given access to a committee meeting. This was an achievement given this initially looked unlikely to happen. It was only following my interviewing of the LAG Chairman that access was granted, and I have no doubt that it was he who pushed the issue of gaining access to the LAG manager, which resulted in me being allowed to attend. Up until this point I had heard nothing but silence on the issue from the LAG management team. The process of securing access was a drawn out affair, and the meeting I did eventually attend was one of the last at which decisions on project approval were made, because the current programme was drawing to a close. Nevertheless, despite the frustration of not being able to gain access to earlier meetings, the observation of a single meeting still gave me a great deal of insight into the decision making process at the local level, how individual actors and organisations interrelated, and the demographic make up of the partnership. I did not record the meeting, or take notes until I had returned to my car. I took this approach because I did not want to make the committee members feel guarded or uneasy by my presence. I felt this may have been the case if I was seen busily taking notes, and as a consequence I may not have observed the typical way that these meetings unfolded.

2.5.5 Discourse

Discourse plays a primary role by constructing and framing the narratives associated with the new governance, and the LEADER programme. The official and non-official

discourses on LEADER are of great importance to my research, as a means to frame and support the issues identified through the narratives evident in my interview data. The focus on LEADER discourse was used as a means to get to the heart of the key principles behind LEADER and to establish what was important through the LEADER approach to rural governance. The prime focus within this analysis of the discourse was the principle of 'bottom-up' rural development, and what this meant in terms of governance. I also attempted to explore, through this analysis, if and where the emphasis on these principles change between the discourses produced at the different levels of governance within LEADER. I also used these data, along with information on previous LEADER programmes to try to identify where the LEADER approach came from, and how its principles were founded. These data sets were used to show how LEADER fits into the wider narratives on the shift from government to governance, and notions of state restructuring, and why these shifts are taking place. These narratives can be found within the academic literature, which unequivocally forms the backbone of my research by putting forward a means by which we can understand what governance might be, and why it may have emerged, through both empirical studies and normative theory within the literature. The narratives formed within this literature are enrolled within my research to explore the nature of the LEADER governance framework. The mobile and unstructured character of governance networks ensures that discourse plays a key role in keeping the governance network together by structuring thinking and action across the wider network (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005: 343). If this be the case then the governance discourse provides a means to explore this proposition further, and use it as a means to look closely at the importance of discourse in the conditioning of power relations.

2.6 Conclusion

I have set out a range of research and data collection methods that best support the aims of my research. By framing my analysis through these interpretative approaches, and by acknowledging that through this work I will be creating my own particular narrative on the governance of the LEADER programme. I hope to be able to show that any understanding of the new governance is dependent upon a set of mobile discourses that interact differently with different policy sectors creating a specific set of narratives. This is poorly reflected in the academic literature on the new governance, and I hope to be able to show through employing these methods, that the new governance reflects the varied and mobile policy networks that support it. This accounts for the potentially varied nature of the new governance, and its reflexive parameters that support powerful narrative(s). I believe that my data collection methodology has provided sufficient empirical data and the basis from which to draw out a LEADER narrative that reflects the social processes that are responsible for its construction. The next chapter begins this process by introducing the LEADER programme in more detail and by looking at the official discourses that frame a particular set of narratives in relation to the LEADER programme.

Chapter 3: LEADER: the basic principles, structures and interpretations

The LEADER programme was first announced by the Commission on 19 March 1991, and largely derived from the 1987 reform of the Structural Funds which introduced the concept and practice of 'Community initiatives' (Bryden, 2006). Community initiatives enabled the Commission to allocate funds of particular interest to the Community (ibid, 6). The LEADER programme is coordinated by the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG Agri). The LEADER acronym was taken from the French title 'Liaisons Entre Actions de Développment de l'Economie Rurale' translated as 'Links between actions for the development of the rural economy' (European Commission, 1999). Between 1991 and 2006[4] three programmes have followed one another. It began with LEADER I (1991-93), followed by LEADER II (1994-99), and most recently LEADER+ (2002-2006). Table 1 gives an outline of each LEADER initiative.

Table 1. LEADER initiatives 1991-2006

Leader initiatives	Number of LAGs	Area covered	EU funding
Leader I	217	367 000 km2	EUR 442 million
Leader II	906	1 375 144 km2	EUR 1 755 million
Leader+	893	1 577 386 km2	EUR 2 105.1 million

Source: LEADER factsheet (2006)

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[4] Funding for projects allotted under LEADER+ (2002-2006) must be spent by the end of 2008

The current programme[5] funds three areas of activity called 'actions' and these are made up of the following:

Action 1 – *Integrated, pilot rural development plans* – This action assists local action groups in rural areas in developing and implementing high quality, innovative and sustainable development plans.

Action 2 – *Co-operation between rural areas* – Local action groups are required to work on joint projects with other groups in the UK, European Union, or other countries, by pooling skills and resources to achieve the objectives set out in their development plans.

Action 3 – *Networking* – All local action groups exchange ideas and share good practice through a national LEADER+ network (Defra, 2001).

In conjunction with these actions the LAG puts together a development plan built around one or more of the following broad themes:

1. The use of 'know how' and new technologies to make rural products and services more competitive

2. Improving the quality of life in rural areas

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[5] The current programme refers to LEADER+ which ran from 2002-2006, although LEADER funding was still available through the LAGs up to the summer of 2008. There is now a new LEADER programme (2008-2013) ran by the Regional Development Agencies (RDA's), but as this thesis was largely written while the LEADER+ programme was still in operation it was appropriate to refer to this programme as the current one.

3. Adding value to local products

4. Making the best use of natural and cultural resources

The current LEADER programme (LEADER+), like its forerunners, operates around territorially defined areas with a guideline population of no less than 10,000 and no more than 100,000, with a population density not greater than 120 inhabitants/km. In each area a partnership of local actors is put together, as a means to consider proposals and implement LEADER objectives. The way these partnerships are put together differs from area to area, but it is common for the local authority to play a lead role in structuring the partnership by first putting out calls of interest and then appointing a LAG manager to organise interested parties. According to Defra this partnership 'must comprise of a balanced and representative selection of partners from the different socio-economic sectors in the local area concerned' (Defra, 2001). These partnerships or LAGs are the means through which the LEADER programme boasts its credentials as a 'bottom-up' or endogenous approach to rural development. Defra states that LAG areas must be small, homogenous in social, economic and geographical terms (Defra, 2002). There are currently 893 LAGs in operation throughout the EU 15 with a projected budget of EUR 5046.5 million for the entirety of the programme, including all match funding (European Commission, 2002). England has 25 LAGs in operation with a projected budget of £98 million for the 2002-2006 period (This is broken down as follows: EU £38m, Defra £16m, other public sources £28m, and the private sector £16m).

At the outset of the programme the Commission passed guidelines for the implementation of the programme to the member states, and each member state formed a process of implementation based on these guidelines. In order, for an area to be able to accommodate a LEADER group in the current programme there was a period of open competition, which saw a bidding process in operation, whereby areas could apply to be a part of the programme. Some areas had the advantage of having operated a LAG during either the LEADER I or the LEADER II programmes or both. This was advantageous because these areas already had a managing structure in place, and had experience of putting together a LAG and meeting the programmes objectives. During previous programmes bidding was also open, but confined to West Cornwall and North Tamar during LEADER I, and to Objecive 5b areas during LEADER II.

Defra is the managing authority for the current programme in England, and it works alongside the various regional government offices on its implementation. As the managing authority, Defra was initially responsible for interpreting the LEADER guidelines passed down from the EU, but as the programme has developed its role has focused on the financial aspects of the programme, by ensuring funds passed down from Brussels are spent appropriately and on time before the programmes closure. The approach of regional government tends to differ from region to region dependent on the number of LAGs within a region, and as a consequence the resources made available to oversee its implementation. As I briefly outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the focus of my thesis, is the South West region of England, and within that the North West Devon LAG. The focus LAG has selected the national theme of: 'Improving the Quality

of Life in Rural areas', and has also the unusual step to create a further local theme to 'Optimise the use of our natural and human resources to sustain and enhance local communities' (LAG development plan, 2005). It is not common for the LAGs to expand upon the broad themes set out in the programmes guidelines, and this may say something about the particular direction the North West Devon LAG would like to see the programme take.

In conjunction with this theme the LAG has set out the following objectives to help focus the activities of the programme:

1. To promote sustainable development that conserves and enhances the environment, strengthens the local economy and has the support and involvement of local communities

2. To encourage innovation amongst businesses, community groups and individuals

3. To improve local skills and abilities, and build the capacity of communities in support of the LEADER + theme

4. To encourage local and external markets for existing and new local produce and products creating new local networks and outlets

5. To encourage cooperative working and information exchange within the LEADER + area and with other rural areas in England, the UK, Europe and Worldwide (LAG development plan, 2005).

The focus LAG has a budget of £4.6 million. The South West has six LAGs in total, which is more than any other region in England, and as a consequence it is seen as a lead region, and has been used by Defra to sound out the quality of new delivery mechanisms and approaches to policy issues. The regional manager for the South West, employed by Government Office South West, oversees the LEADER programme in the region. This individual works closely with Defra and the LAGs to ensure the rules and regulations are followed properly, to ensure financial regulatory, and manage regional networks and cooperation. Within Defra, there are currently two representatives responsible for the programme across England. The Defra team is also facilitated by a desk officer (and team) in Brussels who is available to give varying levels of support to Defra as the managing authority. Running alongside this governance structure is the UK LEADER+ network, which aims to 'facilitate co-operation and exchange of experience within the UK, as well as with the rest of Europe' (LEADER+ network). The UK network is supported by a constituent of The European Observatory Contact Point, which is responsible for the promotion of networking at the EU Level. It is organised and ran by the Kantor Group, a private international consultancy firm who were awarded the contract to do so worth EUR 8million (Kantor group). It should also be noted that at the regional level and the national level there is a programme monitoring committee (PMC), whose role is to primarily monitor the financial expenditure of the programme, although the regional groups do appear to offer some scope for general discussion and exchange of ideas, probably because there is wider participation from LAG managers and LAG members.

The legal basis for the LEADER+ programme lies in Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds. However, the regulation only refers to LEADER on three occasions, and on none of these is LEADER directly tied into the legal statute of the regulation itself. The regulation refers us to the guidelines set out by the Commission for the LEADER+ programme, and it is here that the implementation procedures that the LAGs and their managing authorities are expected to follow can be found. The guidelines refer to the strengths of the LEADER approach, its context and objectives, the importance attached to an area-based approach, and the programmes key actions. It also gave clear guidelines in respect of the balance of the LAG partnership, stating:

> Local action groups must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socioeconomic sectors in the territory concerned. At the decision-making level the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50 % of the local partnership (European Commission, 2000).

The guidelines, despite acknowledging the importance of the LEADER approach, and the need to mobilise local people, fail to empower the partnership process. Given that the guidelines are not deemed legally binding it is surprising that the Commission is not more ambitious in developing the partnership process attached to programme, given its importance to the LEADER approach. The guidelines state that the partnership process should be assessed in terms of its "transparency and clarity", along with the

"effectiveness of the operational" features of the partnership. This does little to defend the 'bottom-up' principles attached to LEADER, and ensures the member states can take a broad interpretation in implementing the programme and monitoring it.

> The relevance and effectiveness of the partnership is to be assessed in terms of the transparency and clarity in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities. The capacity of the partners to carry out the tasks assigned to them, and the effectiveness of the operational and decision making arrangements must be guaranteed (European Commission, 2000).

The governing structure, and the institutional makeup of the programme, is relatively light. This reflects the size of the programme in terms of its financial outputs. It is important to note that large parts of the programmes administration have in effect been contracted out to the Kantor Group, the LAGs and their managing authorities. The small nature of the programme should not, however, take anything away from the importance of this policy initiative, and its significance in terms of the new governance and the emergence of an area based approach in rural development. The ongoing history of *agricultural exceptionalism* within the EU has seen agriculture take priority over other rural economic activities, particularly in terms of how much financial support it receives, and the wider cultural significance it is perceived to have in rural areas. This history of exceptionalism gives the LEADER programme a level of precedence that we may find it does not deserve in the final analysis. A great deal of this precedence comes through the perceived benefits of networks and partnership to the development process, facilitated

through the new governance. However, whether these mechanisms can actually show an alternative means to secure the future of rural communities is far from clear, but what is clear is that LEADER remains a signifier of change for rural development across the EU.

The perceived benefits of the LEADER approach to rural development will be outlined in more depth below, but first it is necessary to outline the structure of the LAG partnership I chose to focus on in the South West region. I decided to focus on the North West Devon LAG, which from this point will be referred to as the focus LAG. The focus LAG, as it name clearly implies, covers the whole of North West Devon, with the exception of the town of Barnstaple. The territory of the focus LAG is not a district in its own right, but instead, as shown on the map below, combines both North Devon and Torridge districts.

Map 1. Districts of Devon

Source: www.devon.gov.uk

These districts are very similar in terms of their geography, demography and economic focus. The key features of the area are outlined in the *Appendices to North West Devon LEADER+ proposal* (2001). The most notable features include:

- A very rural area with a low population density and only 1% of land classified as in urban use.

- Access to basic services is poor with six rural wards showing in the worst 1% of wards in England having very limited access to GPs, Post Offices and public transport.

- Lower than average educational attainments both at GCSE and adult education levels. Particular difficulties centre on poor literacy and numeracy and access to further education.

- A low wage and therefore low GDP per capita economy.

- Has a high preponderance for micro businesses

- Is an area that attracts in-migration by those aged 50+ but suffers out migration from those under 25.

- In agriculture between 1995 and 1997 there has been a significant shift from full time employment into part time employment although the overall agricultural workforce has remained static.

- Tourism is a major industry with the main asset being the outstanding natural scenery.

- Has a high preponderance of agricultural holdings of less than 49 hectares (70%).

- There are significant issues surrounding the continued operation of small scale farming enterprises.

Like many rural areas the area of North West Devon faces a number of economic, social and cultural challenges. Agriculture has for a long time shaped the landscape and the

economy of the area, while also instilling strong cultural ties between communities and the land. It is increasingly apparent that agriculture must play a different role if the economy of the area is to grow and develop, and sustain itself well into the new century. LEADER provides some impetus in this direction through its focus on innovation, while also providing the means by which those micro businesses can grow and develop new ideas as part of an adaptive global economy.

As outlined in the introduction to my thesis the focus LAG is managed by RegCo, a not-for-profit organization that receives its core funding through the two district councils. RegCo had been fortunate enough to have had the experience of managing a LEADER II group prior to the current programme. As a development agency RegCo has also been responsible for a number of different projects within the area of North West Devon. The table below details this involvement.

Table 2. North Devon and Exmoor Regeneration Company (RegCo)
RegCo manages the North West Devon LEADER+ programme, which has supported over 50 projects, worth over £6.5m. This programme has supported over 450 individuals, businesses and community groups.
Acts as the accountable body for the Devon Renaissance Programme, around £7m of regional funding, which will bring in a minimum of £20m of funding from other sources.
Acts as the accountable body for the Ilfracombe and District Neighbourhood Management Programme, 'Transform', a seven-year programme, intended as a template for other communities.
Manages a Technical Assistance project to assist projects to apply for European Objective 2 funding - since March 2004, the project has supported 65 funding bids, contributing to the attraction of £14.5M funding in Torridge and North Devon.
Runs the Empowering Communities project in Ilfracombe, supporting the development of community enterprises, financial inclusion and community development.

Source: North Devon+

RegCo clearly holds a high level of experience of both public and private development work among its staff, and has is strongly established in the area of North West Devon. The current LEADER programme is headed by a team of three people that work within the premises of RegCo. This team was put together to manage the programme, and is headed by the LAG manager who was appointed at the outset of the current programme.

Any individual or organisation who resides within the area of a LAG can apply for LEADER funding. Project applications must meet the programmes broadly defined objectives, and although LEADER has a preference toward innovative ideas, many approved applications do mirror similar projects in other LAGs. There is also a

stipulation in the programme regulations that any project funding must not have a negative effect on other nearby projects, or businesses. This regulation is widely known across the LEADER network as *State Aid*.

There are a wide range of projects which have successfully gained LEADER funding. In North West Devon three project examples include: (1) the youth surfer development project, a transnational project linking Brittany in France, Donegal in Ireland and North West Devon through a training exchange programme for young surfers. 'The aim was to give selected young surfers an opportunity to learn all about the surf industry, improve their level of surfing and benefit from cultural exchanges. Emphasis was also placed on marine environmental awareness and sea safety issues' (North West Devon LEADER+, 2007); (2) project self-build, provides opportunities for 16-25 year olds to become 'trainees' in straw bale construction and sustainable housing techniques; (3) North West Devon Economic Partnership - Long Term Vision for Rural Regeneration, received funding to develop and document a long-term vision for the economic and social regeneration of the North West Devon Area. The series of grant schemes ran by the focus LAG have included: the business development fund, business start-up grant, local learning grant, community projects fund and the arts action grant, among others. These grants provided support to over 450 businesses, community projects and individuals (North West Devon LEADER+, 2007).

The LAG management team work full-time in guiding the project application process by ensuring applicants are aware of the programmes objectives, and meet its specified

targets**.** This team is also responsible for the monitoring of individual projects, and serves to ensure that a LAG is in place and working effectively, along with its small grant schemes that are ran in conjunction with the main programme. The LAG manager must also lead on producing a business plan for the group outlining information on the structure of the programme and its implementation. The focus LAG accommodates a partnership that operates in the form of a committee. It is chaired by an experienced chairperson, and project applications are considered through a process of deliberation and consensus. These meetings take place on a quarterly basis, and last two hours. The focus LAG is made up of local actors from the voluntary, business and public sectors, along with two members of RegCo, not including the LAG management team. The focus LAG also has statutory membership from four local district council representatives, although these representatives do not participate on a regular basis within the LAG meetings. There are also a series of sub-committees split by various themes that process the small grant applications. The following diagram shows the corporate structure of the LAG.

Figure 2. The corporate structure of the LAG

Statutory involvement — Torridge and North Devon District Councils

Accountable body — RegCo

Community involvement — Local Action Group (LAG) — Grant application sub-committees
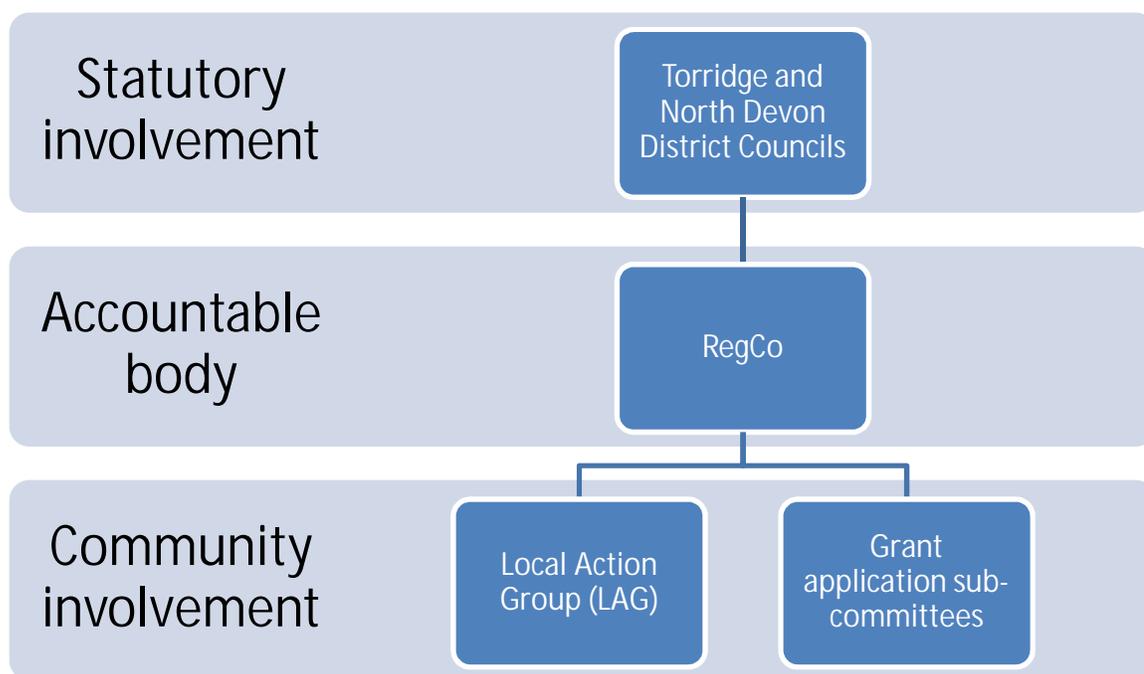
At the outset of the programme a number of letters were sent out to actors in the local community who might be interested in, or have a history of being involved in, governance partnerships and civic groups. Out of this process the focus LAG gained a great deal of support, although many of these calls of support did not come from people now involved in the focus LAG, and is indicative of the LAGs fluid membership over the course of the current programme. This fluidity comes about for a number of reasons, but quite often, as is shown in Chapter 6 people tend to find that other commitments get in the way of their participation with LEADER, such as work, family and their participation in other civic groups and partnerships. This is evident through the change of chairperson, and the need for the LAG manager to advertise for LAG members in the local press. This situation seemed to stem from changing personal circumstances rather

than any particular problems with the LAG itself. Within the focus LAG between 15 and 30 people generally turned up to the partnership meetings, and in theory any member of the local community could join the partnership. However, as I will show in chapter 6 the partnership process was relatively closed off from the general public, and in this sense the partnership operated more like a private committee. The focus LAG was seen by Defra and Government Office as a good example of an effective LAG. RegCo and the management team were held in high regard at the national and regional level because of the focus LAGs bureaucratic efficiency. However, the LAGs focus on efficiency and effective management appears to have taken away some of the emphasis within the LEADER programme on endogenous or bottom-up decision making functions. This point will be expanded more vigorously in chapter 6, but as a precursor to this I will now outline the importance of the 'bottom-up' approach, and the persuasive arguments in its favour as a source of rural development.

3.1 The birth of endogenous rural development

The timing of the introduction of the LEADER programme is seen as significant because 'It was introduced at a time when the process of 'globalization' was widely felt to be intensifying as a result of the collapse of the USSR both as a political reality and as an alternative model of social and economic organisation' (Bryden, 2006: 6). There was an increasing emphasis within rural policy on carving out a relationship between the local and global (ibid, 6). A common response to this challenge from local areas was to attempt to 'sell the local to the global' through market based strategies in an effort to attract

mobile, both public and private, investment (Peck and Tickell, 2002). According to Bryden

> 'Such 'beggar-thy-neighbour' strategies (to gain advantage at the expense of the other party), were increasingly doomed to failure, and rural development practitioners concluded that the competitive advantage of 'their' rural area increasingly depended on less mobile and less tangible resources which were locally rooted and were hence better protected from global competition' (2006: 6).

LEADER is then cited by many in EU policy making circles as part of a policy agenda to overcome the challenges of the global economy. This is based on a more strategic approach to governance that engages with the local level in an attempt to tame the implications of increasing liberalization and a global marketplace. LEADER has been used to reinforce 'local identity and self respect (cultural capital)', through the development of initiatives that have promoted 'regional products and local labelling, linked local sectors formerly isolated from each other such as farming and tourism, commercialised cultural and environmental assets such as nature parks and cultural festivals, developed new applications of information and communications technologies, and revived particular local skills such as boat building and stonewalling' (ibid, 6). There has clearly been an attempt through the LEADER programme to commodify all aspects of the rural economy, to give it a higher market value, by drawing on social capital, cultural capital, environmental capital and local knowledge capital (ibid, 6). In this

respect, LEADER represents an attempt to add value to rural products so that they are more attractive on a global market. At some point in this process the governing mechanisms have sought market solutions to socio-economic problems by directing policy down the cultural/social/environmental/natural capital route and through the extension of the rural policy network downwards to local actors and communities, while the implementation of LEADER represents the extension of these networks upwards to the EU, and its associated bodies.

The LEADER programme provides an example of the shifting nature of rural policy, and the changing ideology within the post-Fordist rural economy. LEADER promotes the principles of subsidiarity and partnership, principles not previously associated with policy implementation in rural areas. The 'corporate relationship' between agricultural ministries and farmers' unions, as will be discussed in chapter 5, has been cited as the main feature of power relations within the passing Fordist rural economy. However, within the post-Fordist rural economy these corporate relations are held to be gradually being broken down as formerly politically marginal actors (such as environmental groups or local grassroots organisations) are enrolled into policy-making and decision making networks (Wilson, 2004: 462; See Winter, 1996). This can be linked to broader notions of regulatory transformation in advanced capitalist societies as the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of accumulation takes place[6] (*ibid*, 462). Within this context commentators

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[6] The shift from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of accumulation represents a move away from the reliance on mass production as a means of achieving national economic prosperity, along with the focus on standardised, 'machine like' processes, towards flexible modes of production based upon a mobile technologically advanced workforce, adaptive in terms of both its size and output to the demands of the market. This shift has also seen a reduction in the influence of organised labour unions on the political system, while also heralding wider cultural influences throughout society such as changes within

have attempted to follow the changing levels and trajectories of governance that have resulted through the perceived empowerment of local stakeholders and the changing role of government within the policy making process (*ibid*, 462).

The principles of subsidiarity and partnership are supported through the 'bottom-up' approach to policy making 'supporting local solutions, helping local communities to play a fuller part in their affairs through capacity building and developing well-balanced, representative partnerships' (Defra, 2001). This process is facilitated through the LAGs, which are seen as a means to identify local needs, develop local strategy and select the projects to be implemented in their area. The LAG enters into a legally binding contract with Defra to ensure that each LAG is accountable and operated effectively. This structure, in theory, is a far cry from the corporate power structures associated with the passing Fordist mode of accumulation. The ethos of the LEADER programme sits well within the broader rural policy framework set out in the *Rural White Paper* (2000) and the *Rural Strategy* (2004)(See Lowe and Ward, 2001). However, whether in practice registers of power within the LEADER programme actually reflect this emerging ethos need to be questioned, along with the notion that this is a bottom-up policy through exploring the way power travels through this network.

The LEADER approach to rural development can be placed within the context of the 'new world order' through the evolution of the new governance within rural policy. This evolution has been heavily influenced by a number of policy crises, many of which can be

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communities and to their traditions, changing educational demands and career opportunities, and the opening-up of society to wider cultural diversity (Bullock and Trombley, 2000).

linked to the opening up of markets and policy arenas to multiple scales of influence. This has resulted in a political system characterised by the potential for disaggregated complexity (this point is developed further in chapters four and seven). It would be naive to look at LEADER and the focus LAG, without placing it within this wider perspective. The focus LAG is part of a much wider story, and it is this story which will invariably dictate as to whether the programme is a success or not. Given the linkages between the global policy environment, New Labour's policy agenda and the emergence of a 'rural' as opposed to an 'agri-centric' policy arena there is a great deal of significance in tracing the evolving governance framework and the rhetoric used to outline this within the policy sphere. LEADER may well be an anomaly in many respects. It differs markedly through its focus on endogenous rural development and extensive network arrangements throughout the EU, compared with other rural policies. However, there is also a strong argument that sees LEADER as a testing ground for the future of rural policy in Europe, a way forward in this increasingly contested policy arena. This point is confirmed through the mainstreaming of the LEADER approach in the new Rural Development Regulation (2007-2013).

The central rationale for the LEADER programme and rural development more generally, within the EU, is the existence of socio-economic disparities among regions that could cause inconsistency in the functioning of the Single Market, which the EU embarked on in 1987 (Van Depoele and Ebru, 2006: 21). It was this rationale that led to the development of economic and social cohesion within the EU through the Single European Act (1987), and this commitment was subsequently strengthened through the

Maastricht Treaty (1993) (ibid, 3). The Maastricht Treaty laid the legal basis for EU rural development policies, placing them squarely with the EU's efforts to achieve economic and social cohesion by adding the words "including rural areas" (ibid, 3).

The need to improve the economic situation in rural regions, in order to facilitate cohesion policy was initially expressed through the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP sought to achieve social equity for farmers and improve efficiencies within the agricultural sector paying no reference to other economic sectors, or indeed the occupants of rural areas outside of the agricultural sector (Gray, 2001:34). The policy to assist rural society solely through supporting the development of those involved in the agricultural industry was under increasing pressure throughout the 1980's, as calls for a shift away from a sectoral approach, towards a territorial one, became prominent.

The publication of 'The Future of Rural Society' (European Commission, 1988) recognised these calls for change by bringing into focus the heterogeneity of rural areas, and its 'complex economic and social fabric' (European Commission, 1988: 15). A key feature of this document was its call for an 'area based integrated approach' to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well being of rural areas. Rural areas were defined as territorial entities with a coherent economic and social structure of diversified economic activities[7] (European Commission, 1988: 5, 16). The document

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[7] Rural policy in the EU remains highly sectoral, and although area based initiatives have found their feet, through the CAP, a sectoral approach still dominates the rural policy arena. This approach, despite the reduced share of economic activity represented by agriculture, is enforced through the perception that the interdependencies between agriculture, natural resources, landscape and cultural heritage (i.e. the multifunctional nature of agriculture) means that agriculture still has a valuable contribution to make, and must be seen in this broader context (Van Depoele and Ebru, 2006: 5).

recognised that local communities must be more widely engaged in order to help identify how those problems facing rural areas can be best tackled (European Commission, 1988). Wider community engagement was seen as the best means of avoiding 'the number of errors of diagnosis that are all too common when planning is carried out from the outside' (European Commission, 1988:62).

The Cork Declaration in 1996, although not a formal policy paper, reinforced the need for a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach, and importantly the principle of subsidiarity was attached to rural development, focusing on the need for an emphasis on participation and a 'bottom-up' approach as a means 'to harnesses the creativity and solidarity of rural communities' (European Commission, 1996). The results of subsequent reform efforts through Agenda 2000 and the 2003 CAP reform have seen a further emphasis on assisting a heterogeneous rural economy and rural communities and not just farming. Nevertheless, farmers and agri-environmental schemes still take up the vast majority of funding for rural development through the CAP .

Coinciding with the publication of the 'The Future of Rural Society' in 1988, the EU Structural Funds underwent reform, which resulted in the emergence of four key principles for future structural intervention: concentration, partnership, programming and additionality (Bache and George, 2006: 465). *Concentration* focused funds on areas of greatest need, and it was through this principle that the identification of 'objective regions' took place; *programming* required regions to develop strategic multi-annual plans to ensure coherence between projects; *partnership* required that funds be

administered through regional partnerships within each state, consisting of representatives of national government, regional (or local) government and the European Commission; and the principle of *additionality* ensures that EU Structural Funds may not replace the national expenditure of a Member State (Bache and George, 2006).

The LEADER Initiative was first introduced into those regions identified as 'objective' and lagging behind other regions within the EU**.** The emergence of the LEADER programme, and the key principles attached to endogenous rural development can be associated with a set of theoretical and policy changes within the field of regional policy. In fact, it is difficult to ignore the influence, in particular, of these theoretical influences on the development of those features that make up the LEADER approach. As such, I will now briefly discuss the links that should be made between this theoretical output and the LEADER approach.

3.2 Theoretical underpinnings to 'bottom-up' rural development in the EU

The theoretical underpinnings of endogenous development rest on the broad assumption that 'the capacity of any given territory to embed increasingly global processes of economic development partly rests on sub-national, social, cultural and institutional forms and supports' (Van Depoele and Ebru, 2006: 6; See also Amin, 1999; Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Storper, 1997). This set of work argues that economic development is facilitated by networking and interaction between a plural set of actors that represent business and non-capital interests and relations (Van Depoele and Ebru, 2006: 6). It is

argued that through these interactions, and through the process of coalition building, rogue behaviour is limited, while the identification of a common territorial agenda is given a more coherent platform. Furthermore, the consideration of rural space as a territorial identity facilitates the construction of a local or regional economy made up of a plurality of economic concerns (ibid, 6).

The bottom-up approach to economic development represents a shift away from regional policy based on Keynesian economics, and more recently the neo-liberal approach to economic development (Amin, 1999: 365)[8]. The Keynesian approach is characterised by firm-centred, standardized, incentive-based and state driven initiatives that were common in the majority of advanced economies after the 1960's (ibid, 365). In terms of regional development, the passing Keynesian system focused on 'income redistribution and welfare policies to stimulate demand in the less favoured regions (LFRs) and the offer of state incentives (from state aid to infrastructural improvements) to individual firms to locate in such regions' (ibid, 365). The neo-liberal approach, by placing its faith in the market, has sought to deregulate markets, most notably in relation to labour and capital, and to promote entrepreneurship in the LFRs through incentives and investments in training, transport and communication infrastructure, and technology (ibid, 365). Both these approaches, despite their fundamental differences over the necessity of state intervention and over the 'equilibrating powers' of the market, share a common belief that top-down policies can be applied universally to all types of region (ibid, 365).

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[8] This development has also been reflected in the 'new urban politics' with its focus on local economic development as opposed to the welfarist orientation of urban political institutions during the post-war period, and is further evidence of a changing global order (For an account of this see Harvey, 1989; and Brenner, 2003).

Keynesian regional policies, without doubt, helped to increase employment and income in the LFRs, but they failed to secure increases in productivity comparable to those in the more prosperous regions and, more importantly, they did not succeed in encouraging self-sustaining growth based on the mobilization of local resources and interdependencies (by privileging non-indigenous sectors and externally-owned firms). The 'market therapy' has threatened a far worse outcome, by reducing financial transfers which have proven to be a vital source of income and welfare in LFRs, by exposing the weak economic base of the LFRs to the chill wind of ever enlarging free market zones or corporate competition and by failing singularly to reverse the flow of all factor inputs away from the LFRs. In short, the choice has been between dependent development or no development (ibid, 165).

The emphasis within rural economic development has been largely shaped by Keynesian welfarism under the rubric of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Even with the advent of neo-liberalism rural economic development has diverged little from a set of founding principles that place agriculture at the heart of the rural economy. This made rural economic development a one sided affair in that the level of support for agriculture was not matched among other economic sectors within 'rural' areas. This was a huge oversight by EU policy makers, and meant that many economic interests outside of agriculture, within areas defined as 'rural', did not receive the same level of support,

despite the growing realisation that agriculture no longer dominated regional economies as it had in the past. It was the recognition of this situation that led to calls for a more area based approach and the changing rhetoric, previously discussed, at the EU level.

The failings of rural policy within the EU reflect the wider failings of regional economic development found through the application of both neo-liberal and Keynesian approaches, dependent upon a top-down approach applied in a universal manner. As a response to the failures of regional economic development, an alternative approach, informed by the experience of a number of prosperous regions characterised by strong local economic interdependencies (e.g. Italian industrial districts, Baden Württemberg), sought to mobilize the endogenous potential of a region, building on regional strengths as a means to promote economic development (ibid, 366). This approach is not based on a single coherent economic theory, but instead on a recognition of 'the collective or social foundations of economic behaviour' (ibid, 366). The recognition of the importance of collective action on economic development has its roots in institutional economics, from which three sets of ideas are relevant here.

Firstly, economic sociology offers the idea that markets are socially constructed (See Bagnasco, 1985) and that economic behaviour is embedded in networks of interpersonal relations. Network properties, such as mutuality, trust and cooperation, or indeed the opposite of these can have a significant effect on economic outcomes (see Dore, 1983; Granovetter, 1985, 1995; Grabher, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995; Misztal, 1996). Granovetter contends that weak ties offer more dynamism than strong ties in economic development.

Social structure, especially in the form of social networks, affects economic outcomes for three main reasons. First, social networks affect the flow and the quality of information. Much information is subtle, nuanced and difficult to verify, so actors do not believe impersonal sources and instead rely on people they know. Second, social networks are an important source of reward and punishment, since these are often magnified in their impact when coming from others personally known. Third, trust, by which I mean the confidence that others will do the "right" thing despite a clear balance of incentives to the contrary, emerges, if it does, in the context of a social network (Granovetter, 1995: 33)

The ability of social networks to aid economic development has been reinforced by the increasingly influential actor-network theory (ANT) (Amin, 1999: 367), proponents, of which, seek to look at the relationships of power across networks by stressing the contingent relationships between 'people and things' that determine social and economic outcomes (Latour, 1986; Callon, 1991).

Second, comes the idea from evolutionary and cognitive psychology (Cosmides and Tooby, 1994; Plotkin, 1994) and the behavioural tradition in economics (Simon, 1959) that across networks different actor rationalities produce different forms of economic behavior and decision-making. The proponents of these ideas distinguish between

instrumentalist, procedural and recursive rationality. An instrumentalist approach favours reactive responses to problems, but these responses tend to be framed by rule-following behavior (Amin, 1999: 367). This kind of response is not held to be effective within changing and unpredictable environments given its rule driven nature (ibid, 367). Procedural rationality, on the other hand, 'seeks to adapt to the environment, drawing upon perceptive powers and generally more complex cognitive arrangements for solving problems', whereby possible solutions are put forward based on perception and conscious design (ibid, 367). Both these rationalities offer a problem-solving perspective based upon an 'invariant' view of the world , in that problems are always expected and responded to, as and when they arrive, rather than seeking them out before they do so (ibid, 367). Recursive rationality is based on the assumption that the particular environment that problems emerge from can be anticipated and to some extent manipulated (ibid, 367). As such, this form of rationality supports creative actor networks with the capacity to shape the environment through its ability to think and act strategically (ibid, 367). It is these rationalities that are seen to frame 'the creative, learning and adaptive capacities of economic agents' within their constituent actor-networks (ibid, 367).

Third, from Hodgson's relatively recent explication on the importance of 'old' institutional economics (Hodgson, 1988; 1998) comes the proposition that the economy is shaped by complex and enduring collective forces. Hodgson shows how these collective forces represent an instituted process, not a mechanical system or set of individual preferences (Hodgson, 1998: 179). These collective forces 'include formal institutions

such as rules, laws and organizations, as well as informal or tacit institutions such as individual habits, group routines and social norms and values' (Amin, 1999: 367). Under these terms institutions can be formed around 'micro-level' interrelationships, as much as through those rules attached to large organizations. As such, institutions are formed around the various means by which information is communicated (Hodgson, 1998: 183). Hodgson highlights that 'regularities or stability at the systemic level may arise not despite, but because of variations at the micro-level. In complex systems, macro-stability may depend on micro-chaos. Or systemic constraints may prevail over micro-variations' (ibid, 171). It is important to recognize that in the field of development these institutions can be seen as either a template for effective communication and development or represent a constraint upon it (Amin, 1999: 367). The endurability and framing influence of institutions over individuals and actor networks forces a recognition of the path- and context-dependent nature of economic life (ibid, 367). From a governance perspective one might conclude 'the wide field of institutions beyond markets, firms and states … need to be addressed by policies seeking to alter the economic trajectory' (ibid, 367).

These three perspectives, founded on institutionalist thought, represent a set of important principles that have heralded an 'institutionalist turn' in regional development studies. There is clearly a preference, through these perspectives, firstly, for policy actions that are designed to strengthen networks of association, instead of actions that focus on the individual (Amin, 1999: 368). Secondly, the role of policy action may cover the encouragement of 'voice, negotiation and the emergence of recursive rationalities, in order to secure strategic vision, learning and adaptation' (ibid, 368). Third, there is an

acknowledgement that effective economic governance extends beyond both the state and market institutions, and as a result there is a focus on the need to mobilize a plurality of autonomous organizations (ibid, 368). Fourth, the stress on intermediate forms of governance extends to a preference for building up local 'institutional thickness' through systems of support, such as political institutions and social citizenship (ibid, 368). These systems are often aligned with network forms of governance, which have developed out of the inadequacies of state and market led forms of governance. This relationship is developed in a later chapter. Finally, a key institutionalist concern is that solutions or action must 'be context specific and sensitive to local path-dependencies' (ibid, 368). It is from this that the concern with endogenous or 'bottom-up' forms of development has found theoretical support. At this point it is worth highlighting that although such forms of development offer a great deal of potential, the process of design and implementation is often steered by government bodies in some form, and their perception of local path dependencies are subjected to wider discourses and influences. In sum, identifying these dependencies gives 'the powerful' the ability to construct the context of development.

The institutional turn in regional studies has been heavily influenced by these underlying concepts, which have gone on to influence the emergence of a new set of ideas and policy in relation to regional development, in conjunction with a series of studies on dynamic regional economies and industrial districts, outlined above. The basis upon which these ideas have been built rests on the thinking that the region exists as an important site for the growth of economic capital within the increasingly competitive global economy (Scott, 1995; Cooke, 1997). Two important areas of thought have emerged in line with

this premise. The first, explores the advantages of the spatial clustering of interrelated industries, skilled labour and technological innovations, in terms of growth and competiveness based on the enhanced ability for related economic concerns to be able to exchange resources (Porter, 1994; Krugman, 1995). This line of thought has been criticized for failing to develop an explanation of the sources of those advantages emanating from the spatial clustering of interrelated economic concerns (Martin and Sunley, 1996). This point has been taken on by a second strand of theorists, made up largely of economic geographers, who have attempted to show that the source of any advantages lie in the character of social, cultural and institutional arrangements (Amin and Thrift, 1995; Sunley, 1996; Storper, 1997). Storper (1997) is a key exponent of this view by suggesting that a key feature of those places, in which globalization has resulted in positive outcomes, has been their 'relational assets' or 'untraded interdependencies'. These resources draw on the social properties of networks in which economic agents operate, and 'include tacit knowledge based on face-to-face exchange, embedded routines, habits and norms, local conventions of communication and interaction, reciprocity and trust based on familiarity and so on' (Amin, 1999: 369). These two strands of thought, at the heart of the 'new regionalism', help develop the importance of regional level industrial configurations and institutional arrangements in securing economic success in a globalizing economy (ibid, 370). These ideas have stretched beyond regional policy into the area of rural development, as witnessed through the principles attached to the LEADER programme.

There are a number of commentators who have contested the claims made through these theoretical perspectives. Criticism is based on the reality and desirability of the shift towards an endogenous approach and towards an increasing role for local actors in the decision making process (Outlined in Terluin, 2001: 49-51). For example, Slee (1994:193-4) rejects the existence of an endogenous development model despite acknowledging that development agencies have recognized that more sustainable development gains are likely to be found by encouraging local entrepreneurship. He warns against over emphasizing the capacity of endogenous development by indicating the need to recognize that the same means of infrastructure development, grant aid, loan finance, and support services, as in the exogenous development model, are employed. As such, he contends that the shift from a broad strategy towards support for local entrepreneurs and partnerships does not alter the fundamental nature of the development process. In sum, 'external forces remain the principal determinants whereas endogenous forces may colour the nature of the process' (Terluin, 2001: 49-51). Along similar lines, Vanhove (1999:330) argues that an endogenous development strategy does not need to be perceived in terms of an alternative, but as a complementary strategy to that of exogenous development. Efforts to attract projects from other regions and continents remain important and should not be neglected; and therefore, continued attention should be given to marketing the region and sustaining efforts to bring inward investment.

Bowles and Gintis discuss development in terms of 'community governance'. This offers solutions to problems that cannot be handled by individuals acting alone or by markets and governments (2002: 421). Their discussion centres on the role of 'community

governance' within economic development. They are keen to stress that the problems of social exclusion can be enforced through community governance. They state, 'Communities work because they are good at enforcing norms, and whether this is a good thing depends on what the norms are' (ibid, 428).

This point enforces the idea that collective forms of capacity building, through participative forms of decision making are conditioned through social relations. Within this framework these relations are able to enforce norms, questioning the altruistic nature of 'bottom-up' rural development. There is then a need to question LEADER's 'bottom-up' approach on a number of fronts.

In the case of LEADER there have been various studies already undertaken on the potential of this approach within the realm of rural development that will be discussed below. These studies have increasingly shown that tensions exist between the endogenous and exogenous elements within the approach. Despite an emphasis on endogenous rural development, the LEADER approach attempts to bring together both endogenous and exogenous features. The effects of this will be explored in time, and I will begin here by looking to those accounts of the LEADER approach already in circulation.

3.3 The LEADER experience

The EU's approach to the Structural Funds through the notions of local participation and local empowerment are now widely known across the EU. However, various analyses of LEADER groups show that the emphasis on a bottom-up approach in rural development is reliant upon a set of cognitive governing processes that are not easily discernable among those actors along the LEADER network, and as a result these processes are little understood and often poorly applied (Mannion, 1996; Barke and Newton, 1997; Ward and McNicolas, 1998; Saraceno, 1999; Storey, 1999; Bruckmeier, 2000; Clark *et al.,* 2000; Ray, 2000; Scott, 2004). This is no surprise given the confusion that exists around key concepts like 'governance', 'partnership' and 'community engagement' within the LEADER programme. As we will see in Chapter 6, members of the focus LAG were as equally unaware of the type of processes that might ensure social mobilisation, and in turn an effective 'bottom-up' governing process. In the same chapter I will explore the tendency for powerful groups to reinforce the current 'status quo', and ensure their dominant position is not threatened. This is achieved by withholding information, and ensuring the partnership process is protracted, and as closed as possible.

Commentators have described the nature and extent of participation within the LEADER programme as 'variable', contending that it 'may well be more valid to view current developments in terms of a process of incorporation rather than a move to a 'bottom-up' participatory model' (Storey, 1999: 307). This gives the impression that powerful groups at the local level are engaging with those ideas pertaining to bottom-up forms of

development and social mobilisation, and are incorporating new deliberative practices in to the decision making process, but there is little impetus to ensure that these practices are effective. This critique may stem from the way local partnerships have been allowed to develop their own governing processes on the condition that they follow national/regional and/or EU financial, administrative, monitoring and evaluation procedures and criteria (Terluin, 2001: 49-51). These bureaucratic requirements imply that 'ultimate' power is largely retained at the national level, camouflaged behind a rhetoric of participation, empowerment and subsidiarity (ibid, 49-51). This 'reality' supports claims that 'it may be more valid to view current developments in terms of a process of incorporating local activism in a top-down strategy than a move to a bottom-up approach' (ibid, 49-51). In essence, there is a need to distinguish 'rhetoric from reality', and investigate the strategic implications of these rhetorical claims.

On reflecting on these claims it has been argued that the LEADER programme represents a process, subsumed within wider state processes, whereby the 'principle of command is being replaced by one of competition and negotiation as the system shifts from hierarchy to market' (Osti, 2000: 172).

> LEADER may be an instance in which the regulation of the development
> of peripheral areas based on public command or neo-corporatist
> agreements gradually gives way to something similar to market
> regulation, so that the public authority does no more than establish the

rules with which a multiplicity of public and private actors must comply,

if fair completion is to be ensured (ibid, 173).

A defining feature of the of the LAG partnerships has become the level of participation each LAG has sought. Osti has identified two polar models through his empirical research on the type of LAG partnerships evident in Italy. The first is identified as a *technocratic model*. This model is seen as a means 'to stimulate the rapid and effective decision-making that springs from the 'simultaneous' participation of the main actors involved in the development process' (1999: 177). Participation is developed here as an 'instrument' in order 'to reduce transaction costs by eliminating certain bureaucratic procedures, or as the power of ex-post veto exercised by some or other interest group' (ibid, 177). In this context, partnership resembles a corporate team, that has the ability to take decisions in 'real time' (ibid, 177). The second, is the pluralist model, which seeks to bring about the participation of an extremely broad range of actors (ibid, 177). This increased level of participation is seen as a means to bring out the needs of the population, producers and excluded groups within a 'community' more distinctly than in the past (ibid, 177-178). The technocratic model, or at least many of it traits, can be identified throughout a large proportion of these partnerships. This system is facilitated at the EU level by only passing general guidelines to the member states, and hence, allowing the LEADER programme to be implemented at their own discretion (Ray, 2000: 165-166).

It comes as no surprise, given the technocratic nature of a large number of LAG partnerships, that the partnership process attached to LEADER has been criticized. Shortall found that the tendency to see partnership as empowering, based on the assumption that such partnerships are locally based and as a result shift power away from central bodies, is misplaced (2004: 120). She found that a critical 'feature of the partnerships studied is that they do not emerge from the grassroots. They are initiated at a higher level by statutory organisations' (ibid, 120). As a result, 'their make up is predetermined; usually including a mixture of elected representatives, the private sector and the voluntary sector' (ibid, 120).

> The state chooses those external agencies that seem most appropriate to the delivery of particular governmental objectives and programmes. There is evidence that power struggles, contradictions and dominant ideologies are transferred by the state to the sub-national levels in how these structures are completed. There are groups that are rarely represented, and an exercise of power is evident in the very construction of the partnership (ibid, 120).

External influence has also been seen as result of restraints enforced through administrative processes. Barke and Newton (1997) have commented on the short time period local partnerships have had to put forward their business plans, and the general requirements to support their application for the LEADER programme. This may be one factor (among many) resulting in the insufficient form these partnerships have taken in

terms of engaging widespread local interest (ibid, 337). In such cases, the business plans have been found to be the product of external influences, rather than the product of the local area (ibid, 337). This was evident in LEADER I where there was an overarching trend within the LAGs concerning the desire to promote rural tourism, often with little reflection on local needs and concerns (ibid, 337).

Mannion reinforces the general critique of the area-based partnership approach by highlighting 'the danger of local development ending up in the hands of the few' (1996: 3).

> A small group of able people who have the skills and experience to carry forward local development may continue to do so with little or no reference to the members of the community which they purport to represent. The challenge for LEADER groups and partnership companies is how to avoid institutionalizing a system of 'devolved patronage' (ibid, 3).

This statement can be related to wider concerns over the democratic legitimacy of such partnerships within the governance framework. Fundamentally, it also highlights that the LEADER partnerships represent a set of intricate relationships between a range of different actors across the LEADER network. The 'bottom-up' principle at the heart of the LEADER approach can be challenged at any number of sites across this network, from the local to the supranational, especially given the flexibility enshrined within this

approach. It may come as no surprise that there have been calls to ensure that the partnership approach is facilitated by rules of engagement at the local level (Scott, 2004: 58). It might also be appropriate to instigate a more valid appraisal of what constitutes endogenous rural development, and what level of engagement is sufficient in order to achieve this. Once such appraisals have been made, we can begin to show that the technocratic approach followed by many managing authorities at the local level is anything but endogenous.

Furthermore, the LEADER programme has been criticised because of the way the discourse elides community with territory as an unproblematic and homogenous 'community of place' (Shucksmith, 2000: 208). According to this view there is a tendency within endogenous development to emphasize communities as territories rather than focus on the individuals within these territories. Community is then seen as a group of people living in the same geographical area with common interests and a strong sense of 'community spirit' (*ibid*, 209). It is within such a context that differences according to gender, ethnicity and class are obscured (*ibid*, 209). Furthermore, this territorial approach can also lead to the masking of inequalities and power relations between social actors due to the focus on consensus within these communities (*ibid*, 209). Although the LEADER objectives refer to 'communities' it is still far from clear that LAGs are in fact able to represent different communities or more importantly individuals within these communities. Ray argues that symbolic construction is at the heart of the LEADER programme.

Local cultural identity, far from being a fixed or reactionary concept, can form the basis of a dynamic, 'progressive' and flexible approach to endogenous development in the era of globalisation. [In LEADER,] the shift to the territorial approach brings the act of territorial construction to the forefront of the development process…It is territories and cultures that are key to reflexive development (Ray, 1999a: 526).

The symbolic construction of LAG territories, that has the effect of eliding community with territory, immediately threatens the potential benefits that may have ensued from the LEADER approach. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the focus LAG, covering North West Devon, encompasses the territories of Torridge and North Devon District Councils, but does not include the town of Barnstaple. This area covers a population of approximately 125,000 people. Chapter 6 shows that this territorial construction has had the effect of reinforcing a set of dominant power relations that do not represent the territory. As a result the development process is starved of potentially valuable forms of cultural capital. This implies that even if a territory does encompass a 'community' or group of communities theoretically, the rationalities and the interactions of power across the LEADER network ultimately influence whether this network is closed or open to certain groups within the territory. As such, these territorial constructions have the effect of hiding the rationalities and interactions that represent the LEADER network and its endogenous web of relations. This point further recommends a network approach to the study of the new governance.

3.4 Interpretations of LEADER and its Governance

The governance of the LEADER programme has been interpreted in a number of different ways within the academic literature. Nevertheless, it is broadly framed in two distinct ways. The first sees LEADER governance as that framed through the 'LEADER approach' to governance. This approach, set out at the outset of this chapter, sees LEADER as a largely endogenous process, whereby local communities draw upon community resources to build capacity and develop local economies. The second, interprets LEADER governance by linking in a set of wider influences from the local to the global level. Much of these interpretations attach a great deal of significance to the fact that LEADER is a supranational policy arrangement which draws upon countless different policy discourses. In this light, the endogenous nature of the LEADER approach to governance is brought in to question through a diverse set of different influences that are deemed to effect and shape governance arrangements in multiple different ways across different nations, regions and LAG territories. As a means to reinforce this point it is important to outline the existing interpretations of LEADER governance so that these can be drawn upon when framing the LEADER narrative constructed in this thesis.

Bocher (2008) begins "The main question is whether or not 'regional governance' is just a fashionable scientific term. Can we really observe impacts of the regional governance discussion on policies for sustainable regional development in rural areas in Germany?" In his response to this question Bocher develops a complex multifaceted view of LEADER governance. LEADER is constructed as a "combination of hierarchical top-

down steering (government) and a bottom-up approach (governance)" (ibid, 385). Bocher argues that regional cooperation is dependent on incentives from the outside and political support. As a result, local government and institutions play a pivotal role in whether programmes like LEADER are a success or not. He states,

> The practical implementation of regional governance faces particular problems as a result of the tense relationship between the network structures of regional partnerships that it supports and the traditional structures of the German federal political system, as well as local government level (governance versus government). The LAG's lack of formal legitimacy seems to weaken the governance structures in LEADER+. Nevertheless, the EU's hierarchical steering strengthens regional governance, as it gives an incentive, through financial means, for government and administration on a local level to participate in LEADER+, despite their reservations and conflicts (ibid, 384).

The potential complexity of network structures at the regional or local level is brought to our attention. The level of complexity associated with the new governance is not predefined, nor is it easily discernible. Adapting network structures to hierarchical government is not a linear process, and it is doubtful whether the complexity inherent in network structures can ever be truly reconciled by hierarchical steering. This is a point that will be considered in greater detail later in the thesis.

Ray (2001: 280) builds upon this by offering a slightly different focus. He describes how "local and extralocal forces interact in order to create rural development entities each with their own identities". The focus is different, but the implications of this statement are very similar to that drawn up by Bocher. The interactions that take place at the local and extralocal level shape the new governance, in the same way that interactions between network and hierarchical structures shape the nature of governance. Crucially, Ray acknowledges "that local development initiatives are also, and inevitably, tied-in to all manner of policy and public funding frameworks, capitalist relationships on regional, national, European and even global scales, and to global social movements such as environmentalism" (ibid, 280). At this juncture it is worth highlighting this fact and stating that hierarchical state government does not only have to reside alongside local network structures. Governments are interconnected to a series of networks that stretch from the local to the global level. Economic and regional integration at both the supranational and global level means that governments have to reside alongside much wider and more powerful network structures as part of the global financial system. As a result Ray outlines the need to be aware "of the danger of subscribing too readily to the rural development rhetoric which surrounds the LEADER approach for, in the political economy of 'rural development Europe,' the potential exists for new power constellations to emerge" (ibid, 286).

Ray goes on and links the 'new rural development model' with Taylor's (1995, 2000) research on global cities.

Global cities emerge not so much as a function of the accumulation of more inhabitants than their rivals but through an accumulation of superior commercial capacity, especially in the service sector. Cities are connected to each other and to their respective global regions through commercial networks and it is the relative net flows of business volume, public/private investment and aid funds and information ('intelligence') through these networks to city-nodes which dictate a city's position in the hierarchy of commercial power and influence. The political economy of global cities in the era of contemporary globalization provides us with three important notions. First, commercial vibrancy is a function not solely, or even primarily, of local enterprise creation but of the collective ability of a city to create connectivity with other nodes in networks so as to be able to profit from net inflows. Second, this results in an hierarchy of city-nodes. Third, the logic of this international connectivity is that the opportunities for a city's development are not restricted to within its regional or national boundaries. Global cities do not (or no longer) emerge as a function of 'central place theory'; they can be centres for distant global regions (for example, London's relationship to the African and Middle East regions). (Ray, 2001: 286).

Ray goes onto argue that rural territories have the same potential to position themselves and take advantage of overlapping network structures. The rural 'territories' of Europe

will develop at different rates in this analogy, and 'growth' will be dependent on a territories ability to take advantage of network arrangements. The most successful of these will presumably be those that can infiltrate global networks and markets. Some territories will be better placed to do this than others, and undoubtedly in those territories that are well placed to enter the global market place, hierarchical structures of government will be increasingly challenged.

Buller (2002) also refers to the tensions that exist within the LEADER approach to governance in his study of the programme in France.

> [T]he 'bottom up' philosophy and territorial focus that underlie LEADER have arguably created a series of tensions both in a horizontal sense, between spaces, territories and political or local administrative structures, and in a vertical sense, between local and extra-local forces, be they regional, national or European (ibid, 191).

In addition, Buller outlines how endogenous responses to rural development continue to be dependent on exogenous policy frameworks (ibid, 197). These policy frameworks are framed by multiple interests, within and beyond the state. The governance of LEADER in this interpretation is clearly constructed to show that the impacts or success of endogenous rural development is conditioned by a complex set of local and extralocal governance mechanisms and influences. Buller supports this point, stating "decentralization has had complex and often contradictory impacts upon local

government and territorial capacities leading in some domains to a reinforcement of State roles, in others to a more genuine subsidiarity" (ibid, 197). This reflects the opportunity for territories to position themselves within new network structures, both vertical and horizontal. For those territories without the capacity or desire to reposition themselves within the new world order there appears to be a tendency to continue to depend on the state, and state led governing processes.

Buller also argues that the shift from LEADER I to LEADER II, which brought about a new role for regional authorities in coordinating the LEADER programme[9], has seen the de-localisation and de-Europeanization of the programme.

> This, one might argue, has provoked, first, a de-localisation of the policy, in that local territories become the instruments of a broader region-wide policy space whose dynamics and concerns are arguably less 'endogenous,' and second, and perhaps paradoxically, a de-Europeanization in that the formerly direct links with the European Commission and other leader territories within the Union now pass through the regional echelon which, as has been shown above, becomes the primary administrative framework. The conflict here is between two dynamics; the need to find a suitable territorial focus for

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[9] The shift from LEADER I to LEADER II gave saw regional authorities across the EU take responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the LEADER programme. Prior to this the LEADER programme was based on a direct relationship between the Commission and each individual LAG. This transition is discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis. In general terms this transition is significant because it strengthened the role of the state in coordinating and governing the LEADER programme.

social organization and partnership and the need to maintain a suitable

mode of State regulation (ibid, 197).

This transition represents an interesting phase in the history of the LEADER programme. However, Bocher's work outlined above on the LEADER+ programme implies that the potential for 'territories' or LAG's to position themselves within wider network structures has not been limited by this shift to regional governing structures, and by the 'loosening' of ties with the Commission.

Lee et al. (2005: 227) highlight the complexity of structures across Europe and the effect they have on the LEADER programmes governance: "[I]t is necessary to be aware of the context of governance within which development takes place. There are a variety of national and local structures in Europe that affect development processes in different ways". Shucksmith (2009) outlines how LEADER is much more than simply a new approach to rural governance.

> [I]nitiatives such as the EU's LEADER programme might be recast explicitly as a transnational experiment in doing 'disintegrated rural development', addressing the challenges of neo-endogenous rural development, multi-scalar governance, an enabling, generative state and the transformation of mainstream policies (2009: 1).

LEADER is then constructed as a 'catch-all' approach to governance. The LEADER approach based on this understanding is designed to mitigate forces emanating from all possible multi-scalar governance channels, while also providing a new platform for participative policy-making. In this respect the LEADER programme is very ambitious, but success is dependent on the ability of the LAG's to position themselves within those network structures that provide opportunity to break away from state led governing norms.

Lee et al.'s interpretation of those influences on the LEADER approach to governance is supported by Marsden (1998).

> [W]e have to conceive rural spaces as ensembles of local and non-local connections, of combinations of local actions and actions 'at a distance', situated in regional economies and different institutional contexts. In this sense, different rural spaces have different combinations of networks which they are connected. In developing an understanding of these we not only have to consider the lateral or spatial degree of differentiation (i.e. between the preserved and contested bits of the countryside). It is also necessary to combine this with an analysis to the 'vertical' chains of connection which are incorporated in each, through, for instance, the largely 'at a distance' food chain relationships, or the wider markets of rural consumer demand associated with housing, tourism and leisure (1998: 109).

The linkages different rural areas make with wider network structures in the 'differentiated countryside' is highly varied. This means the governance of rural areas is incredibly varied and conditioned by the nature of particular rural economies, their cultures, traditions and their overall ability to position themselves within new and varied social, economic and political network structures. Goodwin (1998) draws upon Jessop's notion of 'tangled hierarchies' to further pay lip-service to the complex web of interdependencies that frame the new rural governance. Goodwin outlines how this has enabled "actors at the local level have…formed a number of coalitions and partnerships which have also transformed the institutional structure of government.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the current LEADER programme through the basic principles and structures of the focus LAG; the exogenous influences on the birth of this approach; the theoretical underpinnings to endogenous rural development found within regional development studies; and through a set of pre-existing work on the LEADER programme and its governance. By exploring these narratives I have been able to draw out some of the tensions within the LEADER approach between structure and agency, theory and practice, and endogenous and exogenous influences on development. These tensions represent the rationalities and socially contingent processes behind LEADER and the mobile interactions between discourses of power, institutions and structures, cultures and individual agency. In other words, the LEADER approach is framed exponentially by a

number of different possible components, resulting in possible variations in form. The variation between LAGs is enhanced by the endogenous networks within the programme at this level. It is then inevitable that those studies exploring the governance of the LEADER programme vary not only due to the ability on the part of the researcher(s) to explore the rationalities, and those socially contingent process that frame a particular LEADER narrative; but also to the extent that the local level is considered and seen as functionally important. Within the following chapters I hope to be able to put forward my own LEADER narrative that takes into account these components framed by discourses of power.

Chapter 4: Governance: A new world order?

4.1 Understanding Governance

A common approach within the governance literature is to outline the different ways in which the notion of governance can be understood (See Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Kjaer, 2004; Rhodes, 1997). Governance is a promiscuous term, beyond the comfortable confines of understanding associated with its popular synonym 'government', within the English speaking world. It is not necessary here to outline each key understanding of the term, especially given the extent to which some of these understandings stretch and diverge strongly from how governance is used and understood here. The focus here is on the analysis of changes within the functioning of the British state, the forms of coordination employed to govern LEADER and wider considerations posed by the perception of an emerging global order.

I begin by outlining how the emergence of the new governance, both in domestic and international contexts, is linked to the changing function of the state (Dean, 2007: 48; also see Hirst and Thompson, 1995; Jessop, 2002; Morgan, 2007). The emergence of governance, as a concept, helps us understand changes within and beyond the British state over the last thirty years and is underscored by a number of propositions that are seen to have brought about these changes. I begin this chapter by outlining the changes that are perceived to be the most important within the governance literature, and by showing how the notion of governance should be seen as a framework for

conceptualising these changes. I attempt to show how governance has transcended state boundaries to include notions of multilevel, European and global governance. This is in conjunction with the strengthening of regional and community level of action within policy terms through the related concepts of partnership and community engagement.

Networks have become increasingly important to the concept of governance, as stressed in chapter two. It is important to recognise that looking at the coordination of policy through a network approach positions the policy network as a complex field of actors and organisations that transcend state boundaries. Any mixture of these actors and organisations, or the discourses they produce, might be involved in the framing of a particular policy at any one time. This ensures that policy networks should be positioned within the 'new global order', and although not all policy networks actively interact in 'global network relations', all networks are subject to a set of socially contingent processes, similar to those that frame the global political economy.

4.2 Governance in Public Administration and Public Policy

The notion of governance I am engaging with in this work began to emerge from widespread public sector reform in the 1980's and 1990's. During this period the post-war welfare settlement in public administration was under increasing strain. This post-war settlement saw the state as the principal service provider with large bureaucratic state organisations forming a public sector predominantly based on hierarchical forms of governing (Newman, 2001: 13). Even by the 1970's there was some concern that the

structure of the public sector was not in line with the tasks the state had begun to perform since the end of the Second World War (Kjaer, 2004: 22). The British state had changed from being mainly a regulatory state, principally concerned with the preservation of law and order and providing basic infrastructure, to the provider of a more expansive set of services in health, education, pension programmes, unemployment schemes and other schemes that ultimately led to an increase in the size of the British state, and the cost incurred to run it (ibid, 22).

The reforms, begun in the 1980's by the Thatcher government, saw dramatic changes within the British welfare state that went on well into the 1990's. These reforms have come under the heading of The New Public Management (NPM), and were also implemented in other countries, most famously under Reagan in the USA, but countries like Australia and New Zealand also followed suit in large scale state reform under the rubric of NPM (ibid, 25). NPM can be characterised by a series of trends within public administration, these include: the transfer of private sector management principles to the public sector, privatisation, agencification, competition and decentralization (ibid, 25-31). These trends required new forms of coordination and control to be developed due to the more fragmented and dispersed pattern of service delivery and regulation under the rubric of NPM, spearheading the neo-liberal political project at that time (Newman, 2001: 13). These mechanisms included framework documents, contracts, targets, performance indicators, service standards, contracts and customer charters (ibid, 14). One of the most important consequences of these changes was an increasing dependence of governments

on a range of new institutional arrangements across the private, public and voluntary sectors (ibid, 14).

This dependence on a new set of actors and organisations led some analysts to refer to the 'hollowing-out' of the British state (See Rhodes, 1997; and Weller et al., 1997). This was seen as an unintended consequence of the NPM reforms and more broadly the neo-liberal project set out by the Conservative party, as it was felt that central government departments increasingly saw their primary position within governing networks diluted, while 'steering' was made even more difficult by the increasing number of networks involved within public policy (Rhodes, 1997: 23). The realisation that central government departments no longer took such a central role within public policy, and that their role within governing networks had changed, was a major turning point for the study of the British political system. These changes were intensified by the increasing importance of 'globalization', as global markets held back the autonomy of the state in economic decision making (Kjaer, 2004: 32). Increasing European integration during the mid 1980's and early 1990's had also begun to have an influence on the autonomy of the policy making process at the state level (ibid, 32). This led some commentators to talk about the external hollowing-out of the state (ibid, 32).

It was through this pluralisation of public policy making and administration that it became appropriate to talk of a shift from 'government' to 'governance'. This shift can be directly related to the NPM reforms set out by Thatcher, along with the increasing importance of supra-state forms of policy making. Governance has become associated,

'whether in domestic or international contexts, to the narrative of the decline of the national state and its capacities' (Dean, 2007: 48). Governance emerged from the political shifts that culminated in the neo-liberal reforms of the 1980's, as a means to overcome, or at least develop the capacity to govern a free wielding economy. Whether the emergence of governance can be seen as an unforeseen consequence of these reforms; or whether these changes were foreseen and deliberately embraced; or whether the state set out to transform the nature of its own *power* through a deliberate pluralisation of politics is open to debate. What is important to recognise is that governance has arrived, and its significance over the last two decades has increased greatly. It has not only become the darling of the market economy, as the bridge between the harsh realities of the market and the softer outputs the state is still expected to provide through public policy, but its capacity to provide the means of effective rule, have also seen governance at the forefront of the network society that began to emerge in the mid 1990's. Governance has become a 'buzz' word for so many of the changes that have taken place, and are taking place within domestic and global politics. It carries with it a set of subliminal meanings, like other 'grand' political concepts, such as 'democracy' or 'globalization', where meanings are diffuse and much contested. In its simplest form it is a plural form of governing through the engagement of varied actors and organisations, but empiricism has bred a notion of the concept which is incredibly varied in form and intent.

The defining feature of the various understandings of domestic governance is the level of involvement by the state, or the extent to which the state is able to 'steer' public policy effectively. Governance is a concept which has changed over time, and has adapted to

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changing political realities. In Britain its development mirrors ideological changes within mainstream politics, from the NPM of the 1980's to the 'Third way' of the mid 1990's, including developments in between and beyond. This has led to a great deal of empirical work on governance, and the 'modelling' of various normative characteristics. Governance has become a concept that is seen to hold differing particularities among academic scholars.

Following the conception of governance as the NPM, as stated above, the concept has evolved over time to incorporate ever changing modes of regulating society, principally through forms of market, network and hierarchical forms of regulation. I will try to show here that a mixture of all three of these modes is the most prominent, with a tendency for one or two of these to dominate over another at any one time, or within a particular policy arena. The idea that markets, hierarchies, and networks form alternative strategies of coordination and governing within the post-Fordist world is a common theme within the governance literature (Newman, 2001: 13).

4.3 Networks and network governance

The idea of 'networks' or 'network governance' has dominated the public policy literature since the mid nineties and has become increasingly important to empirical studies on governance. This is often linked to the inadequacies of both the market and hierarchical forms of governing. The idea of the 'network' within public policy literature, as explained in Chapter 2, began to emerge in the 1980's through Rhodes (1981) typology

for a study of British central-local relations. This work built on similar academic developments in the related literature on interorganizational theory (see Heclo and Wildavsky, 1974; Hanf and Schapf, 1978), and another set of work influenced by the research of Heclo and Wildavsky (1974) on British public expenditure decision making within the treasury (see Richardson and Jordan, 1979; Wilkes and Wright, 1987) (Rhodes, 1997: 35). Rhodes (1981) developed a theory of power dependence through his work on central-local relations in Britain, which he later developed alongside Marsh to form what he later calls the Marsh and Rhodes typology (1992). The typology treats policy networks as a generic term. This typology was based on the idea that policy communities and issue networks represented different types of relationships between interest groups and government (Rhodes, 1997: 43). These networks are placed within a continuum. Policy communities occupy one end of the continuum and involve close relationships; while issue networks are positioned at the other end of the networks and involve loose relationships (ibid, 43). This typology is best explained through a description of both a policy community and an issue network**.**

The characteristics of a policy community include:

- A limited number of participants with some groups consciously excluded
- Frequent and high quality interaction between all members of the community on all matters related to the policy issues
- Consistency in values, membership and policy outcomes which persist
- Consensus, with the ideology, values and broad policy preferences shared by all participants

- All members of the policy community have resources so the links between them are exchange relationships

Whereas an issue network has the following characteristics:

- Many participants

- Fluctuating interaction and access for the various members

- Limited consensus and ever present conflict

- Interaction based on consultation rather than negotiation or bargaining

- An unequal power relationship in which many participants may have few resources, little access and no alternative

(Rhodes, 1997: 44-45)

This approach to policy networks has been described by Bevir and Rhodes as 'interest intermediation' (2003). Policy networks, in this generic sense, are defined as sets of resource dependent organisations, and so to achieve their objectives different organisations have to exchange resources (*ibid*, 50). 'Rules of the game' regulate what strategies actors employ in the exchange of resources, as actors look to position themselves to achieve the best possible outcome (*ibid*, 50). These networks are seen as institutional-like structures 'which limit participation in policy-making, define the roles of actors, decide which issues to include and exclude from the policy agenda, shape the behaviour of actors through the rules of the game, privilege certain interests not only by according them access but also by favouring their preferred policy outcomes, and substitute private government for public accountability' (*ibid*, 50).

This approach, although still relevant, focuses on the type of networks that exist within public policy, and the relationships of power dependence that characterise them. More recently the focus on 'networks' has shifted greatly. The conception of policy networks has been incorporated into the process of governing through the 'new' governance of social and economic relations. Networks are no longer solely a means of analysing interorganizational relations within public policy, but are now, as previously stated, seen to be increasingly enrolled, either, alongside, or as alternatives to, markets and hierarchy in the process of governance and meta-governance. Networks are increasingly being viewed in more generic ways, linked to the fluid conception of power relations set out in chapter two. The theoretical work on policy networks discussed above still has relevance, despite these changing parameters, due to the insights offered on the dependencies that are evident through interactions across networks. However, the growing importance of informal policy networks, identified in the previous chapter, is intended to highlight that mobile points of solidarity are increasingly more likely than solid network structures. Networks have become synonymous with the changing power relations of the state, and beyond, within the post-Keynesian global economy. Networks offer an alternative to markets and the hierarchical limitations of the Westminster model of government. For many commentators 'networks' are 'governance'.

4.4 'Networks as governance'

During the late nineties the British Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Research Programmes on Local Governance and Whitehall found that 'the system of government beyond Westminster and Whitehall changed from a system of local government into a system of local governance involving complex sets of organisations drawn from the public and private sectors (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 52; see Stoker, 1999, 2000). The term 'network' starts to be used to describe the range of actors involved through interdependent relationships in the delivery of services (Rhodes, 1997: 51).

The creation of government agencies, the use of special-purpose bodies to deliver services and the encouragement of public-private partnerships contributes to networks becoming an increasingly important element in the process of governing, challenging the Westminster model of government (ibid, 51). Governance was then seen to be about the management of networks (ibid, 52), instead of a reliance on hierarchy or the market. In the same way as hierarchy and markets, networks became synonymous with co-ordination and the allocation of resources (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 53). Rhodes defines network forms of governance as 'self-organizing, interorganizational networks'. He draws on Kickert (1993) to help explain how networks have become self organizing and autonomous.

> The control capacity of government is limited for a number of reasons:
> lack of legitimacy, complexity of the policy processes, complexity and

multitude of institutions concerned etc. Government is only one of many actors that influence the course of events in a societal system. Government does not have enough power to exert its will on other actors. Other social institutions are, to a great extent autonomous. They are not controlled by any single superordinated actor, not even the government. They largely control themselves. Autonomy not only implies freedom, it also implies self-responsibility. Autonomous systems have a much larger degree of freedom of self-governance. Deregulation, government withdrawal, and steering at a distance... are all notions of less direct government regulation and control, which lead to more autonomy and self-governance for social institutions (Kickert, 1993).

Rhodes concludes that '*integrated networks* (my emphasis) resist government steering, develop their own policies and mould their environments' (1997:52). The challenge for the state, is seen as the ability to find the appropriate tools, in an attempt to steer these networks from a non-sovereign position (ibid, 58; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 53).

4.5 The new governance and the state

Governance is seen, by some, as a system characterised by interactive socio-political forms of governing, responding to the challenges posed by complex social problems and fragmented societies (Newman, 2001: 14). This line of argument is taken up by Kooiman and van Vliet (1993):

The purpose of governance in our societies can be described as coping with the problems but also the opportunities of complex, diverse and fragmented societies. Complexity, dynamics and diversity has led to a shrinking external autonomy of the nation state combined with a shrinking internal dominance *vis-a-vis* social subsystems... Governing in modern society is predominantly a process of coordination and influencing social, political and administrative interactions, meaning that new forms of interactive government are necessary (Kooiman and van Vliet, 1993)

This conception of governance questions the ability of state-centric modes of governing, and placates notions of a central sovereign authority (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 47). It is felt that there are a variety of actors involved within policy making in any given policy field out of necessity (ibid, 47-48). This necessity derives from the inability of government, or any single body for that matter, to have all the knowledge and information required to solve complex social problems (Kooiman, 1993). This has meant that, rather than government acting alone, it is increasingly promoting forms of co-steering, co-regulation, co-production, cooperative management and public/private partnerships (ibid, 15). Within the lines of this conception of governance the task of 'steering' public policy is no longer the sole preserve of government, but has been enrolled by a wide ranging set of agencies, organizations and individuals within the

public, private and voluntary sectors, either in conjunction or in combination with each other (ibid, 15).

A related conceptualisation of governance is offered by Luhmann who believes there is an undeniable "centrifugal tendency inherent in all modern societies" (Luhman, 1982). He claims we live in a 'centreless society', within which 'the tasks of government are to enable socio-political interactions, to encourage many and varied arrangements for coping with problems and to distribute services among several actors' (ibid, 1982: xv). These new patterns of interaction are represented in Britain by public-private partnerships, co-operative management, and joint entrepreneurial projects, among others.

The new political economy approach to governance, as titled by Bevir and Rhodes, explores both the regulation of the economy and the boundaries between civil society, state and the market economy as they are seen to become increasingly blurred (2003: 48). Bevir and Rhodes outline two approaches under this heading: a positivist and a neo-Marxist approach.

The positivist approach is drawn from Lindberg *et al.* (1991). They contend that governance refers to 'the political and economic processes that coordinate activity among economic actors' (1991: 3). Through exploring the 'transformation of the institutions that govern activity' they identify six ideal type mechanisms of governance: markets, obligation networks, hierarchy, monitoring, promotional networks and associations (ibid, 5). In discussing these mechanisms they also draw on social control understood as

'struggles over strategic control and power within economic exchange' along with a focus on which ones promote economic efficiency, and under what conditions (ibid, 5). They contend that the state plays an important role, and should not be seen as just another mechanism of governance. Instead, the state is seen as a gatekeeper to 'outsiders' through its ability to promote and inhibit economic activity. An explanation of this role is offered by describing how the state apparatus provides arenas through which those groups whose participation in governance is not already institutionalized are able to participate (1991: 30). They give the example of the courts, which are seen as a 'common gate-keeping mechanism that determine what effects, if any, outsiders, such as consumer and environmental groups, have on sectoral governance' (ibid: 30). As such, the state has an important role in shaping the nature of governance through this type of mechanism according to this positivist account of governance.

The neo-Marxist perspective on governance, drawn from Jessop (1997, 1999, 2002) and Le Galès (1998) sees governance as 'the complex art of steering multiple agencies, institutions and systems which are both operationally autonomous from one another and structurally coupled through various forms of reciprocal interdependence' (Jessop 1997: 95), or more simply put the 'coordination of interdependent social relations' (Jessop, 2002: 52) Jessop distinguishes three areas of social relations, the coordination of which represents a system of governance, these include the familiar notions of market (anarchy of exchange), hierarchy, and networks (heterarchy of self organisation) (ibid, 52).

According to Le Galès, the state within the classic framework of public policy studies is largely defined by the power it is able to exert over society and the economy in a given territory (1998: 494). Within the neo-Marxist perspective on governance there is no such primacy accorded to the sovereign state, instead only the ideas of leading, steering and directing are recognisable (*ibid*, 495). The issue of governance, from a neo-Marxist perspective, and within the context of the new political economy calls for a 're-examination of the interrelations between civil society, state and market and of the re-composition of these different spheres whose boundaries have become blurred' (*ibid*, 495). In Jessop's work this view is expressed through his strategic-relational approach that views the state as a social relation (2002: 40).

> This implies that the exercise of state power (or, better, state powers in the plural) involves a form-determined condensation of the changing balance of forces. In other words, state power reflects the prevailing balance of forces as this is institutionally mediated through the state apparatus with its structurally inscribed strategic selectivity. Adopting this approach, the state can be defined as a relatively unified ensemble of socially embedded, socially regularized, and strategically selective institutions, organizations, social forces and activities organized around (or at least involved in) making collectively binding decisions for an imagined political community (2002: 40)

As such, Jessop believes that it is vital that the circulation of power is traced through wider and more complex sets of social relations both internal and external to the state (2002: 41), given the fact that social relations (i.e. market, hierarchy and networks) are constantly re-produced in line with forms of capitalist accumulation (2002: 52).

4.6 The new governance: hierarchies, markets, networks and their co-relationship

Jessop goes on to develop a notion of meta-governance, which attempts to look more closely at the 'complexity, plurality, and tangled hierarchies found in the prevailing modes of coordination' (2002: 242). From a governing perspective meta-governance 'is the organization of the conditions for governance and involves the judicious mixing of market, hierarchy and networks to achieve the best possible outcomes from the viewpoint of those engaged in meta-governance' (ibid, 242). Jessop outlines four modes of meta-governance that relate to governance by markets, hierarchies and networks. These modes of meta-governance include: First, meta-exchange, which involves 'the reflexive redesign of individual markets and/or the reflexive reordering of relations among markets by modifying their operation and articulation'; Second, meta-organization, which 'involves the reflexive redesign of organizations, the reordering of inter-organizational relations, and the management ecologies (in other words, the organization of the conditions of organizational evolution in conditions where many organizations coexist, compete, cooperate and co-evolve)'; Third, meta-heterarchy, which refers 'to the organization of the conditions of self-organization by redefining the framework for heterarchy or reflexive self organization'; and finally, there is meta-governance, which 'involves the

rearticulating and collibrating different modes of governance' or 'governance of governance' (ibid, 240-242).

This understanding of meta-governance or the 'governance of governance' help us think more strategically about the way different forms of governance are enrolled by the state and other organisations and actors. There is no doubt that the state plays a significant and increasing role in meta-governance (ibid, 242).

> They provide the ground rules for governance and the regulatory order in and through which governance partners can pursue their aims; ensure the compatibility or coherence of different governance mechanisms and regimes; act as the primary organizer of the dialogue among policy communities; deploy a relative monopoly of organizational intelligence and information with which to shape cognitive expectations, serve as a 'court of appeal' for disputes arising within and over governance; seek to rebalance power differentials by strengthening weaker forces or systems in the interests of system integration and/or social cohesion; try to modify self understanding of identities, strategic capacities and interests of individual and collective actors in different strategic contexts, and hence alter their implications for preferred strategies and tactics; and also assume political responsibility in the event of governance failure. (ibid, 242-243)

Dean believes this represents a paradox given that 'governance is presented as a solution to failures of states and markets', and yet 'states still play a central role in the exercise of meta-governance' (Dean, 2007: 49). This represents the changing relationship of the state with society, as public policy becomes increasingly pluralistic. However, Jessop is keen to stress that markets, hierarchies and hetararchies (self-organization) still exist but in the context of 'negotiated decision making' (2002: 243). In other words, a balance is negotiated between these three modes of regulation in an attempt to find the most appropriate solution to a problem. Undoubtedly there are winners and losers in this type of negotiated decision making, with the state no longer 'the sovereign authority', it is just seen to add its own 'distinctive resources to the negotiation process' in the same way as the other organisations and actors across the policy network (ibid, 243). Jessop does not dismiss the ability of states to command governance and meta-governance, but makes clear that the process of governing has become fluid through the opening up of the policy making process and the repositioning of the state as an arbiter by removing the dependency on hierarchy, and searching for the means of 'governance of governance'.

The differences that exist with the governance literature mirror the changing ideological trends over time, which has seen the development of governance from the NPM (see Bevir and Rhodes, 2003: 46) towards the more recent conception of 'meta-governance', and its constituent subtleties in the facilitation of self-organizing networks and their structural development (Dean, 2007: 49-49; See Jessop, 1998). Governance is often seen either 'in the narrow sense of managing self organising networks'; or more broadly in the 'sense of managing rules and patterns of coordination, organizing the complex structures

of hierarchies, networks and markets' (Kjaer, 2004: 48). The later conception of the term has more recently been aligned with the notion of meta-governance. However, to some commentators governance has always been about more than managing self organising networks. Kooiman and van Vliet (1993, 1995), for instance, believe that self-governance, co-governance (or 'heterarchical' governance) and governance through hierarchy are likely to co-exist in any society. In this sense governance is a structural 'game', and as such no conception of governance should be seen to stand alone. Kjaer makes this point in relation to network governance, but this argument should also be extended to all those forms of governance discussed here and their interrelationships (2004: 49).

4.7 Going supra-national: international interdependence – European and global governance

An important area of the governance literature explores the global political and economic shifts that have limited the capacity of nation states to govern (Newman, 2001: 12). The ideas of the 'hollowing-out' of the state, multilevel governance, and European governance have brought valuable insight into how we should perceive the importance of governance beyond the confines of the state, and how we should understand the relationship between the state, their governments and the proliferation of supranational and even global institutions that have emerged in conjunction with the decline of Fordism, the decline of the Westphalia system or state led intergovernmental relations, and the rise of an increasingly market led global economy.

The notion of the 'hollowing out' of the state has been used to summarize many of the changes which have taken place in the British state (Rhodes, 1997: 17). 'It refers to the loss of functions upwards to the European Union, downwards to special purpose bodies and outwards to agencies' (ibid, 17). For many, such as Held the notion of 'hollowing-out' of the state is directly related to the processes of globalization, and is not specifically a function of Europeanization. He identifies four processes of 'disjuncture' that are limiting the autonomy of nation states: the internationalisation of production and financial transactions, international organisations, international law and hegemonic powers and power blocs. Held states that:

> The 'disjunctures' reveal a set of forces that combine to restrict the freedom of action of governments and states by blurring the boundaries of domestic politics; transforming the conditions of political decision-making; changing the institutional and organizational context of national polities; altering the legal framework and administrative practices of governments; and obscuring the lines of responsibility and accountability of national states themselves. From these processes alone one can say that the operation of states in an ever more complex international system both limits their autonomy and infringes ever more upon their sovereignty (Held, 1991: 157).

The processes of globalization, internal devolution within states, and the growth of international bodies like the EU, and the World Bank is felt to have weakened the powers of the state, effecting their ability to govern.

Saward (1997) argues that the 'hollowing-out' thesis hides the extent to which this process was an outward effort by the state to get rid of some of its functions, separating politics and administration, as a means to exercise more effective control. However, Rhodes argues that the motives the state draws upon for giving up some of its internal functions are not the critical point. 'A function willingly lost is still a function lost; the centre can no longer do something it used to do. (Rhodes, 1997: 17). 'Intentions all too often disappear in a flurry of unintended consequences' (ibid, 17). This sentiment is drawn from policy research Rhodes carried out alongside Marsh through which they found there is a 'marked disparity between legislative intent and the policy as put into practice' (ibid, 17).

The nation state is still seen by many to play a central role within the 'global' governance model, by providing the conditions for effective international interdependence. Hirst and Thompson call this process 'suturing', whereby, the policies and practices of states in distributing power upwards to the international level and downwards to sub-national agencies are the structures that will hold the system of governance together (1995: 423). The nation state then appears as a 'source of constitutional ordering', providing a set of standards in a world of diverse political forces (ibid, 435). In the next section I explore whether the EU should also be seen as a source of constitutional ordering.

4.8 Governing the EU 'state'

The EU, as a supranational governing body, has the institutional capacity to take on the functions that are deemed to have been passed upwards from the state. I would now like to spend some time exploring the extent to which these functions have passed to the EU, and what significance this carries for the way domestic policies are now governed. Within the European Studies literature there are two main ways in which the concept of governance is understood: multilevel governance and European Governance (Kjaer, 2004: 108).

Multilevel governance refers to a system of coordination involving regions, states and the EU.

> Multilevel governance refers to the evolving policy mode in the EU, in which the state no longer monopolizes EU policy making. Multilevel governance is a model in which decision making competences are shared. The Commission devises programmes in partnership with local and regional authorities. Individual state executives lose a significant degree of control over rule enforcement, and sub-national arenas are not restricted to acting only within the limits of the state. The regions act increasingly at the EU level, they have established their own offices in Brussels, and they also pressure the Commission through the European Parliament (ibid, 109).

The study of multilevel governance rests heavily on the power relations that exist between the regional, national and supranational level. Within the theory of multilevel governance there is no assumption that the state is the dominant actor, instead all participants operate, drawing heavily on the policy network approach, as resource dependent organisation where the balance of power can be equal or unequal (ibid, 109). Multilevel governance developed as a concept in line with the growth of distributional policies at the EU level, exemplified through the commitment of the EU to pay attention to economic and social divergence within its territory (ibid, 109). The EU's cohesion policy empowered sub-national authorities through the implementation of structural funds to address social disparities in the regions (ibid, 110). This had the effect of breaking down hierarchical systems of governing at the EU level and promoting the regional level as a new institutional partner, along with less formal network governance arrangements (ibid, 110).

The theory of multilevel governance rests heavily on assumptions about the process of governance based upon social and economic policies of redistribution (Ibid, 110). Kjaer argues that this undermines the more significant role the EU plays through the regulation of *markets* (2004: 111). European Governance offers an alternative to the multilevel governance approach and examines the various forms of governance evident in the EU by referring to 'the complex, non-hierarchical nature of policy making', while not presuming 'governance to be necessarily multilevel' (ibid, 108). As Kjaer points out the EU budget is very modest compared to the budgets of national governments, and has very little

influence over national legislation in areas such as poverty, family policy, urban policy or old age (ibid, 111). Yet, its role in the regulation of the economy is clear, given that around 70% of all business administration in the UK is authorised in Brussels (ibid, 111). Add to this the increasing influence of the EU over other areas, such as the environment and consumer protection, along with the fact that those EU regulations agreed by the Council have primacy over national legislation we begin to see that many of the regulatory practices that characterise European governance reflect a form of top-down centralised governance as opposed to multilevel governance *per se* (ibid, 111).

The key strength of the European Governance theory rests on its recognition of the different regulatory forces within the EU and its member states. Scharpf (1996) compares the harmonization of product standards and the area of industrial relations to show the variance within the regulatory processes of the EU. In the former, the Commission takes a lead role in organising committee arrangements for representatives from each member state, through the process of 'comitology' (ibid, 528). Comitology refers to the complex system of committees made up of national civil servants within the EU. These committees oversee any delegated acts from the European Parliament or the Council to the European Commission for implementation. This replaced the process of intergovernmental bargaining, through which unanimity was often difficult to achieve. In contrast, in industrial relations Scharpf felt that a pattern of interest representation was emerging that did not represent a horizontal network of many members. This was exemplified through the prevailing existence of national collective bargaining, where national institutional frameworks still differ greatly (ibid, 528). As such, the traits of a

hierarchic non-competitive system of corporatism were still in evidence through certain aspects of EU governance.

The notion of European Governance is expanded further by a form of policy coordination that the EU calls 'the open method' (Kjear, 2004: 112). This form of governance has been particularly related to economic policy.

> The open method of coordination is about consensus-forming among member states, involving a common assessment of the economic situation, agreement of the appropriate policy response, acceptance of peer pressure and, where necessary, adjustment of the policies being pursued, the process of the open method involves a Council Committee that sets guidelines, establishes performance indicators and benchmarks tailored to each member state, and monitors periodically through peer review, with the emphasis placed on a process of mutual learning. The targets are not legally binding, but they are a result of policy learning and policy transfer between member states. This type of governance thus involves member states in policy areas where there is *no* transfer of power to the EU. Yet it represents a sort of deliberative supra-nationalism, in that inter-administrative governance leads to common ideas among a club of national ministers and key officials (ibid, 113).

Thinking about European Governance has also been developed by Sbragia (2000a, 2000b). She argues that there is too much focus on the 'crisis' of the welfare state, which neglects the fact that states continue to play an important role in the facilitation of markets. Out of this argument develops the idea that the EU provides the platform for this 'transformation' through 'non-majoritarian' institutions such as the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Court of Justice. These institutions enjoy more autonomy within the executive than those actors traditionally concerned with the policy making process, and as such are not subject to the same levels of scrutiny.

> The "rule of law" is critical for a market economy, and the absence of well-defined legal and judicial mechanisms for resolving conflicts among parties is an almost insuperable barrier to the construction of a functioning economy. The state therefore builds markets – shapes them in a variety of ways – as well as regulates them. Markets just like the welfare state, are absolutely dependent on public authority (Sbragia, 2000b: 245).

> Central banks are perhaps one of the most pivotal institutions for the state as a "market builder". Central bankers dominate much of the policy discourse related to market activity, shape policy debates, and provide rationales for their policy activity that implicitly or explicitly present a theory of the functioning economy (Sbragia, 2000b: 249).

This implies that 'actors in non-majoritarian institutions are able to act in ways that might not have the support of democratically elected officials, the electorate, or political parties' (Sbragia, 2000b: 248). This has important implications for the way we view European Governance, and is highly indicative of the increasingly complex nature of governing the state under the auspices of market led governance networks. In a period of global economic crisis it might be advisable for commentators to look more closely at the role played by non-majoritarian institutions, and relate these to the wider challenges of governing, while also drawing out some of the positive implications of 'majoritarian' democratic policy making and governance.

4.9 Global governance

Roseneau offers a perspective on global governance that can be used as a means to comprehend the complex processes of governance in an international setting. This understanding of governance may help put the complexities of European Governance into perspective.

> I treat the world not as national or international arenas, but as a globalized space – a space that is not disaggregated in terms of specified geographic territories so much as it consists of a wide range of fast moving, boundary-spanning actors whose activities cascade erratically across amorphous ethnoscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes, technoscapes, and financescapes. For the foreseeable future, therefore I view this

dissagregated system of diverse transnational collectivities as a multi-centric world that competes, cooperates, or otherwise interacts with the state-centric world and, as such, constitutes the *new world order* (my emphasis), an order that is so decentralised that it does not lend itself to hierarchy or coordination under hegemonic leadership (2000: 172-173).

Roseneau attempts to show that the role of the state has been eroded by 'transnational collectivities' in a 'multi-centric world'. He is conscious that his analysis is unlikely to win over the 'litany' of the state centrists, but presses on in an attempt to highlight the complexities of global life (ibid, 174). However, it is not the case that the importance of the state is lost within Rosenau's work, but simply 'that many new collectivities and structures have emerged as equally important that keeping states exclusively at the epicentre tends to blind us to the underlying forces and processes that sustain the evolution of global politics' (ibid, 187). Roseneau believes there are a set of dialectical processes taking place that ensure change and complexity do not unfold in a linear way (ibid, 177).

It is the nature of change and complexity that neither unfolds in a linear way... both evolve along paths marked by reversals, sideward movements, feedback loops, and a variety of other non-linear dynamics that make it difficult to both practice and trace the exercise of governance. Perhaps most notable in this regard are the worldwide tensions that derive from the simultaneity of dynamics promoting

integration, centralization, and globalization on the one hand, and those

generating disintegration, decentralisation, and localization on the other

hand (ibid, 177).

Roseneau contends that these tensions define the emerging epoch, which he terms

'fragmegration' as a means to capture the 'interactive causal links between fragmentation

and integration' (ibid, 177). Under this view the process of governance is non-linear and

takes place within 'a multi-centric world that competes, cooperates, or otherwise interacts

with the state-centric world' (ibid, 172-173). This understanding of governance is a useful

interpretation when used against the notion of European Governance. Governance

operates through multiple channels within the new world order, through the markets that

occupy the global and the local, and the interconnections between these two; through

hierarchical structures and processes at the national level and beyond; and through

horizontal networks that spread across state and international boundaries. These processes

are characterised and overlain by a complex web of activity by states, institutions,

business and other actors who find themselves jockeying for positions of power, or

acceptable compromise in the new world order. At the forefront of these efforts are

attempts to control financial flows within the global market, and the command of

consumer values through various forms of rhetoric, ideology and attempts to influence the

media.

This notion of a new world order has found its way into the wider political science

literature and thought. The features of this new order have been used to try to explain a

number of features and events in world politics over the last decade or so. Fukuyama has shown how the weakening of states within this new world order, has operated in conjunction with the growth of market and civil society governing functions. He argues that these functions have not been effectively implemented, resulting in weak states and many of the world's most serious problems (2005: xvii). This feature of the new world order does not only have important resonance for developing countries, but it is also significant for developed liberal democracies as power is being increasingly devolved to new governing functions and mechanisms.

Many states in the twentieth century were too powerful: They tyrannized populations and committed aggression against neighbours. Those that were not dictatorships nonetheless impeded economic growth and accumulated a variety of dysfunctions and inefficiencies due to excessive state scope. The trend therefore has been to cut back the size of state sectors and to turn over to the market or to civil society functions that have been improperly appropriated. At the same time, the growth of the global economy has tended to erode the autonomy of the sovereign nation-states by increasing the mobility of information, capital, and to a lesser extent, labour. (...) For individual societies and for the global community, the withering away of the state is not a prelude to utopia but to disaster (Fukuyama, 2005: 160-161).

Fukuyama believes a certain level of institutional development is crucial for economic development, and provides an important framework for developing countries. This passage also implies that state power is under threat from two separate directions. On one hand there have been conscious efforts on the behalf of the state to downsize and devolve their functions, while on the other hand the increasing mobility of capital and power relations has brought about new pressures, which has tempered the ability of states to steer the devolution of its functions in a linear direction. This implies a polycentric world which supports state power through the organisational apparatus of the new governance, yet at the same time the state is simply another actor in a highly competitive political economy, and as such state power is an unstable commodity in an increasingly contested world order.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has set out a series of narratives that relate to the new governance. These narratives provide a crucial basis for our understanding of how these governance mechanisms feed our understanding of the LEADER programme. In Chapter 2 it was made clear that an interpretative approach was to be employed in this study. The discourses evident within this academic output has been used to unpack the 'cultural-historical' influences incorporated in this work, and to show how new strong governance narratives are emerging. These play a significant role on in framing our understanding. In understanding governance there is a tendency, as outlined in Chapter 2, to group our

understanding into 'patterns of knowledge, events and actions' we already posses. This tendency is clear within the governance literature. By employing an 'interpretative lens' it is possible to unpack these patterns, and be aware of new and diverging narratives within the discourse. In the discourse reviewed here it is clear that there is increasing awareness of the polycentric nature of the new governance, and the power held by those network structures that stretch beyond traditional state institutions.

It is important to start to frame the LEADER programme in the context of these wider narratives. From a Foucauldian perspective if we are to fully understand the LEADER approach to governance it is important to consider it within the context of this wider discourse. The discourses discussed in this chapter increasingly turn the emphasis away from concepts of government and the state. These concepts have dominated political science for a long time, and it is important that new narratives are formed around network based governing structures. In exploring a number of differing narratives on the new governance and networks, particularly from a British and European perspective, the attempt has been made to develop a diverse understanding of these concepts and lay the foundations for placing the LEADER programme within a more discursively relevant understanding of the new governance in the thesis. The proceeding chapters add to these narratives by building a contextual layer around the LEADER programme, relating to the development of rural policy in the context of national and supranational priorities, participatory democracy, and a closer look at those discourses that frame European governance specifically.

This chapter has also introduced 'networks as governance'. The discourse on networks within the governance literature is become to dominate governance narratives. Increasingly, governing activities are taking place away from the centre and involve negotiations between sovereign or private actors. The focus LAG is a form of network organisation, but is based on continuing regulatory ties with the centre. Networks as governance, as introduced here, offers a broad understanding of this mode of governing. It does not show how this approach to governance is conditioned by complex relationships between organisations, individuals and wider societal discourses. Over the course of the thesis it will become clear that network relations play a key role in the LEADER programme. Network structures are particularly adept at producing varied outcomes, and differentiated outcomes across time and space. This was made clear from the insight provided by existing interpretations of governance outlined in the previous chapter.

The study of network forms of governance, as discussed in Chapter 2, is dependent on a methodology that is reflexive and capable of following complex social relationships and the micro-sociologies that frame interactions. There is also a need to be mindful of those powerful discourses and narratives that are produced within networks and carried by actors across it and beyond it into other networks. In adopting snowballing approach to this research it was possible to follow the network interactions that took place. These interactions often took place at nodal points across the network, and this was represented through the geographical location of interviewees. One of the main challenges of adopting this approach is identifying the nature of interactions, especially when state and

non-state actors come together. There is a temptation to view state involvement in networks as an attempt at steering. In order not to make any unqualified judgements in this regard it is wise to frame these particular interactions through prior discourses and narratives of existing research. This is possible by building up our understanding of those discourses relating to the new governance. This chapter and the proceeding chapters attempt to do this to ensure an interpretative eye can be cast on the nature of the interactions that took place. In this chapter the notion of 'integrated networks' is introduced, this is one of many possible interpretation of network relations. Given the differentiated nature of endogenous rural development across Europe there will be no attempt to prescribe the networks that make up this study to other LAG's or rural development programmes.

Power is the inescapable means by which governance is understood. From a state-centric perspective power is framed through a Foucauldian perspective on 'governmentality', as outlined in Chapter 2. However, the notion of governmentality also provides a useful insight into the way non-state actors can utilise the 'technologies of the self'. Power does not always reside in the same place or sets of hands, and this ensures that governance narratives will continue to change and differ over time. The ability to hold onto power and the use that is made of it by those that hold it underpins the discourse discussed in this chapter. Power is an incredibly discursive term and the narrative that is built up over the proceeding chapters underpins this. A full and detailed understanding of power relations is developed in line with the focus LAG and its governance. Power no longer

simply resides with the powerful institutions of the state, and this becomes clear as the power relations that underpin the focus LAG are explored.

The Latourian perspective on power, as outlined in Chapter 2, helps explain how power is dependent on each actor's willingness across a network to pass power forward to the next actor. As power passes between actors it invariably changes shape. The key point is that whatever the nature of power across a network, it is driven forward by multiple bodies; it does not 'stand-up' on its own, and can stop moving at any time. What is often overlooked within the current governance discourse is the instability of power, especially within a network setting. The state can frame discourses of power through institutions and the rule of law, and yet nothing moves. In the same context, the EU can frame policies, guidelines and regulations, and yet not a lot happens as a consequence. These ideas will be brought out in the rest of this thesis, and this chapter spearheads the ongoing process of interpretation and discourse framing which takes place over the following chapters.

As outlined in this chapter, governance is made up of hierarchical, market and network forms of coordination, or any mixture of these three. The rich discourse that has emerged in relation to network forms of governance does not mean that market and hierarchical modes of coordination are no longer important, but instead it reflects current political ideas and trends. Networks as a mode of coordination should not be confused with the network approach. The network approach is used to look at social relations across networks, while network forms of coordination occupy specific policy networks, often

framed by tools associated with meta-governance. Nevertheless, network forms of governance are fluid by nature because they involve a wider range of actors, and as such there is greater potential for new forms of actor interaction. Network forms of coordination may well be restricted by existing hierarchical and/or market led structures, along with community based institutions and their cultures. It is at this juncture where tensions can form around the ability of network forms of coordination to interact with other forms of coordination, and their pre-existing structures. It is here that network flows become increasingly non-linear or stall, as a result of conflicting discourses.

The state does not have a predefined role within the new governance. Its position is dependent on its ability to steer the market and networks either through hierarchical structures, or through a set of tools that come under the heading of meta-governance. These tools are not exclusive to the state. Network and market forms of coordination have opened up policy networks to a set of global influences, further weakening the position of states across networks. This has spurred a new global order characterised by international interdependencies. A good example of this is the EU, which has seen international interdependencies constitutionalised through a series of treaties, which are the basis for an ever expanding supranational regulatory system. I explored the potential for theories of European governance and multilevel governance to help explain how the EU system of governance operates, and what role the state now holds within this new world order. It was tentatively suggested through Roseneau that the new world order is multi-centric, defined by the character of interactions between new transnational collectivities and the state-centric world. This is reflected in the theory of European governance, which

provides an explanation for the widely varying forms of interaction and coordination within states and across state boundaries. I also outlined the theory of multilevel governance, and the need to view this empirically based theory as a good example of the differentiated nature of governance within the new world order, a point returned to in later chapters.

In the next chapter, I look at the history of the rural policy arena. This arena has been dominated by agriculture, and despite pressing global and domestic pressures, and calls for a more heterogeneous policy that reflects wider rural interests, the policy community still proves difficult to break down. This provides an interesting case study for the complex relationships that exist in this arena between domestic, EU and global interests. The history of rural policy in Britain and the EU provides an important context for LEADER, not only is the LEADER approach seen as an important element for future rural policy, but it has also played an important role in inspiring CAP reform in the mid-nineties. As such, the following chapter forms an important aspect of any LEADER informed narrative of governance. This chapter also looks closely at the influence New Labour has had on rural policy, and how its strategy relates to the LEADER approach.

Chapter 5: 'Post-agricultural' policy, New Labour and the new rural governance?

5.1 The agricultural policy community and resistance to change

As outlined in the previous chapter, the new governance operates within a global context. Territories provide the infrastructure for policy settlements and the constitutional legitimacy for mobile associations of power. The state continues to hold an important, but not necessarily sovereign, position among a plurality of other actors and organizations, across potentially global policy networks. The rural policy arena and its governance have changed in a number of ways since the conception of the European Economic Community (EEC) (now the EU) in 1957. These changes have been in line with the changing modes of coordination employed by the state (markets, hierarchies and networks), and increasingly through the influence of supranational bodies like the EU and the WTO. The coordination of the rural policy arena during this period has been dominated by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP has for a long time, as expressed in the previous chapter, sought to coordinate rural economies and communities through agricultural exceptionalism. Even in the face of growing pressures from market led forms of coordination, and the increasing neoliberalisation of advanced economies throughout the early 1980's, agricultural exceptionalism has continued along with price distorting 'subsidies'.

In Britain, agriculture has largely dominated rural policy following the Second World War (Woods, 2005: 132). This is reflected through academic research on rural politics, which has tended to focus primarily on the politics of agriculture (Grant, 1990). Smith (1993) has highlighted how the agricultural policy process could be used as 'the paradigm case of a closed policy community' spearheaded by the National Farmers Union's (NFU's) close relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF). Policy communities, as outlined in the previous chapter, are characterised by a limited number of participants with some groups consciously excluded; frequent and high quality interaction between all resource rich members; consistency in values, membership and policy outcomes; consensus, with the ideology, values and broad policy preferences shared by all participants (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992).

Winter (1996) outlines some of the underlying beliefs typifying the common culture of the post-war agricultural policy community, as follows. Firstly, the participants shared underlying 'moral' values of farming and country life, and a belief in its central role in the nation's future prosperity. Secondly, there was a shared economic interest in increasing agricultural production – it was important for the state to ensure food supplies were adequate due to increasing food security concerns, while electoral prospects where dependent on food security issues, along with wider economic concerns. These concerns were also shared by key interest groups who depended on agriculture for their livelihood. Thirdly, there was a consensus among the policy community that agriculture should be entitled to public investment and expenditure. Fourthly, there was a shared interest in the application of management economics to the farming industry, as a means to increase

efficiency and reduce food imports. This was dependent on publicly funded education and research. Further advances were also seen to be dependent on the application and development of scientific principles. In both cases the state was happy to provide the resources and support to ensure these advances could be realised.

Through these shared beliefs the NFU 'became a classic example of an insider interest group' and 'its relationship with MAFF was sufficiently close that the Ministry became in effect the NFU's advocate *within* government' (Woods, 2005: 134). Britain's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) saw British agricultural policy subsumed into the CAP, but this did little to dent the close relationship between the NFU and MAFF, and the closed nature of the policy community. The policy community was able to direct the implementation of the CAP at the national level, and determine the British position within the EEC (ibid, 134). In fact, the NFU's close ties with the MAFF were mirrored in Europe through the close relationship between COPA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations), the Europe-wide federation of farm unions, and Directorate General for Agriculture, the department responsible for agricultural policy within the European Commission (Winter, 1996).

The Brussels policy community shared many of the objectives that underpinned its counterpart in Britain. At the heart of the CAP was the desire to increase agricultural production and maintain the standard of living for farmers. The objectives of the CAP were set out in Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome, and were as follows:

1. to increase productivity, by promoting technical progress and ensuring the optimum use of the factors of production, in particular labour;

2. to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural Community;

3. to stabilise markets;

4. to secure availability of supplies;

5. to provide consumers with food at reasonable prices.

The result of these measures saw increasing agricultural intensification across the EU throughout the three decades following the Second World War, driven by intense capitalization. This resulted in significant levels of investment in farm machinery and farm infrastructure, and the increasing use of agri-chemicals, while farm efficiency became of paramount importance and resulted in the creation of much larger farming units (Woods, 2005: 135).

However, despite significant improvements in the level of production throughout the EU, the agricultural policy community had not anticipated the wider problems brought about by agricultural intensification. It began to become increasingly clear that the policy community's overemphasis on agriculture was creating a whole host of separate problems that it was not well equipped enough to deal with. These problems included the detrimental effect farming practices were having on the landscape, particularly the process of removing hedgerows and ponds, and the ploughing up of meadows to increase productivity. Pollution and poisoning from agri-chemicals had become increasingly common, and was closely linked to reductions in farmland birds, and other native flora

and fauna (Harvey, 1998; Woods 2005). In addition, the nature of livestock farming was increasingly scrutinised, and the idea that animals could be 'factory farmed' was severely challenged by animal rights activists, while consumers began to question the quality of such produce (Woods, 2005: 135). The success of farmers to dramatically increase levels of production also brought an unexpected challenge for policy makers. By the 1970's farmers were producing more key agricultural commodities than the market could cope with, this forced the European Commission to intervene and buy surplus produce at a minimum price threshold. The cost of buying surplus produce, along with the added financial burden of storing it, saw the CAP represent 70%   the EU's budget in 1984 (Winter, 1996). As a result there were increasingly strong calls for CAP reform.

The first significant reform initiative came about through the publication of three papers by the Commission between 1980-1982, these included: *Reflections on the Common Agricultural Policy*, *Report on the Mandate*, and *Guidelines for European Agriculture* (Commission of the European Communities, 1980, 1981, 1982). These publications had little immediate effect, with the Council of Ministers blocking the proposals, in favour of substantial price increases in both 1981 and 1982. Nevertheless, at last there was some recognition of what was needed to be done. Winter (1996) outlines the necessary requirements that were agreed to in principle:

1. the need to reduce the level of guaranteed prices, especially where particular member states were supporting their domestic agricultures beyond the level agreed by the Community;

2. the need to increase exports from the EC;

3. the need to improve structural policies so as to support poorer farmers and regions without recourse to across-the-board price increases.

In 1983 it began to become clear that the necessity for reform was not abating, as dairy stocks escalated. Alongside this, the Thatcher government, driven by the principles of the free market, continued to insist that budgetary discipline be maintained. These calls were acknowledged by Chancellor Kohl, acting as president of the European Council, and together they brought enough pressure on the Council to call for new measures to reduce the limit of agricultural spending (Winter, 1996: 143). This resulted in the introduction of milk quotas on 31 May 1984. Over the course of the remaining years of the 1980's further progress in terms of CAP reform was limited. In 1985 a new publication entitled *Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy* was produced (Commission of the European Community, 1985), which heralded a co-responsibility levy for cereals in 1986, and budget stabilisers in 1988. These were designed to impose stringent limits on the growth of CAP expenditure, but it was soon discovered that these measures were not as effective as milk quotas. 1988 also saw, for the first time, the introduction of voluntary set-aside, giving arable farmers the option to leave some of their acreage fallow in return for compensatory payments (ibid, 146).

The final significant step of this decade was the publication of *The Future of Rural Society* (Commisison of the European Community, 1988). This discussion paper was incredibly significant because it signalled a more encompassing approach, by what had

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been to this point a very inward looking policy community. The paper recognised three particular forces of rural change not directly connected to agricultural adjustment: 'the pressure of modern development', 'rural decline', and 'depopulation and the abandonment of some land'. However, 'there remained a strong, if not exclusive, agricultural element to the policies that emerged from this approach. The new emphasis on the *rural* economy led to a focus on new uses for *agricultural* land and buildings through schemes for farm diversification and alternative land uses, launched in 1988' (Winter, 1996: 147).

The fact that CAP reform was now strongly on the agenda was a significant juncture in the history of agricultural politics. It was a clear 'sign that the strength and exclusivity of the agricultural policy community was weakening and that the voices of groups other than the farming unions were being heard' (Woods, 2005: 136). As a consequence, both COPA and the NFU, found that they were forced to engage with a new agenda, and new compromises that did not always reflect their members' preferences, leading to increasingly fractious internal politics (Grant, 2000: 97). However, reform efforts had still not done enough to bring CAP spending under control, reduce cereal surpluses or significantly alter the closed nature of the agricultural policy community. The three subsequent CAP reforms (1992, 1999, and 2003) play an important role in the move towards a new *rural* policy.

5.2 New rural policy 1992-2003?

The 1992 reform, commonly referred to as the 'MacSharry reform' after the incumbent EU Agriculture Commissioner, was significant on a two levels. Firstly, it recognised the pressing need to reduce food surpluses created through intervention buying, and in turn limit spiralling budget expenditure. Secondly, the success of the Uruguay round of GATT talks was dependent on significant reform of the CAP (Winter, 1996: 161), and for the very first time in the history of the CAP, global economic and political pressures combined to play a significant hand in the process of reform, and further broadened the policy agenda away from the initial objectives of the CAP (Coleman and Tangermann, 1999). The US was particularly keen to see the eradication of trade distorting farm support policies, and wanted to encourage decoupled support, breaking the link between support and production (Ackrill, 2000).

In response, the MacSharry reform shifted payments based on levels of production to direct payments, while cereal prices were cut by 29% by 1995/6, beef by 15% by 1993/4, and butter by 5% by 1994/5. As a way of compensation a number of measures were introduced to soften the blow for farmers, perhaps most significantly, the Arable Area Payment Scheme (AAPS) was introduced which provided payments for those farmers who agreed to take 15% of their land out of production (Winter, 1996: 162).

The 1999 reform was largely based around the EU's Agenda 2000, as part of which the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) was launched and heralded as a new approach to

rural and agricultural policies across the EU (Dwyer et al., 2007: 874). The RDR was quickly depicted as the 'Second Pillar' to the CAP, and its objectives closely related to those formulated at the Cork Conference of November 1996 (Bryden, 1998; Lowe et al., 2002). The declaration that emerged from the Cork conference set out ten guiding principles that sought to embrace a '*new start*' in rural development policy (Dwyer et al., 2007). These included: a multi-sectoral and territorial focus; sustainability, particularly relating to natural and cultural resources; the importance of building private and community-based capacity governing structures at the local level, through decentralization and improved participation throughout the policy making process; and the need for monitoring and evaluation involving a wider range of stakeholders (Dwyer et al., 2007: 874).

An important feature of the Cork Conference was the emphasis on Structural Fund Programmes and Community Initiatives, in particular the LEADER programme and its specific *approach* to rural development. This is more than clear in those principles that were developed at Cork, and which emphasise territorial sensitivity, devolved delivery and community participation (Shucksmith, 2000; Dwyer et al., 2007).

> The rhetoric surrounding the development and launch of Pillar 2 of the CAP has drawn heavily on the experience of the policy community that has developed to shape and deliver the Structural Fund programmes and their associated Community Initiatives, rather than a predominantly CAP-focused rural clientele (Dwyer et al., 2007: 883).

The 1999 reform, under pillar 2 of the CAP, led to the introduction of Rural Development Plans (RDPs). RDPs can either be delivered through a single national plan (i.e. Sweden, France, Austria), through regional programmes (i.e. Germany, UK), or through a complicated mixture of both (i.e. Spain). This approach is designed to meet the rural development goals, and reflect the varying nature of rural areas (ibid, 877). However, despite the potential of this new approach to rural development, Dwyer et al. (2007) indicate that there was a high level of variability in the quality of RDPs, with the tendency for member states to hang on to existing initiatives driven by old institutional conservatism relating to the CAP.

The 1999 reform did a great deal to advance rural development as an important policy issue across the EU. Structural Fund Programmes and Community Initiatives, in particular the LEADER approach had played an important role in advancing new ideas on the future of rural policy at the Cork Conference. The important role played by the LEADER approach is commonly overlooked, and more generally the significance of the LEADER programme is often belittled because of its relatively small budget. This cynicism is still clear to see, and attached to the institutional conservatism closely related to the CAP and the core of the agricultural policy community. Nevertheless, the LEADER approach has provided the basis for advancing rural development programming and delivery and continues to do so. An interview with a Defra representative was quite revealing in this regard.

It has been hard to convince other people, whether it's been in the department, or in other departments, the value of softer targets, social and community based stuff rather than just job creation, raising incomes or whatever, which is easier to measure and sounds better in the headlines. I must admit I used to feel, certainly earlier on, that we were quite isolated. We were pretty much on our own dealing with it, and any body else who worked on bigger programmes was quite dismissive of it, but they have perhaps had to pay more attention recently. I think it has been more successful than anybody anticipated. Also the fact that the model is going to be mainstreamed for the next programme means people have to pay more attention to it. I think there will always be a bit of resistance to delivering those kinds of soft outputs (Defra representative).

Some of the other features of the 1999 reform measures included an attempt to make the budget more stable through increased direct payments and the 'stabilized expenditure scheme', which was another attempt to limit CAP expenditure. However, many of the challenges facing the EU, due to its impending enlargement from 15 to 25 countries on 1st May 2004, and the increasing pressures within the WTO to resolve issues relating to agriculture were not dealt with by the 1999 reform.

Following these failings, it came as no surprise that the CAP was subject to another reform in 2003. The European Commission (2003) set out its objectives clearly, by stating that the reform will:

i.   be geared towards consumers' and taxpayers' interests while continuing to assist farmers;

ii.   safeguard the rural economy and environment;

iii.   keep budgetary costs stable and manageable;

iv.   help in negotiating a World Trade Organization (WTO) agricultural agreement that meets the needs of EU agriculture and society (European Commission, 2003)

There are two key elements of the 2003 CAP reform. These include: Firstly, what the Commission call 'more market orientated, simpler and less trade distorting support' via the introduction of the Single Payment Scheme (SPS). The SPS involves the decoupling of payments from production, meaning support is no longer related to what a farmer produces. The scheme requires farmers to agree to a process of 'cross-compliance' whereby farmers are expected to keep all farmland in good agricultural and environmental condition in return for economic support. 'Cross-compliance' is also linked to a series of environmental, food safety, animal and plant health and animal welfare standards. Secondly, the reform also guarantees that rural development receives a greater level of funding; this has been secured partly through the process of 'modulation', which directs some of the funds that larger farmers would have received in the past toward Pillar 2 of the CAP. (European Commission, 2003).

Former European Commissioner for agriculture Franz Fischler outlines the significance of the 2003 reform:

> This decision marks the beginning of a new era. Our farm policy will fundamentally change. Today, Europe has given itself a new and effective farm policy. The bulk of our direct payments will no longer be linked to production. To our farmers, it offers a policy which will stabilise their incomes and enable them to produce what the consumers want. Our consumers and taxpayers will get more transparency and better value for money. This reform also sends a strong message to the world. Our new policy is trade friendly. We are saying goodbye to the old subsidy system which significantly distorts international trade and harms developing countries. Today's decision will give Europe a strong hand in the negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda. The EU has done its homework, now it's up to others to move to make the WTO trade talks a success (European Commission, 2003).

The emphasis here is on meeting the demands of the Doha round of WTO negotiations, but the wider objectives of the 2003 reform emphasise the broader scope of the CAP, in particular consumer concerns relating to food safety, the environment and the wider rural economy.

5.3 British rural politics: any signs of change?

Over the course of the last 15 years CAP reforms have mirrored a number of changes within the British rural economy, not only does this indicate the massive influence the CAP has had on British agriculture, but it is also indicative of the wider global economic pressures on this sector. Yet, despite the influence of the CAP and wider pressures, agriculture and rural policy remains a domestic issue, it still has political ramifications for governments, and the electorate is still sensitive to the vagaries of rural politics. Furthermore, many of the new schemes relating to Pillar 2 of the CAP, such as England's Environmental Stewardship Scheme (ESS), have been developed around consultations that took place in England, and are orientated toward regional RDPs.

The outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in Britain on 19th February 2001 provides a good example of not only how rural issues can still come to dominate domestic news coverage and political debate, but also how policy arenas at the national level still hold a crucial and strategic role in directing policy and averting crises. British attempts at ensuring the FMD outbreak was handled effectively were judged to have failed largely because FMD was framed as an agricultural problem, and as such the control strategy was commanded solely by the agricultural policy community (Ward et al., 2004). As a consequence the protection of agricultural interests was prioritised, and any potentially negative consequences beyond agriculture were deemed unfortunate but necessary (ibid, 2004). It is now clear that the agricultural policy community was ill equipped to manage the FMD outbreak effectively, with their strategy completely failing to take account of

the wider rural economy, in particular the tourist industry which was reported to be losing around £100 million each week by the end of March 2001 (Woods et al., 2005).

The FMD outbreak was soon redefined as a national crisis during the week of 21-27 March, command of the control strategy was removed from MAFF, and passed over to the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR); signalling that FMD was not just an agricultural issue (Woods, 2005: 155). Woods (2005) sums up the significance of these events for the agricultural policy 'community' as follows:

> The Foot and Mouth epidemic proved to be a watershed event for agriculture in Britain. At one level, within infected areas, sympathy for farmers who saw their stock destroyed helped to rebuild connections between farming and the rural community that had been eroded by social and economic restructuring. Yet, at the broader level, the Foot and Mouth 'crisis' marked the end of farmer exceptionalism in government (2005: 157).

This 'watershed' was marked by the abolition of MAFF, and its responsibilities passing to the newly formed Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The omission of any reference to agriculture in the title was seen as highly symbolic, 'signifying that the countryside was to be constructed in new terms' (ibid, 157), and acted to reinforce those discourses that seek the pluralisation of the rural policy arena and the

breaking down of old ties. Defra is deemed to be a more encompassing institution and representative of a new rural order and a more heterogeneous countryside.

The realisation that agriculture is no longer the dominant economic activity in many rural areas has allowed policy makers to reflect on the role of agriculture within the rural economy, and acknowledge that a diverse range of stakeholders exists. However, although many of these economic stakeholders do not directly rely on the agricultural industry for survival, it is widely held that agriculture provides a host of multifunctional goods. This has been termed by some as a shift from the 'productivist' to the 'consumptionist' countryside through the commodification of rural life (Squire, 1993; Urry 1995; Hoggart and Paniagua, 2001). Through this set of typologies agriculture remains important for preservationist reasons but is no longer seen as the principal economic activity in rural areas. The paradox is thus: the rural economy has become increasingly dependent on economic activities other than agriculture, yet agriculture still dominates rural space, while many of these other economic activities are somewhat dependent on farmers to preserve and enhance this valuable commodity.

Fish *et al*. describe how 'different languages and discourses are beginning to emerge which raise alternative images of what the future holds for rural landscapes and how these might be explained in terms of different registers of power' within the current spate of rural restructuring (Fish et al., 2006: 3). These different registers of power are the source of re-spatialisation within the rural economy. For example, agri-environment and rural development schemes have brought about new associations of power or new

networks of interaction (Winter, 2005: 33). The bringing together of new interests has helped promote a new interactive policy process, and as a consequence the re-spatialisation of some power relations within the rural policy arena.

Taken as a whole a distinct shift within rural policy has taken place towards increasing heterogeneity. The environment, rural cultures, economic diversity, and landscape are increasingly covered within the remit of rural policy. Rural policy now appears to include a more diverse range of actors than ever before. As a consequence the policy process has developed along new lines beyond territorially defined networks that no longer reflect national economies and old Fordist ties. The current discourse on rural policy promotes a new policy agenda that reflects European and global challenges beyond agriculture. The success of the new rural order is dependent on the ability of new policy networks to interact or even subsume long standing discourses and socio-economic structures (See Murdoch, 2000). These discourses and structures hide the differentiated nature of the rural economy.

Closed agricultural policy networks have for a long time been seen as the source of these discourses, and the relative stability of these networks has been founded on the ability to keep the number of actors within them limited. However, the opening-up of the agricultural policy community, and the development of a more heterogeneous rural economy has ensured that programmes like LEADER, previously 'isolated' from the conservative institutions that house the CAP, can begin to have an ever greater influence on rural policy. The next significant challenge for rural policy is to ensure that a far

reaching policy agenda continues to be pursued and that new governing structures engage broadly based interests. This is much easier said than done, a point amplified in the next section as I look to at how New Labour's "grand project" in rural policy has faded toward "technocratic managerialism" despite a wider rhetoric on partnership and participation in the policy process (Ward and Lowe, 2007).

The changes identified above within the rural policy arena have been augmented by the emergence of New Labour as a political force in the mid-nineties. New Labour, were actively drawn into rural policy making, despite it not featuring strongly in their initial manifesto (ibid, 412-413). New Labour was drawn into this area partly through concerns over CAP expenditure, the FMD crisis, and in turn the failings of MAFF, all of which are outlined above. It was also felt that New Labour's stance against hunting with hounds could broaden the party's popular appeal, and increase opposition to the pro-hunt lobby. However, Labour was also aware that many of its MPs held rural and semi-rural constituencies, and as such it was important that a positive rural policy agenda was developed. This agenda was set out in the Rural White Paper published in November 2000.

> From the perspective of broader symbolism and electoral appeal, the promotion of a progressive rural policy helped New Labour to present itself as combating the forces of rural reaction marshalled in defence of hunting and to project a One-Nation populism that transcended the entrenched urban-rural divide (Ward and Lowe, 2007: 414).

The changes in the rural policy sector took place in conjunction with a number of other political shifts, as new Labour attempted to reconcile the shortcomings of the market with a more socially orientated polity. One aspect of this was Labour's decision to establish new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in the English regions, as a means of bringing socio-economic development closer to 'the people'. This triggered rural institutional change, as the RDAs were made up of the staff of English Partnerships - the government's regeneration company – and the Rural Development Commission. The policy, research and advocacy functions of the Rural Development Commission were merged with the Countryside Commission, and this resulted in the establishment of the Countryside Agency, which was deemed a new progressive force in rural policy (ibid, 413).

However, this progression towards a more pluralistic rural policy agenda is deemed to have taken a number of steps backwards following Labour's initial march toward progression. The FMD crisis highlighted the dangers of falling back upon a rural agenda that was dominated by agricultural interests, in fact there was widespread acknowledgment that the isolated nature of the agricultural policy community increased the crisis that emerged out of FMD, and yet from this point onwards there was clear retrenchment (see Ward and Lowe, 2007).

This was evident in both the Curry report, which led to the Governments *Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food: Facing the Future in England* of December 2003; and

the Haskins review, which resulted in the *Rural Strategy 2004*. The Curry report put the emphasis back on agriculture, and attempted to show how agriculture could "(re-)capture" those funds passed over to rural development through agri-environment schemes (ibid, 416-417). The Haskins review, on the other hand, set about looking for means of streamlining the rural policy making and delivery apparatus. The focus of the review was the institutions regulating and funding agriculture and land management, out of which came a new agency (Natural England) developed to oversee environmental payments to farmers and ensure the widespread conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It said little on wider rural issues, and the agenda for rural areas set out in the Rural White Paper three years earlier (ibid, 418). New Labour's 'grand project' had been derailed.

> Despite many platitudes about decentralisation and public involvement, the Strategy failed to provide any greater clarity and coherence over how decentralisation might work below the regional level. There was nothing on the role of local authorities, and very little in the way of specific decentralising reforms. On the initiatives in parish renewal, localism and community development that the rural white paper had promoted, there was a deafening silence. The sense that Labour was charting a socially progressive agenda for rural areas, which pervaded the white paper, was lost (Ward and Lowe, 2007: 418).

The Rural White paper offered a great deal in the way of progress towards a new rural policy, and shares many values with the LEADER approach to governance. LEADER, as a Community Initiative, is protected somewhat from retrenchment back toward agricultural exceptionalism, but just like any policy initiative, the LEADER programme is dependent on those institutions responsible for its implementation at the national level. New Labour promised an engaged rural policy, a community based approach that reflects each and every locality, but has since fallen back towards 'technocratic managerialism'. The next section of this chapter explores in greater detail the New Labour project and as part of that its approach to governance. This offers a means to look more critically at its management of the LEADER programme, and its commitment to the LEADER approach.

5.4 Governance and New Labour

The victory of New Labour, headed by Tony Blair, over the Conservative party in 1997 heralded a 'new' era in public policy and administration in the UK. At the forefront of this new epoch were the ideas brought forward through a 'Third Way' between the market neo-liberalism associated with the outgoing Conservative government, and their NPM reforms, outlined above; and the state-centred Labour governments of the past, associated with collectivist Welfarism and Fordist modes of regulation. At the heart of the New Labour project was the changing perspective on state-society relationships, after it became obvious that politics was becoming increasingly pluralised, and the dependencies of the state had become stretched to include actors and organizations from the public, private and voluntary sectors (Pierre and Peters, 2000: 4). New Labour,

ushered by the principles of the Third Way, recognised that state-society relations were changing, and as a means to take advantage of this they would be required to re-position themselves within the evolving power relations of the state, and present themselves as a 'new' dynamic force in terms of the economy and the public sector.

The 'Third Way', according to Newman, 'was a metaphor used in the USA and some other European states to help forge political settlements that combined a recognition of the increasing importance of the global economy with attention to the importance of social cohesion' (2001: 2) As such, the Third Way was not just about looking for an alternative to the state and market, but sought to overcome some of the harsh realities of the market, and its effect on society as a whole, by addressing issues of civil society and cultural values (ibid, 2). Within the UK this aspect of the Third Way was put into action by New Labour through a new emphasis on citizenship, democratic renewal, social inclusion and consensual forms of decision making (ibid, 2); principles that were put into practice through, inter alia, partnership and community engagement. This engagement with civil society and cultural values was counter balanced by the belief that these values had economic benefit in terms of social and cultural capital, and as such, the sanctity of the neo-liberal state and the drive for economic efficiency provided a powerful 'underbelly' to the verbosity of the social and cultural benefits, advanced by the Third Way (ibid, 42).

In terms of the imperative for change, documented through the birth of New Labour, and particularly the Third Way, Blair states:

The driving force behind the ideas associated with the Third Way is globalisation because no country is immune from the massive change that globalisation brings... What globalisation is doing is bringing in its wake profound economic and social change, economic change rendering all jobs in industry, sometimes even new jobs in industries, redundant overnight and social change that is a change to culture, to life style, to the family, to established patterns of community life. (Blair speech in South Africa, January 1999 in Newman, 2001: 48).

The significance of globalisation on the development of the Third Way, and in the UK, New Labour, has been criticised and with this criticism has come the feeling that this claim only hides the fact that the UK is more 'globalised' than other nations because it has positioned itself as a less active state in terms of its willingness to regulate capitalist economic processes (Newman, 2001: 49). This view is explored along with the importance of global economic processes over the extent to which governments can regulate the global economy (Newman, 2001: 49; also see Held et al., 1999; Hirst and Thompson, 1999; Jessop, 1998). The way Blair engages with the discourse on globalization, through the active construction of an emerging epoch, suggests the positive engineering of a discourse on globalisation that overlooks the complexity of the political and economic processes that constitute the current transnational economy, synonymous with globalisation (ibid, 49; also see Clarke, 2000; Fairclough, 2000; Jessop 1998). Under this light we are able to 'see' the importance of a free and open global economy to New

Labour, and the strategic way it is seen to engage with the discourse on globalisation, and position the UK directly under this rubric, arguably as a means to support the neo-liberal project and show the voter how it has a clear understanding of the policies required for the 'global age'.

5.5 New Labour and its governance mechanisms

5.5.1 Partnership and networks

The aspects of the Third Way that are of great interest here are those that look to place a set of civic values alongside the free character of neo-liberalism. I would now like to briefly explore these in more detail, and show how they have shaped a form of governance embedded in the principles of partnership, inclusion, networks and consensual democracy. These principles are at the heart of the LEADER programme, and so it is important that they are introduced and understood before I explore them in more detail through the LEADER programme in the next chapter. I also hope to show how these forms of governance do not always sit comfortably alongside the demands of the market, and the expectations of representative democracy.

The notion of partnership, and its adoption into the process of public policy adopted by the Conservatives in the eighties and early nineties was new within the realm of British politics. The Conservatives had introduced public/private partnerships as a means to halt the dominance of public sector power and bring new forms of investment for public

services, and their management (ibid, 105). This was on top of the increasing collaboration of public/private partners through government agencies, along with local government initiatives in partnership making to assist urban regeneration and community governance (ibid, 105). The distinction between the outgoing Conservative government and the incoming New Labour government was the new focus on partnership as a means of governance, as opposed to a market dominated approach (ibid, 105). Labour expanded the use of public-private partnerships, and also opened the policy process up to the voluntary sector. Partnerships became seen as a means to tackle complex policy issues, through increasing horizontal integration (ibid, 106). This was significant principally because it indicated that government began to accept that it did not have all the resources necessary to tackle issues like social exclusion, child poverty and housing issues. New Labour was openly accepting its *dependency* on outside sources from the private and voluntary sectors. Partnership, linked to the need for increasing horizontal integration, became a central element of the new 'network' governance. As such, networks not only grew in importance through the development of 'partnership', and attempts to 'join-up government', but they also became increasingly recognised as the new playground for public policy, through which it was felt policy could be 'steered' (Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 2000).

> Steering involves government learning a different 'operating code' which
> rests less on its authority to make decisions and instead builds on its
> capacity to create the conditions for positive-sum partnerships and setting

or changing the rules of the game to encourage what are perceived as

beneficial outcomes (Stoker, 2000: 98)

As such, the organisation of partnerships, and their institutional make-up became important to government, and any control it had over this process became increasingly significant.

This became evident through changes to the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office as a means to better coordinate policy across government (Newman, 2001: 107). A number of task forces were set up, such as the Social Exclusion Unit and the Performance and Innovation Unit with an emphasis on developing new policy initiatives through integrated local action through partnership. The need for vertical collaboration between central and local government, communities and users was also stressed in government rhetoric (ibid, 107). This should undoubtedly be seen as an attempt by government to reposition the apparatus of the state in an attempt to steer networks.

Newman (2001) argues that the government developed a more pragmatic approach to partnership based on an assessment of the 'potential costs as well as the benefits of collaboration' (2001: 125).

There appeared to be an increasing emphasis on partnership and

collaboration as tools to be used selectively – within the overall rubric of

'what works' – rather than as a universal panacea for defects in the

design of policy and management systems. That is, partnership working became embedded as a politically legitimated but essentially *managerial* strategy to be selected as appropriate by government as it learned from its experience (about the costs as well as the benefits of partnership) and adopted new political priorities (2001: 125).

The extent to which the dynamics of partnership working can be controlled by the state is open to interpretation and something that will be looked at in the next chapter. What should be questioned here is the ability of the state to control partnerships and networks effectively in the 'network society'. It is possible that some networks have become too highly integrated for government to have any ability to 'steer' them; or that the role of partnerships in the 'hollowing-out' of the state has brought about the 'further dispersal and penetration of state power (ibid, 125). It is also possible that the importance of partnerships and networks as a mode of governance has been overemphasised, both by government in an attempt to substantiate the New Labour government and the Third Way to a public sick of the harsh realities of the Market; and by academics prone to producing normative theory out of empirical research. As stressed the notion of partnership will be discussed in the next chapter, and these issues will be readdressed through my own empirical research.

5.5.2 Inclusion and representative democracy

Central to New Labour's engagement with partnership and networks has been the objective of promoting civic engagement and attempting to resolve the fracturing tendencies of the Conservatives Neo-Liberal agenda (ibid, 143). New Labour set out on an ambitious programme to try to redevelop the relationships between state, citizen and community (ibid, 143). This involved attempts to build social capital, to promote community leadership and enhance community capacity through policies on neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion (ibid, 144-145). The concept of social inclusion was also a part of European economic and social policy, appearing regularly in the EU's Social Chapter. New Labour's discourse on social inclusion overtly invoked a form of governance based on interrelated concepts of partnership, networks and coordination (ibid, 154). This was evident through New Labour's attempts to enrol the socially excluded with the deliberate extension of networks to include community based partnerships and 'self-governance', along with the better coordination of existing policies (ibid, 154).

Attempts to improve the connection between the state and citizen through more inclusive policy making has brought forward the idea of democratic innovation and more general issues with regards public participation. The mechanisms of partnership and networks developed by the Labour government require direct political involvement and deliberative and consensual forms of decision making that challenge the traditional system of representational democracy (ibid, 127). It is perhaps no surprise that these forms of

democratic innovation have arisen in conjunction with governance and the pluralisation of the socio-political system, and the greater engagement between the state and civil society. However, important questions still remain unanswered in terms of the relationship between representational democracy and its innovative counterparts. These innovative modes of democracy have become an important part of the 'new' governance, especially through partnership and network arrangements. Decisions are being made that affect the lives of citizens through unconventional channels, channels that many people are unfamiliar with, and yet in theory these channels represent a form of decision making which is much closer to the people. The rationale of New Labour in bringing about democratic innovation must be looked at more closely, and whether these innovative practices are simply a means to provide the mechanisms for network forms of governance. There has certainly been some care taken in ensuring that innovation is contained within the boundaries of local initiatives or marginal policy areas, rather than extending innovation to the mainstream (ibid, 142). This strategy overlooks the potential for institutional habits to breed, to grow legs, or to carve out a culture based on poorly defined democratic principles.

5.6 Conclusion

The new rural order has been framed in Britain through a rich discourse on the diversity of the rural economy and the potential for new forms of interaction. The LEADER programme adds to this discourse, and offers a way to break down traditional social ties relating to agricultural exceptionalism. New Labour continues to relate network forms of

governance with partnership and inclusion, both of which are perceived to be features of the LEADER programme. This is indicative of the widely held belief that partnership governance offers a way forward in terms of reducing the harsh reality of market led forms of coordination, by inducing more socially balanced forms of decision making. However, these partnership functions are not only reliant upon socially contingent structures, and their effective management, but a favourable political climate that embraces democratic equality and modernisation. The 'rural policy arena' has taken steps towards modernisation, and this is mirrored through a series of subsequent CAP reforms, but at the national level there are clear signs that momentum has been lost, and the modernising agenda scrapped in favour of 'cost-cutting'. This has wider implications for LEADER, relating to the wider importance attached to new and progressive forms of rural policy implementation. It is also a obvious example of the non-linear progression of politics and policy discourses, and these remain important conditioning elements in the new governance. I draw upon LEADER in the next chapter to show that retrenchment is widespread within the political system, by highlighting the tensions that exist between powerful discourses on area-based partnerships and the quality of the 'new' governance.

Chapter 6: 'Bottom-up' rural development: 'spin' democracy?

6.1 Introduction

The trend towards partnership and network governance mechanisms within public policy, as I have explained, has widespread significance across numerous policy sectors. In this chapter I want to look specifically at partnership and network governance at the local level through the LEADER rural development programme. Local level partnerships are synonymous with forms of community governance that rest heavily on the perceived benefits of strong networks of association discussed in chapter three. I will show how the LEADER programme has been presented as a means to enhance local governance through enhanced deliberative and inclusive policy making and implementation at the local level through the notion of 'bottom-up' rural development. The *design* of the LEADER programme in terms of governance and democratic anchorage has wider significance for the increasing use of community forms of governance within public policy. It is then imperative that the tensions within this mode of governance in terms of democracy and the quality of the governance system are explored. This importance rests on the potential for disparity between government rhetoric or discourse and the narratives of those people involved in local governance, its design, implementation and operation through their participation in LEADER and its LAGs.

Chapter three explored regional development theory, and how constituent notions of 'bottom-up' or endogenous rural development can be linked to the LEADER programme.

This chapter further explores the ways in which LEADER is presented as 'bottom-up', and more fundamentally how we are encouraged to understand this concept. From this initial investigation I want to talk in more detail about partnership governance, and then relate this back to LEADER and the notion of 'bottom-up' rural development. This then provides the basis to look at how this concept is interpreted and enacted by actors along the LEADER network. The narratives brought forward by these actors will be used to open up a broader discussion on the tensions associated with emerging forms of democracy. The chapter concludes by looking at partnership governance, and issues of democratic anchorage within the governance framework.

6.2 Interpreting LEADER as 'bottom-up' rural development

The *Guidelines for the Evaluation of LEADER+ Programmes* (2002) outlines broadly what the central aspects of a 'bottom-up' approach are in the case of LEADER. These guidelines were first formed in conjunction with LEADER I.

(The Guidelines for the Evaluation of LEADER+ Programmes, 2002)

These 'guidelines' offered by the European Commission on the principle of bottom-up rural development indicate that at the heart of this principle is the aim to 'encourage participatory decision-making at the local level' through the involvement of private, public and voluntary individuals and organizations. This participation can take place directly, through wide based community participation in the LAG; or through *representatives of 'collective' interests.* The link between this bottom-up approach and the idea that local ground level participation in the policy making process encourages capacity building is clearly made.

The original guidelines, as outlined in chapter 3, add little to our understanding of the 'bottom-up approach, other than clarifying the make up of the LAG partnerships, and the need for these to be territorially based. Defra's interpretation of those guidelines, below, differs little from the official guidelines.

Local action groups must consist of a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different socioeconomic sectors in the territory concerned. At the decision-making level the economic and social partners and associations must make up at least 50 % of the local partnership.

The members of a LAG must show that they are able to devise and implement a development strategy for the territory together.

The relevance and effectiveness of the partnership is to be assessed in terms of the transparency and clarity in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities. The capacity of the partners to carry out the tasks assigned to them, and the effectiveness of the operational and decision-making arrangements must be guaranteed.

The members of the LAG shall be locally based and must:

- either, select an administrative and financial leader with the ability to administer public funds who will be responsible for the satisfactory operation of the partnership,

- Or, come together in a legally-constituted common structure, the formal constitution of which guarantees the satisfactory operation of the partnership and the ability to administer public funds.

(England LEADER+ Programme 2000-2006, 2001)

The flexibility afforded the member states, through the EU guidelines on the programme, are presented as being based strongly on the idea that local communities should have the freedom to develop their own governing processes through the LAG partnership; while the composition of the partnership should be tailored towards the local strategy. This

approach is seen as a means to ensure that those practices that best suit the local community can be most appropriately developed in line with local needs and cultures. As one senior EU official confirmed.

In our guidelines we do not define the local partnership too much, but we do say that you should have representative actors that are also representing the content of the strategy. So if the strategy is very limited towards a certain domain like tourism, of course the composition of the partnership should reflect, a little, the orientation of the strategy. If the Local Action Group is a regional development agency with a more broad approach you should have all the partners, so it depends. (...) Normally the LAG population will be up to 150 thousand inhabitants, and we want to keep them local, and at the regional level...it should remain exceptional that we keep the local action local and the partners should be local (...)We need the partnership to remain local, to be close to the citizen, to be the expression of local community, but in terms of composition it's a freedom because it will be up to the partnership to decide a strategy, and to define itself, to define its territory, and to define its partnership (DG Agri Representative)

The LAG partnership is the key component of 'the LEADER approach' to rural development. From the perspective of the Commission, the LAG represents the means by which the 'bottom' is found, where community needs can be identified and development

can be tailored towards these needs. However, there is an inherent tension within the LEADER approach. This tension rest on the freedom afforded by the EU guidelines on the composition of the LAG, and the means by which identification of the LAG territory takes place; compared to the quality of these processes at the LAG level. For example, the extent to which the LAG territory is inclusive of a homogenous community or group of communities, and how much the partnership itself represents the territory, its communities and the local strategy should be questioned. Given the freedom of the EU Regulation and its guidelines, it seems clear that the Commission has little capacity to ensure the quality of the bottom-up approach. This sentiment is enforced through the following observation by a representative of the Commission:

As far as the Commission is concerned we see 'bottom-up' as delivery through the LAGs, we set a framework in place through the regulation, and as long as the managing authority can demonstrate that the criteria have been met, the Commission is then satisfied. Now if it's made up of the local elite in a local area, the Commission don't really have any great say if the regulation is being adhered to. Because that's the legal basis and the Commission can't say to a managing authority you're doing something wrong, the Commission can have an opinion but they can't actually influence the managing authority outside of the regulation (DG Agri Representative).

This observation was mirrored through Defra, England's managing authority, during an interview of a representative:

> The rules are quite general, and then within that, how these rules evolve in each area is quite organic. And you will always get a lot of variation, because it depends on the support of the organisations involved, and the style and the quality of individuals. I suppose that is all part of the bottom up approach, you can only get consistency everywhere if you have some quite strong central, top down direction and control (Defra representative)

The flexibility the EU offers the LAG partnership is respected at the national level. The quality of the partnership and the processes through which decision making is made rests heavily, as recognised above, on the quality of the organisations and the individuals within the LAG. This means that not only is the LAG dependent on actors to bring something to the table in terms of social capital, but also in terms of a knowledge of civic engagement and decision making practices.

According to Giorgio Osti the method of 'bottom-up' rural development is based on two principles: 'decisions should be taken by bodies located as close as possible to the areas of intervention (subsidiarity principle); and the hierarchy of decision-making functions should be replaced by negotiating mechanisms which theoretically involve all bodies on an equal footing (partnership principle)' (2000: 172). The former should be linked with

the concern, through LEADER, for capacity building at a territorial level. Subsidiarity is a important principle within the EU context and rests on a belief that 'the Community must not undertake and regulate what can be managed or regulated more efficiently at national or regional levels' (Moussis, 2004: 30). Participation is closely aligned with the principle of subsidiarity, as it is seen as a means through which local people can develop the capacity of a local economy through strengthening the 'knowledge, skills and attitudes of people so that they can establish and sustain their area's development' (Mannion, 1996: 2). The LAG is then seen as a 'partnership of local organisations and people who live or work in the area, know it inside-out and have the drive, desire and commitment to push through improvement' (Defra, LEADER; 2005). This is closely related to Osti's latter point, which identifies the importance of a non-hierarchical decision making processes at the local level by engaging with the potential offered by partnership in building local capacity.

The process of 'bottom-up' rural development is a poorly defined term within EU legislation and guidelines, and policy discourses at the EU and national level. It represents a call for participatory decision making at the local level, with no guidelines on what 'democratic' processes and structures should be employed. The omission of which is presented as a belief in the notion that this kind of flexibility will best encourage processes and structures that are the most suitable to the partnership in question, and as such are seen as the most effective means to build local capacity. The extent to which this is evident needs to be explored through a better understanding of the bottom-up approach, and under what conditions local capacity is best built. However, the relationship between

this approach and the building of local capacity cannot take place within the context of LEADER without referring to the aim of participatory decision-making across the population of the LAG territory at large, bringing together a range of private, public and voluntary representatives.

The extent to which the LEADER partnerships are to be representative of the LAG territory is loosely worded within the EU guidelines. The wider discourse alludes to the notion of representation loosely but this still has the effect of presenting LEADER as a representative process. Policy documents on the subject are made up of statements, such as; 'participatory decision-making can ensure, insofar as it functions efficiently, a wide and fair representation of all groups of interest, thus creating an occasion for building up a consensus, dealing with conflicts and fostering interrelationships between sectors and groups' (LEADER European Observatory, 1999). Defra outlines that 'The extent to which the partnership is a balanced grouping (number and nature of participants), genuinely locally based (i.e. living or having a significant work interest in the local action group area) and representative of the area and the wider community' (Defra, LEADER; 2001) would be taken into account in the selection of bids from LAGs to host the programme. An evaluation of the LEADER II programme funded by the Commission reported that the success of the bottom-up approach partly rested on a 'representative partnership' (European Commission, Agriculture Directorate-General, 2003).

Given the flexibility afforded the LAG partnership, in terms of its composition, there is undoubtedly a risk that the partnerships do not attain the standards expected through the

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'bottom-up' approach. The standards associated with the LEADER approach to rural development may not be enforced through EU law, but the wider discourse and rhetoric, as presented, constructs an approach that rests on community wide participation through the LAG. Given the flexibility in the regulations, and the nature of the bottom-up approach, participation is important not only in terms of collective agency and interactive regeneration, but also as a means to ensure that there are some democratic checks in place within this deliberative system. This works on the principle that,

> A broad and diverse partnership is a good thing, because if you do get people who start to monopolise [the partnership] it's fairly clear. As you tend to find people get dissatisfied and start withdrawing from the partnership, and it would just fall flat on itself (Defra Representative).

This belief in partnership, and its ability to ensure a widespread and fair 'democratic' process was a widely held belief among those representatives I spoke to at Defra.

> It's very hard to police without having an army going in there, but I think in some ways you do rely a lot on the fact that there is a range of people in this partnership, and if there is that and the Programme Monitoring Committee keeping an eye on things, hopefully they are responsible and proactive, you are relying on the fact that it is a partnership and that people are keeping each other in line, it is certainly not going to guarantee that you do not have some kind of power struggle, or some

more powerful individuals and organisations using the partnership to
their own ends (Defra representative)

The LEADER approach to bottom-up rural development presents well functioning participatory decision-making as a means to ensure effective representation within the LAG partnerships. It is the discourse surrounding this aspect of the LEADER approach that gives the impression that the governance of LEADER carries some democratic anchorage and structure, and as such it is important to examine the interconnecting themes that characterise the LEADER approach.

6.3 Territory and Community

Collective capacity building through the LEADER programme also rests on the concern for territorial capacity building through the construction of 'territories as communities'. Shucksmith criticizes this approach, and is concerned by the potential of the territorial approach 'to mask inequalities and power relations between social actors within a 'community' by employing a consensus perspective' (2000: 209). He argues that the process of symbolic construction can create a dominant form of cultural identity that excludes and disempowers those residents that have limited affinity with what has been constructed (2000: 210). This can have the effect of obscuring differences such as class, ethnicity and gender that require a development approach that also builds the capacity of individuals (ibid, 209).

It is apparent that the discourse of LEADER elides community with territory, as an unproblematic and homogenous 'community of place'. Yet it has long been established that communities of place are far from homogenous and include many 'communities of interest', with highly unequal capacities to act. And is it only the capacity of 'communities' (of place or of interest) that is to be built, or might development seek to build also the capacity of individuals (especially disadvantaged individuals) to act? (ibid, 208).

There is evidence to suggest, based on my research, that the focus LAGs network did not stretch evenly across its territory. A representative of a high profile community based charity gave the following reference to their involvement with the focus LAG, and their attempts to develop a project within its territory.

We have had difficulties operating up there because there are natural tensions between local organisations who have been very inward looking, and feeling as though they have ownership over activity in their area, so we found it quite difficult, we have found it quite challenging to engage them at times. When you get an organisation like that [a LAG] they can be quite inward looking and they can be quite territorial, and they can lose the kind of innovation and expertise that can come from outside and from other parties by looking outside the box and seeing what else is going on. I guess the danger is just that it becomes a body which is as

much about maintaining itself and its own infrastructure, as about

working with the community, and not necessarily as engaging as well as

with other partners and being aware of other ways of doing things. Some

things they wouldn't have the critical mass to do, but in principle I am

not against such organisations (Community based charity representative)

This representative was giving reference to their own involvement with the focus LAG, and their attempts to develop a project within its territory. The problems this charity faced, in what was eventually a successful project, indicates that the focus LAG can represent a 'closed' policy network which can be difficult for those not within it to access, despite inhabiting the LAG territory. There is also a sense that outside interest is not actively welcome, and deemed a threat to the stability of the policy network. As indicated in chapter 3, the focus LAGs committee meetings are closed to the public, and as I discovered, access to these is dependent on the management team seeking approval from its supervisors within RegCo.

A closer look at the geographical location of the projects within the LAG territory reveals which areas of the focus LAGs territory benefit the most. By looking closely at the 'Business Support and Development Grant Scheme', which has a budget of £429,000 (not including match funding), the highest out of all the grant schemes available; and the 'Community Projects Grant Scheme', which has a budget of £63,750 (not including match funding), it is possible to see that a geographical bias exists. Table 1, which relates to the Business Support and Development Grant, indicates that Bideford, where the LAG

and its management team are based, has the highest level of projects with 36. This represents 28.6% of all projects funded through this grant, while Bideford's population only represents 11.5% of the wider population living in the LAG territory. The next nearest number of projects is 14 in Ilfracombe, representing 11.1% of all projects under this grant. This is a more balanced ratio compared to the size of the population, which represents 8.6% of the wider population living in the LAG territory. Overall 60.5% of grants were given to individuals and organisations in only 7 parishes, out of the 105 parishes of the territory, representing just over 40% of the population[10].

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[10] The population of the focus LAG territory is 125, 749, that is made up of 66, 748 in North Devon District (excluding Barnstaple), and 58, 965 in Torridge District (Devon Libraries Local Studies Service, Devon County Council).

Table 3. Business Support and Development Grant Scheme

Parishes with five or more successful grant applications (Total number of grants = 126)					
Parish	Successful applicants	% of total	Population	% of total territory population	Council District
Bideford	36	28.6%	14, 407	11.5%	Torridge
Illfracombe	14	11.1%	10, 840	8.6%	North Devon
Holsworthy	6	4.8%	2, 256	1.8%	Torridge
Braunton	5	4%	7, 510	6%	North Devon
Hartland	5	4%	1, 676	1.3%	Torridge
Northam	5	4%	11, 604	9.2%	Torridge
South Molton	5	4%	4, 093	3.3%	North Devon
Total	76	60.5%	52, 386	41.7%	

Source: North Devon LEADER+ Information – March 2007 and Devon Libraries Local Studies Service, Devon County Council

Table 2 refers to the Community Projects Grant Scheme, which is only made up of 24 grants. Bideford, again, received the most number of grants, representing 20.8% of the total, with the next highest number of successful applicants living in Northam (12.5%), which lies less than two miles north of Bideford. Interestingly, the majority of the 24 grants were given to parishes in Torridge district (66.6%), with individuals and

organisations in North Devon district only receiving 33.3% of all grants in this scheme. This is similar to the breakdown for Table 3, where 68.4% of the 76 projects represented were in Torridge, compared to only 31.6% of successful applicants in North Devon. This indicates that there is a clear bias towards Torridge, despite North Devon having a slightly larger population.

Table 4. Community Projects Grant Scheme

Parishes with 2 or more successful grant applications (Total number of grants = 24)					
Parish	Successful applicants	% of total	Population	% of total territory population	Council District
Bideford	5	20.8%	14, 407	11.5%	Torridge
Northam	3	12.5%	11, 604	9.2%	Torridge
Holsworthy	2	8.3%	2, 256	1.8%	Torridge
Instow	2	8.3%	786	0.62%	North Devon
Lynton/Lynmouth	2	8.3%	1, 513	1.2%	North Devon
Totals	14	66.5%	30, 506	24.3%	

Source: North Devon LEADER+ Information – March 2007 and Devon Libraries Local Studies Service, Devon County Council

Based on this evidence, funds are not allocated in a geographically balanced way. There is clearly a concentration of funding in Bideford, and the district of Torridge. This indicates a positive relationship between the LAGs location in Torridge and the number

of successful applications there. There is evidence to suggest that this bias exists because Torridge was the focus of the LEADER II programme (1995-1999), which did not encompass North Devon. This programme was again managed by RegCo, and based in Bideford.

The previous programme provides the basis for embedded network relations that are structured around a pre-existing policy 'community'. This might help explain the focus of funding in Torridge. In particular, public awareness of the opportunities offered by the LEADER programme is more likely to be concentrated in this area. It is also likely that LEADER has become strongly identified with Bideford. In effect, because the focus LAG is based in Bideford, local groups and individuals are more familiar with it, have a better grasp of what it does, and are more likely to know someone who has benefited from it, and as such are more likely to pick up the telephone, or drop an e-mail to the management team, to find out more. It is likely that the policy network associated with LEADER II in Torridge built up some, if not all, of the following network characteristics: "embedded routines", "habits and norms", "local conventions of communication and interaction", "reciprocity and trust based on familiarity" (Amin, 1999). At the outset of the current programme there was little effort to extend the policy network into North Devon, with the pre-existing policy 'community' playing an important role in shaping the current programme. An existing member of this 'community' describes the consultation phase for the new programme.

> We knew a lot of people anyway having operated on the ground for a few
> years, and so it was relatively easy really, we knew all the actors and

anybody who wanted to participate, and just added on anybody that
might be of interest (LAG member).

This indicates that the pre-existing policy network was drawn upon heavily to inform this consultation phase. In fact, the original LAG partnership was made up of 40 people from Torridge (75.5%), and only 8 from North Devon (15%), the remaining 9.4% came from outside the LAG territory (5 people) (NW Devon LEADER+, 2001).

This clearly shows that the LAG partnership has not been extended significantly to engage with, or represent, a good cross section of the LAG territory. This defies the principles of the LEADER approach set out in chapter 3, and suggests that crucial elements of the 'bottom-up' approach to rural development have been overlooked. The management team have failed to counterbalance the pre-existing policy community based around Bideford, by taking the LEADER programme to 'the people' and extending the policy network to the wider LAG territory, encompassing North Devon. As a result, North Devon is at a disadvantage, and this underlines the difficulty of converting the powers of association across a policy network to a specific territory.

This narrative implies that the construction of state territories and eliding these constructions with community, conditions power relations in a specific way. These relations can potentially exclude those individuals and groups who have limited affinity with, or access to, the dominant relations of power. This may, as a consequence, engender a belief that their objectives cannot be met, potentially leading to a lack of interest in

these governing structures. LEADER type partnerships may actually begin to advance the problem of apathy towards the political system. This is ironically the very problem some commentators believe deliberative democracy may help overcome. The 'bottom-up' approach to rural development attached to LEADER becomes politically mobile through the discourse on participation, collective capacity building and the LAG territories. This discourse (re-)enforces a number of political tensions by poorly observing fundamental democratic principles, principles that are so poorly developed in the official documentation.

We should see the territorial approach as an initial attempt to reconfigure a new rural compromise not centred on traditional structures of power. Initially LEADER was conceived in the 1980's out of a desire for social and economic cohesion, in an increasingly liberalized world. The ability to compete even within the confines of the European Community (as it was then) varied greatly from region to region. The extent to which some rural regions had moved away from a peasant based society varied greatly, especially with the advent of the Southern European States into the EC in 1986. LEADER, although initially on an experimental level, was developed to improve cohesion across the Community, and as such should also be seen as an attempt to develop the rural economy. In turn, the LEADER initiative has sought to re-define relations of power through an inclusive policy process. A retired member of the Commission, who played a key role in the development of the Cork Conference (1996) and the LEADER approach, spoke of this process:

The problems inside agriculture stem from the fact that the CAP is a sectoral approach, LEADER is important because it's purely a territorial approach... On the one hand you have Mrs Thatcher pushing for liberalisation and one big single market, on the other hand was Jacques Delores. The broad context is the following one: We are going back to 1985 or 1986 and Delores [came along and] said ok that's fine, but he was a socialist and a French man very much concerned about those that would not be able to be competitive in a single market. He saw the difficulties which a big single market would create, applying survival of the fittest, and he questioned what would happen to those people that would not be able to adapt in time, to be competitive, which was certainly the case for a lot of areas in France suffering, at that time, from migration to urban centres. Villages were becoming deserted, and so his concern was on the one hand to work for the single market, and on the other hand to work on a counter weight, and this is the origin of two concepts found in the Single European Act, the concepts of economic and social cohesion. (Former senior official to the Commission)

There is undoubtedly an attempt through the discourse on LEADER to reconfigure the power relations existing in rural policy, and this seems to be taking effect within the LAG partnership.

We get the odd person who have pushed farming, farming, farming,

farming, farming, and that's ok because people are clever enough to

understand now that this single issue is not the be all and end all, it's just

part of everything else in rural areas (LAG representative)

LEADER is representative of a shift in rural policy, and it has developed in line with the increasing impetus behind changing power relations in this area. It may represent one attempt at further redesigning the rural policy network and its key actors.

The potential reconfiguration of rural power relations has wide implications in terms of the shape of the rural policy arena. The territorial approach is a significant development in rural policy given the dominance of the CAP, and its implications in terms of positioning sector interests at the forefront of rural policy. This is not to say, however, that LEADER has the ability to reconfigure power relations on its own, nevertheless it may go some way in empowering or mobilising those changes that New Labour deems attractive. At the heart of the territorial approach is a desire to bring the decision making process to 'the people', but this rests heavily upon effective processes of partnership and participation, and it is to these I now turn.

6.4 Evidence of partnership and participation in LEADER

Partnership and participation have become synonymous with the perceived shift to network governance. Vivien Lowndes and Helen Sullivan (2004) have examined the

relationship between partnership and public participation. They contend that participation and partnership have "co-evolved" as key instruments of New Labour's programme for the 'modernisation' and 'democratic renewal' of British public services (2004: 52). However, these terms should not automatically be placed together as there is no certainty that partnership working does indeed promote participation better than traditional bureaucratic structures, or market alternatives (ibid, 52). At the same time there is also tension between participatory forms of democracy associated with the emerging 'partnership governance', and representative forms of democracy associated with traditional bureaucratic structures.

Christopher Ray has discussed the relationship between participative and representative forms of democracy within the context of the LEADER programme. He states:

> The 'problem' for initiatives such as LEADER is that their rhetoric includes an invitation to populist participation but their implementation requires the political and financial support of the organs of the orthodox politico-administrative system (1999: 528).

Ray goes on to add that LEADER has been accused of being undemocratic, especially when the programme has been implemented through the private sector or where the geographical boundaries have not conformed to those of local authorities. The legitimacy of using private sector bodies to implement the LEADER programme does not necessarily equate with being undemocratic. There is no reason why a private body, such

as RegCo, cannot oversee the machinery of democracy, but as with the state, standards must be upheld, and the quality of the system monitored. The *design of governance*, and in particular the nature of the relationship between partnership governance and the orthodox politico-administrative system, must be clearly defined.

The focus LAG was shaped by a number of centrally driven demands, principally those relating to monetary issues. These demands undeniably had an influence on the quality of the democratic anchorage present and the legitimacy of the partnership. As one manager for a South West LAG indicated:

> There are two arms to LEADER, one to be frank is about spending the money because you have got to, but the other, and for us I think the more significant is this process of local governance. I think the problem is, as for all of the programmes that Defra have been overseeing, there is obligation to spend the money, there is an obligation to spend the money within a particular time frame, but there has been no kind of similar obligation to look at, or to seriously take on board, the process of local governance, to really look at the positive and proactive things you can do in your area. It does feel like a large proportion of LEADER groups have not paid that any regard and have missed the opportunity, because there was no emphasis on that from a Defra level, the emphasis has been on spending the money (LAG manager in the South West).

The concern over LAG spending, and the pressure felt by LAG managers in particular to spend the funding available comes from a wider concern over the efficiency of the LAG partnerships as a delivery mechanism. A regional level actor responsible for monitoring the programme noted that:

> From my monitoring point of view government procedures where clearly concerned with where the money was being spent, and whether it was being spent in the right place. I was not looking at how they were getting information from the community to develop these projects. These monitoring reports are very typical of a lot of the monitoring reports out there (Former RDS employeee)

It is possible that this concern for the efficiency of the partnership has an effect on the level of participation and in turn the quality of the partnership. This sentiment is reflected by one LAG manager I interviewed:

> It's not just about spending the money, it's also about developing the process and that process is a process of supporting and developing local governance and encouraging people to take control and encouraging people to get involved and encouraging people to be able to make a positive difference, and that does seem to get lost in some programmes which are run just as though they were just grant programmes (LAG manager in the South West).

This concern for economic efficiency over the democratic processes attached to partnership is reinforced through scepticism towards deliberative decision making. This scepticism certainly existed among the focus LAG, and following comments by one of its members highlights some of the potential pitfalls of a deliberative approach to decision making and policy implementation in respect of partners' capacity to devote their time, especially in line with questioning related to the potential for a more inclusive LAG.

> I think with a big broad LAG, it can get too broad and you spend a long time in conversation, you are going to get meeting fatigue and people are going to start falling off fairly quickly, or turning up to meetings where there is something that is a clear interest to them. The other problem is the capacity of people to give up their time (LAG representative)

There is clearly a tension here in terms of the demands placed upon individuals through their participation in governance partnerships. This point is quite often overlooked in the literature. The capacity of individuals to be able to spare the time to partake in partnerships is seen to be a problem, and it is felt this capacity would be further stretched if the partnerships were larger, and more inclusive, as the decision making process would potentially take longer, especially through deliberation. This kind of tension can be resolved through improving the partnership process, and the decision making element within it. It was common for my interviewees to stress the demands placed on their time by being involved in the focus LAG. This reflects a culture of 'non-participation' in this

country, where the vast majority of individuals are not prone to giving up their free time to civic functions. There are, of course, many people that do, but there was widespread agreement among my interviewees that these people tend to be "older retired people", which is common in a local level voluntary programme such as LEADER.

The focus LAG did not seem to carry the same concern with participation as other LAGs. The following passage underlines the importance attached to the process of bottom-up rural development, the same level of importance was not attached by the focus LAG.

> For us it was just really essential that if we were talking about a bottom-up programme then we actually had to involve local people in that decision making process, and it had to be transparent and open as possible, so that all the other local people in the area, who were not necessarily wanting to get involved in the LAG, but may have wanted to know what was going on, or may have wanted to apply for some money, they knew exactly what was going on, they knew how the decision making process was working, they could come along to meetings, they could here the kind of discussions, so that everything we did as a programme was completely open and accessible to everybody in the area... LEADER shouldn't just be another grant scheme because its not just about spending the money, it's also about developing the process and that process is a process of supporting and developing local governance and encouraging people to take control and encouraging people to get

involved and encouraging people to be able to make a positive difference, and that does seem to get lost in some programmes (Chalk and Cheese LAG representative).

No one I spoke to from the focus LAG suggested that the partnership process was a high priority, instead it was identified as problematic in nature, and there seemed little interest in engaging new strategies to turn this around. A representative of the focus LAG management team described some of the particular problems in getting the partnership together and keeping participation high.

We put out adverts in local community newspapers and things like that, we asked members to put forward people that they thought might be appropriate. We do try and approach a cross section of society, if possible, but the nature of people who have time to volunteer in this area is that they tend to be older retired people… The time of our meeting at the moment is 10am on a Friday which isn't ideal, we have looked at it, if we change it to the evening we are not necessarily going to pick up any extra people because in the summer people are out doing things or those among the agricultural sector are out working, in the winter no one wants go out on a dark windy night to go to a meeting (Focus LAG manager)

There is no doubt that the process by which the partnership is formed and held together is not an easy one. The level of participation within the focus LAG has dropped significantly since the outset of the current programme, and as the programme draws to a

close the LAG appears to be at very low ebb. This is a problem because it means a great deal of hard work will be required to build the programme up again as bidding commences for the new round of LEADER. I found a great deal of variation on the quality of the partnership process throughout my research, with some LAGs having a very proactive and positive approach to local participation, while others did not. The focus LAG I would say can be placed somewhere in between these two poles. The LAG partnership I witnessed was made up of individuals from the local community, representatives of local organisations and business, including charities and environmental groups, and the majority of these actors seemed to be positioned as carrying some form of expertise.

There was not a great deal of local authority involvement in the partnership, other than on paper through the statutory roles of both Torridge and North Devon District Councils and Devon County Council. The vast majority of council officials I spoke to did not feel as though they had time to attend LAG meetings, and were more focused on the overall strategy for delivering policies in their respective districts. The accountable body for the NW Devon programme, RegCo, seemed heavily represented in the LAG, probably because of the relatively low turnout at the LAG meeting I attended, and some of these representatives were only there in an administrative capacity. The meeting was organised well by the LAG Chairman, who promoted an active debate, and I cannot find fault with the partnership process in question. However, I do think that there is plenty of room for improving the level of participation within this LAG, and the wider concern for the practices of 'bottom-up' rural development. The description of the process by which the

focus LAG describes the enrolment process and some of the problems with engendering widespread representative participation of the LAG territory seemed somewhat weak. It would however, be fair to acknowledge that the capacity for the LAG to be able to do this does not necessarily come down to the quality of the LAG manager, but the resources available, the culture of participation in the area, and the institutional trends enforced through RegCo. The LAG manager was new at the outset of the current programme, and had no prior experience of running a LEADER programme. This may have resulted in greater reliance on the knowledge of existing members of the LEADER policy 'community' in Torridge, and in turn reinforced this community's position and in turn limited the geographical scope of the programme.

Nevertheless, the focus LAG and its management team did not seem concerned with using LEADER as a means to induce greater participation across its territory, and seemed more concerned with fulfilling its technocratic functions. The focus LAG had a closed feeling not conducive to civic engagement. The premises from which the focus LAG operate is not appropriate for a public body. Not only is the entrance to the building difficult to find, but public access is restricted, and by appointment only. There is no indication that LEADER is being operated from the building within the reception area, which is fronted by reception staff who have little, if any, knowledge of LEADER. Furthermore, gaining access to the LAG meetings was a drawn out process, and by no means guaranteed, with the LAG manager having to ask permission from officials within RegCo. To add to this poor record of public access I had no response from the managing authority (RegCo) to discuss their role despite several attempts to get a response, and the

quality of the minutes of the committee meetings was very poor. In fact, they were so poor they provided little initial insight into the decision making process. The minutes resembled a series of very brief bullet points describing what was discussed at each meeting, they did not state who said what, and at what time, and failed to provide any clear detail on how discussions had unfolded and how decisions were made.

6.5 The nature of participation: expert versus collective action

Given the freedom of the LAG partnerships to adapt the LEADER approach to their own ends it would not be surprising to find some innate tensions in how this approach is applied. In the focus LAG it seems there exists a theoretical tension within how the bottom-up approach is interpreted across the LEADER network. In this debate, we see at one side the view that the LAG partnerships should be made up of a broad and representative body within the LAG territory, while on the other side resides the view that these partnerships should be predominantly made up of professional experts, and actors with an organizational remit.

A member of the focus LAG argued that the participatory principles of the bottom-up approach should be tempered through the expertise of professionalism.

> You have got to have a professional level of input into designing the
> projects so that they will work, and there is that knowledge of whether it
> has been tried elsewhere? Did it work? And if not, why not, and how do

you sort of improve on that? So the bottom-up approach is good for generating the ideas and ownership, but at some point there is a professional thing that comes in and says that's great but that won't really work, but it might if you did this (LAG Representative).

Another LAG member, for example, with wide strategic influence in the area through their influential position in local policy delivery questions whether those actors without an organizational remit should participate, because they carry no 'standing' or 'remit' of accountability.

If, for example, your partners are going to be made up of, the chamber of commerce, or the federation of small businesses, or the local council, or environmental groups, at least they represent a range of interests or businesses, at least they have got a platform from which to speak, the rest of them say uncle Tom Cobley from the street, they don't have any remit, they don't report back to anybody, they have got no standing if you like, and you question whether that is right (LAG Representative).

This sentiment is representative of some of the concerns over participatory forms of decision making in respect to issues of accountability, and the lack of prudence that can envelop a partnership that does not carry a suitable level of 'expertise'.

However, this issue does beg the question where the line should be drawn between expert involvement in these partnerships, and simply wide and territorially representative participation. This point is amplified by the simple reality that a lot of the experts sitting around the table do carry an organizational remit, and their expertise is influenced by the objectives of that organization, and not necessarily based entirely on expert local knowledge, and community interests. Many of the individuals sitting around the table, "say uncle Tom Cobley", who do not carry 'professional expertise', may indeed have other forms of knowledge that develop the potential for the production of 'capital'. This capital may be further developed through these individuals because they don't have the same organizational or institutional restraints carried by the 'professionals' and it makes for a different 'quality' of input. Significantly, I question whether a governance partnership without these people involved can claim to be either representative or to improve local democracy.

There are certainly a number of actors across the LEADER network that does support an inclusive approach to partnership, as a means to enhance rural development.

It's only over the last 20 years or so that there has been such an emphasis on the involvement of local people, ordinary people directly involved in public policy, and I am strongly in favour of it. I think there are three reasons why it's important. One is that you are able to get extra thoughts and ideas that otherwise you completely miss out, an extra perspective on the situation. The second is by involving people, people feel involved in

the process, and as a consequence you may be able to mobilise them. The third reason is that a policy is likely to be accepted more if people have been involved. And then I suppose there is a fourth reason, a certain social justice in saying well it's my area as much as yours and I have the right to influence its development as much as you (LEADER research body representative).

This debate, across the LEADER network, can be aligned with the wider debate among social capital theorists about the potential of the concept in economic and social terms. What should be the last point here is that LEADER is an attempt at social and economic cohesion and as such the approach employed toward social capital should mirror this, if we are to believe EU rhetoric.

6.6 Strategic Imagination of the State

Edwards et al. believe that the "strategic imagination of the state is evident in the formulation of official discourse of partnership working which bestow on partnerships meanings consistent with the wider regulatory objectives of the state" (2001: 306). This may explain why the LAG partnership falls short of offering a fully participative agenda. My data suggests that the state conditions the LAG through its strategic demands. The state is able to mediate this relationship by ensuring local actors do not threaten the core interests of the state (*ibid*, 306). This situation is reinforced through the states domination of channels of financing, resourcing and rule setting (*ibid*, 306). This conjecture does not

account for the role of the EU, and this is something that must be considered in the next chapter.

The role of local government in terms of the wider strategy of the state deserves some attention. It was clear through my research that the local authorities did not play a direct role in the LAG partnership. However, the lack of direct influence from local government in the focus LAG does not mean that the local authority was not engaged with the LAG. In fact, the focus LAG was seen to play an important role in public policy delivery despite there been a clear separation between the local authority and the focus LAG. A representative of the Local Authority, who had a strategic focus, described how they saw this relationship between partnership governance and local government.

> We see it more of a delivery agency than a governance agency to be honest. Yeah, I mean it all helps; I mean you can't govern unless you have got a means to deliver. So the two functions aren't completely separate, the emphasis within LEADER, within the regeneration company is delivery. The emphasis within local authorities is governance. It is an interesting relationship, but it does help to deliver in rural communities and its part of our purpose as local authorities to deliver. (...) LEADER+ helps us to deliver those priority areas, so it's a very good alignment (Local Government representative).

The LAG is seen by the local authority as purely a delivery agency. Now there does appear to be some confusion over the role of the LAG in terms of local governance in this statement. However, this representative does accept the LAG does play a role in the process of governance, but clearly, this role is seen as coming second to its principal role as a delivery mechanism. While the local authority believes that in strategic terms, the governance of governance (meta-governance) is the domain of the local authorities at this level.

An experienced political analyst, with a great deal of knowledge of the LEADER programme described the important role these partnerships can play.

> I think these partnerships are an extension of local government to some extent. There has been this general trend away from government to governance at the local level with a lot of other agencies being embraced. The situation is almost too complex now for the local authorities to do everything, so it is an extension of it or from it (Political analyst).

This insight offers the view that the LAG partnership may well be an extension of the local authority in some way. By claiming that the LAG partnerships may well represent an 'extension of' local government 'or from it' implies that this is not necessarily a consequence of strategy coming from the local authority, but instead implies that it may be born out of local government's struggle to comprehend new and complex challenges in public policy and its administration. From where this impetus comes is the focus of the

next chapter. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw the following conclusion: local authorities appeared to have little strategic influence in the focus LAG, despite claims to the contrary.

It is necessary to add that in terms of the strategic operation of the 'state', partnership governance has no constitutional requirement to be democratic. Partnerships were born and have developed out of neo-liberal attempts to devolve decision making away from the state, ensuring there is sufficient separation between the state, and market mechanisms.

However, the nature of partnership has changed in line with political ideology, with the shift from NPM to the Third Way. Partnerships like those associated with LEADER, are founded upon new forms of collective action. This is often perceived as a response to the harsh realities of the market, and its inability to tackle complex social problems. In line with this, partnerships, as set out above, are increasingly being associated with new forms of inclusive and deliberative decision making. In the previous section I discussed the tensions connected with these mechanisms through the focus LAG. The most striking feature of these practices was the level of freedom the partnership had over these mechanisms, and the lack of democratic rigour within the LAG. This conclusion is based on the assumption that these mechanisms should be an extension of those same standards of democracy associated with the liberal democratic state. However, perhaps it is inappropriate to measure the quality of these mechanisms through those same standards. I would argue that in line with partnerships developed under the NPM, new partnership arrangements are seen to be most effective if there is separation between the state, and

these new partnership arrangements. This point is partly supported through regional development theory, discussed in chapter three, which supports an argument for local associational forms of governing based upon local cultures and norms. However, this theoretical work does not go as far as saying that this form of development is dependent on a formal separation of powers between the state and governing partnerships. Nonetheless, a great deal of separation appears to exist between the state and the focus LAG in certain areas of the programme's delivery. The state's primary focus is ensuring a cost-effective delivery process, leaving other aspects of the policies delivery, such as decision-making, completely to the LAGs discretion. This makes for very cost efficient policy delivery mechanism, but fails to ensure the programme is delivered effectively. This does not mean that the state does not have good intentions by embarking on partnership forms of delivery, but too many compromises (especially in terms of resources) have been made to enable this process to follow the same standards associated with those traditional processes at the heart of the liberal democratic state.

6.7 Network governance and democracy: a theoretical synopsis

In the section above, I try to show some of the tensions that are evident in the LEADER approach to partnership. As a result the focus of the chapter so far has been the much vaunted 'bottom-up' approach presented through the discourse attached to LEADER. This approach is reinforced through wider government rhetoric and in relation to partnership and participation. In the following section I want to consider how democracy relates to network governance, and the strategic restructuring of the state. Klijn and

Skelcher offer four conjectures on the relationship between governance networks and democracy. I use these here to explore more generally whether the new governance and democracy are inappropriate allies.

The first conjecture rests on the notion that representative democracy and governance networks are incompatible. First, governance networks represent a multilevel system, where sovereignty is shared between sub-national, national and supranational institutions. This challenges the hegemony of the state, and as a consequence, the construction of 'the people' as the self regulating sovereign (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007: 593). The focus of LEADER is a set of local level partnerships that are deemed to hold sovereignty over the decisions it makes. Nevertheless, the focus LAG can be placed within a wider context, framed by the wider LEADER network, its dominant narratives and a set of highly politicised interactions. In other words, this is an EU programme shaped by a multilevel policy network. In this context, sovereignty is a political construction designed to frame the practices of the state, but any sovereign body is continuously under attack from discourses of power. The level of 'sovereignty' that exists at the local level, in the context of the LAG, is contingent upon the influence of those interactions across the wider network. These interactions will be explored in the next chapter, but it is important to recognise that political sovereignty, instead of being an expression of 'the people', is a contested area shaped by powerful discourses and interactions of power across the policy network (ibid, 593). As part of the new world order, developed in the previous chapter, sovereignty may be increasingly contested by ever more extensive policy networks. This

may make using the term theoretically problematic within the new network society, as its association with the political stability of the state under the countenance of 'the people' is no longer entirely applicable.

Sorensen, also argues that the involvement of public administrators in facilitating and coordinating governance networks has put the role of the public administrator within the process of democracy under a new light (ibid, 593). This gives public administrators the leeway to re-construct governing structures and norms, while also conditioning democratic practice in line with governance objectives. This is a clear advantage of partnership governance from a public policy maker's perspective, while this scenario may not be wholly acceptable under the terms of traditional representative democracy, given that traditional theories of representative democracy rest on a separation between the political system and society. As such, governance networks are seen to challenge this separation, especially through the perception that they are presented as a means to engage multiple actors across the boundary between state, market and civil society (ibid, 593).

Within this perspective the closed nature of decision making is explored along with its sectorization (or the compartmentalization of policy making in separate policy sectors) (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007: 593). Klijn and Skelcher add:

> [This] stresses the limited accessibility of decision-making arenas for non-specialized non-organized interest groups. The relatively closed nature of decision making and the characteristics of the sector result in a

dominant involvement of sector specialists and tends to increase the

participation of technical actors and specialists appointed to quasi-

governmental bodies at the expense of elected politicians (2007: 593).

This has implications for accountability within public administration, as the primacy of

politics and the political accountability of ministers and other elected executive office

holders is interfered with and threatened by the sectorization of governance networks

(ibid, 593). The emphasis of this point should be slightly different in the case of

endogenous governance networks, but the overall point is the same: policy networks are

very malleable to dominant relations of power. This is identified above through my own

empirical work where the focus LAG partnership represents a relatively closed policy

network, based on professional expertise, and lacking the level of accountability expected

through those norms attached to traditional representative democracy. This poses as much

a threat to the primacy of politics and executive office holders as it does to individual

interests.

A number of critics disagree with the prescription that network governance and

democracy are incompatible. Papadopoulos (2000) argues that this argument has two

main weaknesses. Firstly, this critique is based on an idealized or classical view of

representative democracy that does not take account of the recent modifications within

the theoretical and empirical literature. Secondly, this prescription takes little account of

the complexities surrounding issues of accountability within contemporary liberal

democracies. It also fails to recognise that governance networks may offer one means to

enhance accountability because of its potential to enrol more actors into a process of deliberative policy-making and implementation. However, if the deliberative process does not encourage widespread participation from all sections of the community, then the claim that deliberative policy making improves accountability, as demonstrated through the focus LAG partnership, is void.

A number of governance network theorists also disagree with the prescription that dangerous tensions exist between governance networks and democracy, and this is the basis for the second conjecture. Again, the enrolment through networks of a wider range of actors in the policy process is cited as a positive element of network governance. This is seen to help lubricate and assist the functioning of representative democracy. For example, Rhodes argues that governance networks represent a supplement to the territorially organised institutions of representative democracy (1997: 9). Furthermore, Jessop argues that governance networks play a pivotal role in the development of democracy through linking different forms of democratic governance (2000: 17); while Kooiman, sees governance networks as a means to enhance the flexibility of our democratic institutions (1993: 36; 2000: 143).

This view is based upon the hypothesis that representative democratic processes cannot cope with the contemporary complexities of governance in advanced liberal democracies (Klijn and Scelcher, 2007: 594). These complexities are identified to exist in two ways. Firstly, complexities emerge through the development of new policy arenas, where public policy has had to acknowledge new and changing relationships of power and interest.

These are associated with global socio-economic demands and advances in (bio)-technology (ibid, 594). Secondly, further complexities are said to emerge because these new arenas of interest are superimposed upon those cleavages in society, around which the constitutional arrangements within advanced liberal democracies were first founded (ibid, 594). This is shown by Lijphart (1984) in his analysis of governmental systems. For instance, the Netherlands constitution set out an agreement that enabled collective decisions to be made across religious and cultural divides; while in the US the constitutional agreement set out to manage the relationship between individual liberty and public purpose. As such 'new cleavages in society around religion, ethnicity, cultural orientation, sexuality and so on pose challenges for representative democratic systems based on older constitutional settlements' (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007: 594).

Governance networks are seen to contribute to democratic anchorage and legitimacy in several ways (See Papadopoulos, 2000; Fung and Wright, 2001). First, the development of new institutions is seen to offer better opportunities for participating in the policy process. This is bred from the belief that it offers citizens the opportunity to re-engage with democratic practice, while also giving government better quality information on its citizens needs (ibid, 595). Second, partial preferences are seen to be better accommodated within the policy process when developed on the basis of deliberative democratic practices and a positive democratic ethos (ibid, 595). Third, there is a belief that the structure of governance networks and the nature of its institutions enable participation across the different phases of the policy process, from agenda setting, consultation and implementation (ibid, 595-596). Finally, proponents of network governance, as outlined

above, contend that it builds social capital through its semi-formal (having few constitutional rules) and semi-public (typically meeting beyond the view of the ordinary citizen) processes of deliberation (ibid, 596).

This complementary thesis rests on the assumption that the core institutions of the state, despite the pressures of the global epoch, still provide the most effective means of legitimately resolving public policy issues. Governance networks are held to create arenas around the periphery of the representative system that can accommodate the changing nature of society and the complexity of policy issues it faces (ibid, 596). However, the state is able to retain its hegemony through a series of constraints on the jurisdiction of governance networks institutions. These constraints are believed to be set by the legislature and the political executive, ensuring that issues of high politics or fundamental value choices remain the domain of the representative system (ibid, 596). This argument could be applied to LEADER, as LEADER is a relatively small programme with limited scope in terms of resource distribution. However, the concern is that if certain processes are not observed, within a system that lays claim to be at the forefront of economic and social policy making within an EU context, then the very foundations of liberal democracy are at threat from a covert and sinister beast. This argument attempts to align network governance with managerial issues, and suggests that the perceived problem of a democratic deficit may be irrelevant, because these are low-level decisions at the edge of the constitutional system.

This approach fails to acknowledge the influence of market and hierarchical led modes of governance in creating and expanding cleavages within the state, and the potential of network governance to do the same. It also ignores the ability of the executive to adapt to these cleavages over time through improving representational democracy. It may be argued that 'governance networks offer a flexible means of institutional design to mediate the relationship of representative democracy with citizens and other parties, thus ameliorating the problems set out above' (ibid, 595). However, this non-executive based mode of consensus may not offer the democratic stability, protection for 'the individual' and level of accountability that an improved representational system can. The claim that low-level decisions require little democratic legitimacy ignores the fact that low political decisions can have a huge impact on 'the individual' and their quality of life. If a hybrid system is to develop then surely rules of democratic engagement must be developed to address the cleavages within society at whatever level they are found. My empirical research shows first hand that poorly designed systems of governance do little to improve widespread community engagement, and as a result cleavages are unlikely to disappear.

Sorensen and Torfing believe that instead of writing off network governance as 'inherently undemocratic', there is a need to attempt to enhance its democratic performance (2005: 202). They argue that:

> [T]he problem is that the very idea of exercising political control with
> governance networks is flawed. Governance networks are defined in
> terms of their capacity for self-regulation and cannot be controlled

through the exercise of sovereign power within a hierarchical system based upon the giving of orders, detailed instructions and unconstrained overruling of discretionary decisions made by governance networks (ibid, 202).

Sorensen and Torfing go on to look at meta-governance as a means to facilitate and constrain the policy process through self regulating networks, without necessarily retreating to hierarchical 'command and domination' (ibid, 203). They distinguish three forms of meta-governance that they believe politicians must draw on interchangeably to enhance democratic legitimacy (See Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997, 2000). The first is *network design*, 'which involves deliberate attempts to shape and structure governance networks' (ibid, 204). In the process of governance network formation it is possible that meta-governing politicians have the ability to influence how the lines of inclusion and exclusion are drawn, either directly via the means of laws and regulations or indirectly by writing in conditions that ensure public cooperation. This is possible, for instance, by stipulating through the terms of funding that certain actors are included or excluded (ibid, 204). Network design can also selectively empower some actors, over others, by distributing important resources and capacities that can turn them into powerful actors in governance networks (ibid, 204). Network design can also include, importantly, the ability to determine the scope, decision-making competences and internal procedures of governance networks (ibid, 204). Expanding the capacity of governance networks to include significant political issues and delegating political competences that make

possible a proactive rather than reactive engagement in the policy process, which is vital for mobilizing the energies of the network actors (ibid, 204).

The second form of meta-governance that can be identified as a means of improving the legitimacy of democracy in network governance is *network framing*. This involves the formulation of political objectives to be pursued by governance networks (ibid, 204). Network framing also involves the allocation of fiscal and other resources to governance networks, this might also include a legal framework that either acts to facilitate or constrain the ability of self-constituting governance networks to develop (ibid, 204). It is also important to acknowledge the significant role that can be played through the discursive framing of governance networks. 'Story telling either in terms of public political accounts about societal problems, moral values and common futures, or in terms of the propagation of 'best practice', can be used deliberately to influence the policy-making processes within governance networks' (ibid, 204). The ability of governance networks to remain self-regulating can be preserved to the extent that the overall policy objectives are broadly defined (ibid, 204).

The third form of meta-governance that can increase the democratic legitimacy of governance networks is *network participation.* The direct participation of politicians in governance networks gives them 'detailed knowledge of the ideas, plans and activities of the governance network and this facilitates critical evaluation and political intervention in the policy-making process, especially in the early phases where decisions are easier to modify or change without overruling and upsetting the entire network' (ibid, 205). It is

also felt that direct participation in governance networks might also allow elected politicians to counteract, or even stop, the predominance of narrow sector interests by using their influence to foster an inclusive policy agenda (ibid, 205). Finally, through participation in the internal processes of deliberation and bargaining could allow the policy decisions of a particular governance network to be aligned with the objectives of other governance networks, and ultimately the overall goals of the government through a process of 'joining-up' (ibid, 205).

The meta-governance thesis, when applied to LEADER, offers a fascinating insight into why certain norms are (re-)constructed by the state, and how these might be significant in terms of governance. In the case of LEADER I would question whether network participation by government actors would be actively pursued as part of a meta-governance strategy. I would also contend that the government's limited approach to network design and framing in the case of LEADER is a strategically managed position. It ensures LEADER is cost efficient, and owing to government's lack of network participation, its level of accountability is reduced and its job becomes easier. In other words, perhaps the government has actively pursued a strategy of 'governance at a distance' to keep costs low, and reduce government responsibilities. In the next chapter I focus on the power relations that exist along the LEADER network, from the focus LAG upwards, and it is in these relations that the use of meta-governance will become more evident.

Another conjecture on the relationship between governance and democracy rests on the idea that governance networks are part of a transitional process from state-centric government to a network form of governance consisting of decentred, and pluralised nodes of authority (Klijn and Skelcher, 2007: 596). This transitional conjecture posits that democracy becomes more a societal model than a representational model.

> Democracy becomes a process of deliberation that has to be organised and guided carefully to enhance its open character. In addition, it becomes a model that has to be supported by multiple forms of accountability and not only by political accountability by means of the primacy of politics. In the transitional conjecture, democracy is a design task to be implemented in real-life practice of governance networks. It is both a high ideal but also a very pragmatic managerial task (ibid, 598).

Empirically this conjecture is very difficult to explore. It rests on an end-game type assumption, based on the prescription of the re-articulation of the state. It is not for me to challenge this assumption, but neither is it to reinforce it through unwittingly assimilating it with my empirical data. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of its existence, and perhaps acknowledge that if LEADER represents an early attempt to guide this societal model, then hopefully it has a long way to go before its potential is realised.

The final conjecture considered here is shaped by the idea that powerful governmental actors use networks as an instrument to increase their capacity to shape and implement

public policy in a complex world (ibid, 598). This instrumental approach 'can be located either in a notion of local elite strategies or the wider debate about changing forms of social regulation in a neo-liberal context' (ibid, 599). In both cases there is a belief that 'the interests of governmental actors are relatively immutable and exist prior to any wider engagement with stakeholders' or networks, as a means reinforcing these dominant interests (ibid, 599). Empirical studies in England based on critiques of the 'governing without government' thesis challenge two of its key principles (See Bache; Davies 2002; Skelcher et al. 2005). Firstly, they challenge the idea that networks are self-organizing; and secondly, that government is one of many players in a game of resource exchange (ibid, 599). Drawing on case analysis of governance networks at regional and local levels they argue that the role of the national government is somewhat different to that presented, in particular by Rhodes. They conclude that national government remains a powerful actor through the creation and manipulation of networks (ibid, 600). Thereby, governance networks are believed 'to come after rather than before the definition of political projects and are associated with a powerful and legitimate political actor proactively creating or reshaping networks' (ibid, 600). This conjecture rests the most closely with the supposition made above in relation to the potential significance of meta-governance. However, all these conjectures will be carried forward into the next chapter as I aim to explore the significance of the power relations or the paths of power towards the governance of governance.

6.8 Conclusion

In summary of this chapter, the LAG partnership, and the EU's notion of the bottom-up approach, suggests the need to question the strategic functioning of the programme. The flexibility found within EU regulations and guidelines on LEADER provide member states with a significant amount of flexibility on how the LEADER approach should be interpreted. Defra draws upon a set of powerful discourses relating to democracy and endogenous development to frame the LEADER programme. These discourses were compared to the democratic practices employed within the focus LAG and the wider concerns for their implementation across the wider policy network. Two key problems were identified: Firstly, there was a poor level of participation within the focus LAG, enforced by relatively closed policy networks at the local level; and secondly, there was a lack of direct involvement by the state in ensuring the governing processes are fair, democratic and accountable. This implies that the programme is a 'self-governing' process at the local level built on very flexible foundations. At this stage it is tempting to conclude that the LAG represents an implementation tool, developed around strong discourses. These discourses are enhanced by New Labour's highly tuned aptitude for democratic 'spin', which creates a smokescreen for low-cost public policy. As a result the workings of local governance in terms of participation and representation are limited in nature. It appears as though a democratic mandate has been constructed to mobilise and enforce a partnership governance approach to public policy. In other words, the LEADER approach, based strongly on social and economic cohesion, has been hijacked by a neo-liberal policy agenda. This supposition will be explored in the next chapter as I attempt to

look more closely at important sites of interaction and the potential for the governance of

governance (meta-governance).

Chapter 7: Multilevel governmental power play

7.1 Introduction

In chapter four I explored governance and governance theory in order to be able to comprehend the significance of the 'governance turn' in relation to the changing function of the state. In the same chapter I briefly introduced some theoretical work on 'European governance'. I aim to expand these theories in this chapter, as a means to interpret the forms of multilevel governmental power play evident through the governance of the LEADER programme. This chapter explores the role of the EU, the state and the sub-national level in the governance of the LEADER programme. This will be done principally by using the empirical data I gathered through tracing the LEADER network and interviewing actors along it. Following this, I show that some of the particular *design* features of the LEADER approach, explored in the previous chapter, represent a particular means of meta-governance ('the governance of governance') that favours some actors along the LEADER network over others.

7.2 EU governance 'systems' explored

Chapter 4 differentiated between multilevel governance and 'European Governance'. The former, as implied in the title, refers to a shared system of co-ordination involving regions, states and the EU; and no assumptions exist over the strategic role of the state. The latter theoretical conception views governance of the EU as a more complex affair,

non-hierarchical and not necessarily multilevel, underlined by a host of complex regulatory forces. The multilevel governance perspective has become widely applied within studies of EU policy making, and the term itself has found itself applied, often uncritically within all manner of academic and public discourses. It would be a logical step to closely follow this theoretical perspective through my research on LEADER, given that multilevel governance was born out of studies on cohesion policy (see Marks, 1993; Hooghe, 1996; Wallace et al., 2000), of which LEADER is a component. As such, a number of the observations with regards to cohesion policy that frame the multilevel governance theoretical perspective are identifiable in the governance of the LEADER programme, which will be discussed shortly. However, it is important to recognise that as a Community initiative the Commission has more direct control over the LEADER programme than cohesion policy, more generally. This is not to say, however, that the European Governance perspective does not hold important insights into the governance of the LEADER programme. I would argue that although multilevel governance offers a good framework from which to consider the forms of governmental power play at work in the governing of LEADER, it is equally as important to recognise that this power-play is conditioned by inferences of power with varying degrees of regulatory force which do not necessarily conform to traditional understandings of multilevel governance. These features will be explained in more detail as the chapter progresses, but in the meantime I would like to promote a multilevel governance framework which acknowledges that the flows of power do not always run in a linear manner, and that governance is a complex phenomena conditioned by *political dyspraxia*, a term I have adopted to describe the complexity of governance and its discourses, and the effect these processes have on flows

across policy networks. Political processes never flow in a linear way, these processes are constantly being adapted by people and their interests as they are passed across the network, they can easily stall, or take on a completely new form influenced by the cultures and traditions that exist around them. This understanding of these processes is especially pertinent now as part of the 'new' governance; where power ebbs and flows through a whole host of state, and non-state actors; where political processes are dominated by market relations on the one hand, and on the other, policy makers looks to alleviate social and economic inequalities produced through these market relations. In sum, political dyspraxia refers to the confusion within the policy process, heightened by the complexities and contradictions of governance by market, hierarchy and networks, and the inevitable potential of policies to change and be moulded by powerful discourses that many actors fail to critically understand.

It is also important to consider the ability of 'the powerful' in the governance of governance (meta-governance), and their ability to influence the character of the policy process and network design. I would like to show how the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC), discussed in chapter four as a feature of the European Governance perspective, can be identified in the LEADER approach. This implies that the LEADER approach signifies a particular means of meta-governance grounded through the EU principle of subsidiarity.

7.3 Cohesion policy and multilevel governance

As stated previously, the concept of multilevel governance was first developed by Marks through his work on cohesion policy in the EU. Multilevel governance was formed through this critique of the debate between functionalists and neo-functionalists on one side and realists, neo-realists and intergovernmental theorists on the other. The former argued that the process of European integration takes place through a process of institutional innovation where state autonomy and sovereignty is compromised as power is passed to supranational institutions, which shape institutional competencies, resources, and decision making rules (Marks, 1993: 391). In contrast, the latter argued that member states and their executives dominate decision making (ibid, 391). Marks argued that

> [A] convincing analysis of institution building in the EC should go beyond the areas that are transparently dominated by the member states: financial decisions, major pieces of legislation, and the treaties. Beyond and beneath the highly visible politics of member states bargaining lies a dimly lit process of institutional formation, and here the Commission has played a vital role (1993: 392).

He also argues that the early debates surrounding European integration missed a critical element in developing an understanding of the EU, specifically, 'the increasing importance of sub-national levels of decision making and their myriad connections with

other levels' (1993: 392). In line with this observation Marks puts forward his theory of multilevel governance.

> I suggest that we are seeing the emergence of *multilevel governance,* a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers – supranational, national, regional and local – as a result of a broad process of institutional creation and decisional reallocation that has pulled some previously centralized functions of the state up to the supranational level and some down to the local/regional level (1993: 392).

Marks found that despite the dominant role of the member states over key decisions, such as the size of the budget allotted for cohesion policy, the member states did not dominate decisions over the implementation of policy, and in deciding how the budget was spent (ibid, 395). For example, he found that the system of governance operating in cohesion policy provided the Commission with sufficient latitude to formulate and implement policy. Marks discusses a system that is based on the principles of programming, partnership, and additionality; principles the Commission has been identified as having a great deal of leverage over within cohesion policy (ibid, 395).

The programming of cohesion policy refers to the design of the policy programme; including an outline of how the approach meets specified political objectives and identifies the actors to be involved (ibid, 396). The principle of partnership has become a

guiding light for cohesion policy. However, Marks acknowledges that 'the Commission lacks the authority to enforce participation of the social partners in structural decision making against the wishes of the member state' (ibid, 396).   Nevertheless, the Commission consistently attempts to improve participation, within the member states, through a rich discourse on 'social partnership' (ibid, 397). The Commission is also able to influence the allocation of fiscal resources through the principle of additionality, which refers to the idea that member states should not decrease spending in poorer regions as the EU increases its funding (ibid, 398). The first two of these three principles can be linked to the types of meta-governance identified in the previous chapter: network design, network participation and network framing. This exemplifies how the Commission is able to influence policy by shaping and structuring governance networks (network design), target the political objectives and direct the allocation of fiscal and other resources (network framing), and influence participation (network participation).

Marks concludes his work by indicating that it is his belief that intergovernmental and neofunctional perspectives are lacking in one important respect: 'they conceive the systematic outcome of institution building in the EC in terms of a single dimension ranging from national state domination at the one extreme to a supranational polity at the other' (ibid, 407). Marks is able to draw this conclusion by showing how the Commission has played a central role in designing the institutional framework for cohesion policy, and strategically placing itself as a key actor in the process of policymaking and implementation (ibid, 399). The Commission, according to Marks, has used this strategic platform to open up the policymaking process to include a broader range of social

partners, resulting in a 'centrifugal' process. This reinforces the idea held by neofunctionalists that the Commission has a high level of autonomy (ibid, 407).

Structural policy in the EC does not fit along a continuum running from continued national state predominance to the emergence of a Eurostate. Instead, it appears to be a two-sided process, involving *decentralization* of decision making to subnational levels of government as well as centralization of new powers at the supranational level. If we encompass the experience of structural policy in our notion of the future European polity, it can be viewed as the leading edge of a system of *multilevel governance* in which supranational, national, regional, and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks. Instead, of a *centripetal* process where decision making is progressively centralized in Community institutions, in structural policy we see *centrifugal* processes in which decision making is spun away from member states in two directions: up to supranational institutions, and down to diverse units of sub-national government, instead of unambiguous allocation of decision making responsibility between national and supranational governments, we see the institutionalisation of *contested spheres* of influence across *several* tiers of government (ibid, 402).

Marks' notion of multilevel governance has since been applied more widely to the EU beyond cohesion policy, although this arena, arguably, forms the best empirical example to date. For example, Marginson and Sisson (2004) link the integration of industrial relations into European policy-making through the theory of multilevel governance by showing how industrial relations at the EU, sector and company levels are becoming increasingly integrated. Smith (2004) provides another example, by plotting the relationship between institutional development and the multilevel governance of EU foreign policy, as represented through common foreign and security policy (CFSP). He argued that 'the EU's comprehensive approach to South Africa [following the end of apartheid] epitomized the optimal multilevel governance' (2004: 755).

Marks et al. (1996), attempt to further outline the significance of the Commission within multilevel governance. This significance is particularly seen in its role as an agenda setter within the EU, through its formal power to initiate and draft legislation, and its role as a think tank for new policies (ibid, 356). Marks et al. argue that the influence of the Commission extends beyond this formal role because of its unique position. On the one hand the European Council only provides the Commission with general policy mandates, as opposed to specific policy proposals. This is down to the fact that the European Council meets rarely, with a limited permanent staff. As such, this provides the Commission a flexible basis to develop legislative programmes (ibid, 357). However, this should not hide the fact that agenda-setting is an increasingly shared and contested area, with EU institutions competing for control, along with an array of interest groups and sub-national actors jockeying for position (ibid, 359). On reflection, it can be said that the

ability of the Commission to set the policy agenda is ultimately dependent on its ability to guide and influence the policy arena, anticipate and mediate demands, promote operational efficiency, and take advantage of its own expertise (ibid, 359).

The Commission, under the principle of multilevel governance, is seen to play a prominent role throughout the policy process; including, notably, the implementation stage (Marks, 1993: 395). To this end the Commission, along with national, regional local and social actors has been prescribed through the 1988 reform of the structural funds, to be involved in the selection of priorities, choice of programmes, allocation of funding, monitoring of operations, evaluation and adjustment of programmes (Marks et al., 1996: 396).

However, there is a risk that the role of the Commission is overemphasised within the governance of the EU, presenting a largely neofunctional line of argument. It is important to acknowledge that the 'historic' decisions and 'distributive' arrangements of cohesion policy have been dependent on high-level bargaining between the member states (Allen, 2005: 221). Furthermore, reforms of the structural funds in 1993 and 1999 are seen as an attempt by the member states to reassert themselves upon the implementation process, following the 1988 reforms which are believed to have taken the member states largely by surprise (ibid, 215).

Furthermore, although the Commission has the political mandate to take decisions, develop policies and in theory implement them across the EU, the ability of the

Commission to implement policy and direct the policy apparatus of each member state needs to be considered. The LEADER programme provides a good example of a policy programme put together by the Commission. In an attempt to ensure that the principles behind the policy are protected the Commission has gone as far as outlining what apparatus the member states should use to implement the programme at the local level, through its guidelines on the formation of the LAG partnerships. As discussed in the previous chapter the member states were able to control important aspects of the programme due to the flexibility built into it. Furthermore, in the case of the focus LAG, localised policy networks were able to command the structures and processes of the LAG in potentially detrimental ways. On this evidence, the ability of the Commission to direct the policy apparatus in an effective way at both the national and sub-national level is called into question.

In this respect a study by Hooghe (1996) looks at the impact of partnership arrangements across the member states as a means of exploring the extent an EU polity has infiltrated the member states. She attempted to look closely at two interrelated questions: 'have diverse territorial relations converged under pressure of this uniform EU policy, hence moving towards a systematic involvement of subnational authorities in all member states? Or are uniform European regulations being bent and stretched so as to uphold existing difference in member states? (ibid, 2). Hooghe found that the resources commanded at different levels of governance varied greatly across the member states and this influenced the ability of different partnerships to implement policy. This also resulted in a diverse range of different partnerships being implemented throughout the EU (ibid, 2). Bache and

George argue that in centralised member states, there is sufficient scope for governments to be able to dominate partnerships, and act as 'gatekeepers', if they so wish (2006: 472). Britain is seen as a prime example of subnational actors having been mobilised, but not necessarily empowered by government to act effectively (ibid, 473). Undoubtedly variations exist, but a good example of this in England is through regional government apparatus, but it is also a very fitting criticism in the case of LEADER.

In this case, Defra has developed a strong rhetoric to support community engagement and decision making as part of the LEADER approach to rural development, but empowerment has been limited because, as we saw in the previous chapter, the partnership process has failed to engage the whole territory of the focus LAG, and there is widespread confusion within it and its management team over what community participation is and how it should be achieved. In fact, democratic concepts fail to enliven the technocratic approach evident in the management of the LAG. As we saw in chapter 6, there is evidence that other LAGs have done better in this respect, that they have attempted to actively engage the whole community, and so partly the focus LAG and its management team is to blame. There should be an imperative for them to go out and take the project to the community, engage people, and encourage them to improve the deliberative process. This did not happen, perhaps in part due an institutional culture of technocracy within RegCo, and the in-built conservatism of the policy community, but I think most critical was the lack of in-depth guidelines, from above, on what the democratic process should look like. In this sense, the process could have been improved with more direction from above, along with suitable resources, both regulatory and

financial, to help empower the process and give it some momentum to engage with the powers of association in the Latourian sense.

This perspective has also changed over time through the reform of cohesion policy; and changing political ideologies in the member states, associated with the coming and going of different governments. Taking the former point first, the 1999 reform of cohesion policy is significant because the Commission outlined a new role for itself, which saw it taking a lesser role in the day-to-day management of the funds (ibid, 476). This involved removing its officials from partnership activities below programme monitoring committees where, prior to this, involvement had been the norm (ibid, 476). The Commission defended this change by outlining their belief that the Commission was required to play a more strategic role (ibid, 476). It is also likely that a fifth principle added at this time to cohesion policy – efficiency – played its part in limiting the Commission's direct involvement in the day-to-day running of the policy. The second point is supported, again with Britain cited as an example, with governments coming increasingly to see the advantages of the partnership principle (ibid, 478). Britain which, in the past, had been highlighted for the role it played in the 'gate-keeping' of its subnational partnerships began to accept them as a tool of implementation that improved managerial efficiency. The British government had for a long time controlled the level of involvement subnational actors had in the decision-making process. The rise of New Labour in 1997 saw a new commitment towards decentralisation, particularly through holding successful referendums on devolution in Scotland and Wales, while policy

preferences showed signs of greater convergence with the Commission especially towards partnership relations (Bache, 1999: 41).

Andy Smith believes that there are a number of factors that limit the Commission's contribution towards cohesion policy, and I would like to outline two of these (1997: 719). Firstly, Smith, exploring the French translation of the structural funds, found that at the regional or sub-regional level, Commission desk officers only had effective influence if the local 'partnerships' allowed them to be actively involved (ibid, 720). He found that a good sign of closed local networks was when Commission desk officers had to invoke EU law on the structural funds, which stipulates that the role of the Commission must go beyond negotiation (ibid, 720). Secondly, again relating to the role of Commission desk officers, Smith found that in order for them to be effective in the potentially hostile environment of monitoring committees, they required great skill and the security of knowing that they were backed up by the Commission's hierarchy (ibid, 720). Smith found, in the French case, that some desk officers found themselves isolated against pressures emanating from the French government, suggesting that in many cases these officers did not receive effective support, and as such, they were not able to put forth the Commission's 'constitutional' interests effectively (ibid, 720).

In the case of LEADER, the Commission is clearly restricted to the amount of direct action it can take by the framework set out in the regulation of the programme. A member of the UK's desk office stated:

The Commission are concerned to see bottom-up delivery through LAGs, they set a framework in place through the regulation, and as long as the managing authority can demonstrate that the criteria have been met the Commission is then satisfied that they have a LAG in place. Now if the LAG is not representative of the local area, the Commission don't really have any great say. If the regulation is being adhered to, that is the legal basis, and the Commission can't say to a managing authority you're doing something wrong. The Commission can maybe have an opinion but they can't actually influence outside of the regulation (Commission representative)

This is despite concerns among senior staff within the Commission over the quality of LAGs:

I look at a lot of websites of LAGs, some are well organised and transparent with all the meetings of the LAGs and the minutes, decisions why a project was rejected etc. Other LAGs don't have information at all, so I don't see if there is any communication. Some good LAGs also have plenty of publications and leaflets... Do the managing authorities really examine that all the LAGs are working? I have my doubts because for them what is important is their consumption of the budget (Senior Commission representative).

The ability of the Commission to shape the way the LEADER approach is implemented in the member states is highly restricted. The broad nature of the regulation, as discussed in chapter 3 and 6, ensures that those principles at the heart of the LEADER approach can be interpreted in ways that do not meet the expectations of its founders in the Commission.

In this section I have explored the development of multilevel governance. I felt this was necessary given that this theory was based upon empirical findings on research into European cohesion policy. This is relevant given that the LEADER programme is part of cohesion policy across the EU. Nevertheless, I have shown that although the multilevel governance perspective offers important insights into the EU system of governance, this perspective remains contested. In an attempt to develop and critique the debate between neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists, the multilevel governance perspective goes some way to showing that the lines of this debate are outdated by exploring the new policy networks and actors within the EU system. However, it fails to recognise the differentiated nature of EU governance, and the variations from one polity to the next. The LEADER programme is indicative of the variations possible within a policy sector (i.e. cohesion policy). Further, this approach overlooks the ability of actors and associations of power to coordinate EU governance, and influence the Commission. The reality is that EU governance is a highly complex and contested arena, driven by interactions that take place on a series of different levels, between different sets of actors. If a process of multilevel governance is evident across a policy network then it must be

assumed that associations of power from the subnational level upwards support it and have an interest in doing so.

7.4 Why do states agree to multilevel governance?

I have already outlined the debate between neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists with respect to the significance of multilevel governance, specifically in the context of cohesion policy. One question that is often overlooked in this debate is 'Why do states agree to multilevel governance? (Jordan, 2001: 202). This question obviously rests on the assumption that some form of multilevel governance exists within an EU setting.

As a means to contextualise this discussion I want to frame it around two particular models of capitalism: the 'European model of society' (neoliberalism) and regulated capitalism (Hooghe, 1998: 3). These models have also been referred to in the context of a conflict between a neo-American and a social democratic model of capitalism (see Wilks, 1996). Neoliberals (or neo-Americans) contend that Europe's markets should be insulated from political interference, 'a haven for unfettered capitalism', through combining European-wide market integration with national governments holding sovereignty for political regulation (Hooghe, 1998: 3). The sovereignty of national governments over political regulation is seen as a means to generate competition among the member states, which in turn provides attractive conditions for mobile forms of production (ibid, 3).

For proponents of regulated capitalism (or Social Democrats), the single market should be regulated to make sure that values like solidarity, partnership and dialogue are respected (ibid, 3). These values were very much at the heart of Delors's ambition for cohesion policy and European integration, and it is these values that formed the backdrop for the Commission in its conception of the LEADER programme. Regulated capitalists support market competition, but at the same time they believe the state can play a positive role in regulating market forces. However, there is much debate over the extent to which this regulation should stretch among proponents of this approach (ibid, 3). The 1988 cohesion policy reform seems to have represented a significant constitutional package put forward by the anti-neoliberal coalition, around which multilevel coalitions of actors were perceived to have gathered (ibid, 3). However, subsequent reforms of cohesion policy can be interpreted as a backlash against regulated capitalism, as national governments have attempted to increasingly find the means to regulate coalitions of power found at multiple state levels.

As a word of caution it seems unlikely that a neo-liberal policy agenda is likely to completely placate the political project begun by the Social Democrats, unless cohesion policy is drastically reformed through the European Council. The social democratic elements of cohesion policy are protected by EU law, and supported in the treaties, namely through concepts like subsidiarity, proportionality and partnership. In addition, it is also clear that despite the constitutional support for social democracy in the EU, these constitutional elements are not immune from the political ideologies of each member state, or the global economy. As a way of covertly overcoming these constitutional

requirements we may find that the local level is increasingly important to governments and other powerful groups, providing scope for meta-governance.

The programming of cohesion policy ensures that it is safe from the adjustments of 'history making' decisions within the current policy programme. This means that those national governments with a particular 'capitalist' agenda cannot push wholesale changes to a programme once it is up and running as it is part of EU legislation. In a sense, political interests, such as a particular capitalist agenda, are best supported through attempts to try to influence the way policy is implemented at the local level. With respect to LEADER, the flexibility surrounding the regulations and guidelines, and the ability to openly interpret the partnership governance process allows the state to frame policy around its own political ideologies. However, it is unlikely that this is the case universally across all policies, or that this approach is effective in ensuring that member states are in control of their own political destinies. On reflection there is no getting away from the fact that the member states continue to devolve power over policy to the EU.

Marks et al. outline two sets of reasons that help explain why government leaders may wish to shift decision-making to the supranational level: 'the political benefits may outweigh the costs of losing political control or there may be intrinsic benefits having to do with shifting responsibility for unpopular decisions or insulating decision-making from domestic pressures (Marks et al., 1996: 349). In the first instance shifting competencies to the EU may be an effective means of lowering the costs of providing information and other resources to formulate, negotiate and implement policy (ibid, 349). This perspective

takes account of the fact that political leaders hold office for a short period of time, and are more likely, in an effort to prolong their stay, attempt to make decisions that have immediate impacts in term of policy output and efficiency, at the expense of state sovereignty (ibid, 349).

This leads us to another important question, 'are states in control of devolving powers to the EU?' Marks et al. argue that states are 'losing their grip on the mediation of domestic interest representation in international relations' (ibid, 341).

> One cannot assume that those serving in national governments give priority to sustaining the state as an institution. This is an empirical matter. Institutions influence the goals of those who hold positions of power within them, but it is unlikely that political actors will define their own preferences solely in terms of what will benefit their institution. The degree to which an actor's preferences will reflect institutional goals depends, in general, on the extent to which an institution structures the totality of that individuals life, or how positively or negatively the institution is viewed, on the strength of contending institutional, personal and ideological loyalties, and on the length of time in which the individual expects to stay within the institution (ibid, 348).

This strongly implies that national governments risk losing autonomy over the policy process, even in areas where some control is desirable, because they are unable to

command national representatives' loyalties when these are exposed to other political ideologies and institutional practices. Marks (1993) also highlights the fact that the pluralistic patterns of integration taking place within the EU are incredibly difficult for the member states to police. This emphasises the fact that EU governance operates in a non-linear way, and this underlines the need to trace interactions of power along policy networks.

Liberal Intergovernmentalists, such as Moravcsik (1993), assume that political leaders have pursued European integration as a means to secure their national economic interests. There are a number of points to make drawing on this perspective. Firstly, Moravcsik argues that states are in control of the integration process because ultimately it is the bargaining between states, in an intergovernmental setting, that determines the course of integration the EU takes. Secondly, it is argued that a principal task of the state is to aggregate national societal preferences. These preferences are then taken to the international level where states negotiate for the policies they deem necessary; and as a result 'permitting them to achieve goals that would not otherwise be possible' (ibid, 485). Undoubtedly there are winners and losers in the negotiating process. In fact, the history of the EU is littered with examples of compromise, where member states have lost ground negotiating in one area; they have invariably gained in another. The final point, made by Moravcsik, that I would like to draw on is the view that integration strengthens states, because states use the EU as part of a 'two-level game' to overcome domestic opposition to unpopular decisions by passing them through the EU.

Moravcsik's argument overlooks the influence EU institutions can have on national representatives in the negotiating process. There is, of course, room for distinction here between different policy concerns, and the level of power devolved to the EU institutions. However, as I argued above, the member states do not have a 'panoptican' view of what goes on in the EU institutions on a daily basis, and throughout the policy process.

In the case of LEADER, the member states do have room to influence the implementation process, if they so wish. The regulatory processes that provide the basis for LEADER and the guidelines relating to its implementation, as has been stressed in previous chapters, are broad in nature. In the next section, I attempt to link this feature to the notion of meta-governance and advanced liberal government. In doing so I hope to identify how the British state is guilty of employing the LEADER approach as a resource efficient implementation device.

Moravcsik's view on why states agree to multilevel governance shares a great deal with Marks et al. in terms of why states choose to 'devolve' power. The two arguments differ in terms of the level of control member states have over the integration process. I hope to be able to add to this debate by using my own research data to show how, in relation to the implementation of LEADER, numerous actors and associations of power have the ability to control the implementation process because of the flexibility written into the policy process, and the lack of concern by the British government on the nature of the partnership process at the local level.

7.5 Reflections on meta-governance

I discussed the importance of meta-governance in the outlining governance chapter. I would now like to develop the importance of this concept, and the means by which actors are able to deploy it as a mechanism of control in the governing of the LEADER programme. This theoretical perspective will be based on the flexibility of EU law that forms the basis for LEADER's partnership approach to governance (the LEADER approach). This perspective will help us to understand whose hands 'power' passes through in relation to the governance of the LEADER programme. This standpoint is based on a fluid conception of political power within the EU, whereby success is measured by the ability of actors to achieve set objectives; rather than a zero-sum game between actors, where definitive lines are drawn between the winners and losers in the games that are being played (Marks, 1996: 351).

In chapter four I draw on Jessop to show how meta-governance can be used to help frame the 'complexity, plurality, and tangled hierarchies' found in the 'new governance'. This is possible through the governance of governance, or the 'organization of the conditions of governance', as previously outlined, this involves the 'judicious mixing of market, hierarchy and networks' (Jessop, 2002: 242). There is a dual nature to meta-governance that is typical of advanced liberal government: the approach at the same time enables and opens up new possibilities for its subjects, and restrains these subjects as they are made subjects of a certain 'calculative and disciplinary' regime (Haahr, 2004: 209). This reflects the way in which governance has become a part of the new world order.

Governance represents the processes of steering and co-ordination or co-ordination through a mix of market, hierarchy and networks. In contrast, Max Weber's understanding of the modern state was based around highly organised relations of power (Weber, 1968: 8), through which broad assumptions can be based on its mediation and intended objectives. Reflections on the LEADER programme make it clear that no such assumptions can be made on the way power is mediated, and objectives formed, by the actors involved. The LEADER *approach* underpins this particular policy programme. It is a feature of the EU that policy domains carry with them an 'approach' or 'method' through which actors can be made aware of the restrictions within the policy field, and the rules by which they are required to follow. In the case of LEADER, 'the approach' is presented by policy makers as something unequivocally good for 'the people', but behind this rhetorical facade lies a political playground, underpinned by an approach much closer to 'liberal capitalism' than many of its proprietors would care to admit. The LEADER programme was designed to be a cohesive force across Europe, as a means to counteract the harsh realities of market liberalism, and protect valuable rural cultures and traditions. However, market mechanisms have become a central part of the new governance, and as such a great deal of the integrity of the LEADER approach has been lost within the remit of advanced liberalism.

> These are forms of government which embody a notion of structured and conditioned freedom, and which govern through the manipulation of techniques and mechanisms, rather than more directly through the classical liberal or Keynesian welfarist manipulation of processes, or the

early modern 'dispositional ordering of things'. Advanced liberal government is a reflexive 'government of government' (Haahr, 2004: 215).

Advanced liberal rule reflects the changing relationship between citizens as individuals and in their associations, and the national state (Dean, 1999: 150-9, 164-71). The changing understanding of society, in line with advanced liberalism, heralded a form of government that is concerned with 'securing governmental mechanisms, and acting through 'free subjects' and their associations' (Haahr, 2004: 215). As such, 'government consists of establishing and securing the mechanisms which can effectively unleash the energies of society' (ibid, 215). This replaces the traditional conception of the government of society, associated with the 'welfare state' and concerns over social, economic and demographic processes (ibid, 215). The mechanisms of advanced liberalism can be described as thus:

> [A]dvanced liberal practices are 'practices of liberty', practices which establish and facilitate liberty but which also discipline and constrain the exercise of it: they contract, consult, negotiate, create partnerships, empower and activate forms of agency, liberty and the choice of individuals in their different capacities. However, they also set norms, standards, benchmarks, performance indicators, quality controls and best practice standards, to monitor, measure and render calculable the performance of these various individuals or agencies. Thus the concept of

a 'free subject' has in advanced liberal government taken on the meaning of a potential technical instrument in the achievement of governmental purposes and objectives, being an entity which can be constructed and shaped by governmental practices. Advanced liberal rule operates through our freedom, through the way this freedom is structured, shaped predicted and made calculable (Haahr, 2004: 216).

Dean takes this perspective further by arguing for the existence of authoritarian liberalism, the features of which can be related to the implementation of LEADER.

Contemporary liberal rule manifests the recurrent emergence of illiberal practices and rationalities which occur in the name of liberalism and in the defence of its values. I argue that it is necessary to put aside the liberal assumption of a fundamental opposition between liberalism and authoritarianism forms of rule. Authoritarianism is not simply that to which liberalism is implacably opposed and against which it offers safeguards. Nor is it the ever-present danger against which liberalism must be vigilant. Rather I contend, it is a permanent pole of liberal rule made possible by the liberal view of government as limited by the sphere of civil society external to it and the liberties of autonomous individuals within the sphere... The upshot of this analysis was to show that the authoritarian side of liberal governing is intrinsic to liberalism itself and, further, that at least one version of current forms of liberal rule might be

better thought of as authoritarian liberalism rather than neo- or advanced liberal rule (2007: 200).

In summary, a liberal view of government opens the door to authoritarian forms of control, and herein, it becomes an intrinsic feature of the liberal conception of government, best framed as authoritarian liberalism.

The mode of rule employed to govern LEADER has a number of similar characteristics to 'advanced liberalism'. Partnership governance, in this case, represents the pooling of resources (local knowledge, and interest) to tackle economic and social challenges within the rural sphere. This should be placed centrally within the conception of those citizen-nation state relations that underline the governance project. The 'bottom-up' approach is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, which ensures that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that checks are regularly made regarding whether action at Community level is justified given the options available at national, regional or local level (Treaty establishing the EC, Article 5). The 'LEADER approach' represents an attempt by the European Commission to set an effective framework for an integrated and cooperative approach to rural development across a European wide network (LEADER Actions 1-3). Subsidiarity theoretically conditions this approach by ensuring that partnership mechanisms operate at the *loci*. However, the way in which the approach is interpreted at the local level is guided by each individual member state. This ensures that the state has a powerful position under the conditions of advanced liberalism through its ability to *steer* the technologies of agency and performance (albeit under the observance

of the Commission). This undoubtedly conditions the ability of citizens at the local level to some extent, to effectively unleash deliberative practices ('bottom-up'), and in turn deploy valuable local resources in pursuit of development. In the case of LEADER, and its implementation in the focus LAG territory, the state is able to condition the policy process, despite talking openly of partnership and participation, and invoking great optimism through its discourses on the potential of these principles, it does little to empower the local community, to develop new policy networks, or provide the resources to do so. As a result, the state continues to condition and control policy, and yet it has the advantage of being largely unaccountable for it. The question is, to what extent is the state a successful proponent of advanced or authoritarian liberalism within the implementation of LEADER? The answer to this question lies largely in the relationship between the state, and the local level (i.e. focus LAG and its policy community), and the level of influence exerted by both these forces. This relationship will be looked at more closely using my empirical data in the following sections, but I think it is important to recall at this juncture the level of influence held by the policy community attached to the focus LAG, and the effects it had on the quality of civic engagement across the LAG territory, discussed in the previous chapter.

Technologies of agency are contemporary technologies of government that seek to deploy our potential for agency, and as such they must be understood if we are to reflect further on the issues so far outlined in this chapter (Dean, 1999: 167; see also Swyngedouw, 2005). Technologies of agency can be broken into two distinctive forms: 'technologies of citizenship' (Cruikshank, 1993, 1994) and a 'new contractualism' (Yeatman, 1998). The

former is made up of various techniques that are employed as a means to empower and involve certain groups and individuals within the policy making process, principally in consultation and negotiation (Yeatman, 1994: 110). The LEADER approach, enrols 'technologies of citizenship' through its 'bottom-up' approach, by actively constructing individuals as active citizens. However, this is not used by government, necessarily, as part of a community engagement agenda. Instead, the technologies of citizenship might be seen as a smokescreen to hide the informal and poorly defined processes at the heart of the government's policy strategy, while freeing-up important government resources to ensure cost efficient policy delivery.

Haahr (2004: 217) discusses the technologies of agency and performance, what he terms the 'technologies of involvement', in relation to the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The OMC was introduced as part of the Lisbon Strategy to make the EU the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010 (Friedrich, 2006: 368). The OMC is seen as a 'soft law' approach of the 'new governance' in the EU, which aims to achieve common European goals, but by not using the traditional means of European integration, such as regulations and directives (ibid, 368). A number of lines can be drawn between the OMC and the LEADER approach, as both can be understood as advanced liberal government (or more appropriately 'authoritarian liberalism'), constituted by the 'practices of liberty' (Haahr, 2004: 209). These practices are dependent on subject 'participation', through which, subjects are both enabled and conditioned through the interactions that result within authoritarian liberalism.

The 'new contractualism' describes the proliferation of extra-juridical and quasi-juridical forms of contracts (ibid, 217). These are commonly found in the 'contracting out' of public services to private companies or community agencies, along with 'performance agreements' or 'development contracts' between central government and a wide array of non-state actors (ibid, 217). Haahr argues that contractualism takes place within the OMC through quasi-juridical forms. Haahr describes this through the use of OMC in the labour market field:

> The contractual element consists of the formulation of objectives which are contained in the [Employment] guidelines and in the obligations specified in conjunction with the intention to attain these objectives. The document thus stipulates in writing a set of mutual commitments, at the same time leaving it to the committed parties to decide on the measures that are required to live up to these commitments (ibid, 217).

There are clearly links here, in the application of the OMC, with the way LEADER is presented to the member states in guideline form. These guidelines are passed to the member states who play an important role in designing a partnership process to implement the programme through the LAGs, while at the same time respecting the commitments in the guidelines. However, it is important to recognise that these guidelines cannot be considered without reference to the guidelines laying down the general provisions on the Structural Funds (Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/99)**.** This legislation, however, remains relatively broad.

Technologies of agency rest upon the existence of 'free subjects', not as individual citizens, but as active participants within the network economy (Haahr,2004: 218). These technologies are contingent upon technologies of performance (ibid, 218), which act to reinforce advanced liberalism. These 'can be viewed as the plural technologies of government designed to penetrate the substantive domains of expertise fostered under the welfare state and to subsume these domains to new formal calculative regimes' (ibid, 218; see Rose and Miller, 1992). Technologies of performance that shape the conduct of actors include such tools as budget devolutions, benchmarking exercises, best practice examples and the setting of performance indicators (ibid, 218). A particular feature of the LEADER programme is the use of the audit method. This approach has grown enormously as a technology of performance over recent years, and involves the bringing together of various indicators and measurements as a means to scrutinise actors along the policy network (see Power, 1994). These technologies of agency and performance will be kept in mind, as I now turn to consider my own empirical data within the context of LEADER.

7.6 LEADER: the basis for power play and the potential for fracture

The basic governance structure of LEADER was outlined in chapter three. The key features of the approach identified here revolved around two broadly defined yet distinctive features: a bottom-up approach and top-down juridical guidance and monitoring. The former is based on local partnerships whose function is to delegate funds to applicants by the way of deliberative decision making. The latter reflects a top-down

regulatory process. This process begins at the EU level and is then passed on to the member states, who as discussed, receive juridical guidelines on the implementation of the programme, and its monitoring in line with EU legislation on the structural funds. The process of LAG formation is also delegated to the national level, and it is here where the member states have a flexible mandate.   In the following section I want to add flesh to this basic outline by attempting to plot how power operates within the 'confines' of this basic structure, and whether this structure binds power to certain paths as it travels horizontally and vertically across the LEADER network; or whether as implied above, power passes more fluidly between actors, passing through basic governance structures far more subtly than has been otherwise acknowledged. This is aided by the technologies of the powerful, and the contingent paradox within advanced liberalism that can be best described as liberalism with an authoritarian vestige.

LEADER was conceived at a time when the theory of globalisation was becoming an important influence within public policy circles. A former senior official of the Commission described the importance of the theory of globalisation during the emergence of LEADER in the following context:

> [In the commission] we have a very simple sentence...: 'think globally act locally'. You have to see things in the global context in order to increase the competitiveness of these small local areas, therefore you need rural development, and you need your LEADER projects in order to make them resist this global tendency. (Former senior official to the Commission)

[T]he primary aim was indeed in the global context of rural development, seen in the global context of cohesion,...[it] was to say lets help the people to be more competitive in a global context, to increase their quality of life at the local level, and OK develop a territorial approach. I would say the basic aim was to get away from a sectoral approach, which was agriculture, to a territorial approach at the local level, by asking the people to work together to give them a certain confidence, but at the same time you have the responsibility to do something, and for that we give you some small financial means (Former senior official to the Commission).

This principle ('think globally act locally') is closely allied with that of subsidiarity, very much evident in the LEADER approach. This can be further linked with the tendency within states for power to be devolved, which is often seen as a means for states to command greater resources and develop policy that meets global challenges. This trend has been recognised within the context of LEADER, by a senior official of the Commission:

The general trend in Europe is that at a constitutional level you have a federal state, you have a state that gives a lot of competence to the regional level, and the European level. In European policy, through the social funds, our policy is also influencing governments by giving a role to the local people by trying to involve them. I think LEADER is *exemplary* of this method. I would qualify

LEADER as a participant in centralised decision making, a process, a way of implementing policy. (Senior official in the Commission)

This insight indicates that LEADER works for the member states 'as a participant to centralised decision making' while at the same time the Commission plays a conceptual role that helps frame a participative approach to policy making. This view is supported in the earlier LEADER programmes, where the distinction between facilitator and the basis on which LEADER represents a concept formed within a European policy making type 'laboratory' is outlined.

[W]e played quite an active role in the concept; we played quite an active role in the follow up of the elaboration of LEADER. As far as the LEADER work is concerned we didn't intervene, that is of course the bottom-up approach, it's their business, you see, but we had a concept and a follow up (Former senior official in the Commission).

This conceptual role may be interpreted as a means through which the Commission can give the EU wider legitimacy. There is certainly evidence to suggest that its objectives do not just rest with providing member states with effective support in the implementation of policy. In fact, some of its unwritten objectives may be deemed highly political, and at odds with national objectives.

[Through] LEADER we have given a message to the people that the European Union is not only there for big business, that they are not only there for the big industries, or the big farmers unions, or the cereal people in France, but that the European Union is there to help the people at the local level to do something, to increase their quality of life, because that is what it is about. So with small money, with pocket money in fact, in terms of the overall budget, we have spread the European idea at the local level. I think that's the main success as far as I see it, of the LEADER experience (Former senior official in the Commission).

Success in these terms is ultimately dependent on the extent to which the member states invest in the LEADER approach. I made clear in the last chapter that the focus on participation within LEADER is lost to some degree within the English programme, and this is possible because of the flexibility written into the LEADER approach, which is to the benefit of the member states, giving them the ability to control important aspects of the programme. This means that the 'technologies of involvement' have a dual level existence. At one level the EU commands the LEADER approach, which rests heavily on the technologies of involvement and territorial formation through the LAG. On another level, the member state is responsible for interpreting the guidelines that set out the approach, and herein lies the avenue from which government can dictate policy and stop the Commission taking the lead *framing* role. This does not mean that national public policy institutions are not accountable to the Commission. These institutions are subject to EU monitoring, but the concern here is primarily financial, and there is little

monitoring that takes place that actively supports the LEADER approach, and ensures its effective implementation. This will be discussed further below.

7.7 Supranational influence, national preferences, and the emergence of subnational powers

It should be noted that the role of the Commission has changed within the LEADER programme, in line with the reforms of the structural funds. As I outlined previously in this chapter, these reforms saw the member states trying to claw back power from the Commission. This meant during the first LEADER programme the Commission played an active role, not only at the 'European level', but also at the national level by attending the majority of meetings relating to LEADER[11]. In the current programme the relationship between the national level and the Commission is very different, with the Commission now being much less of a physical presence at the national level.

> We have never had that much of a relationship with [the Commission]. We
>
> have been out to visit them; we have had two different desk officers. We went
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> on one visit to meet and greet, they are invited to every Programme
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> Monitoring Committee, and they probably come to two out of three, as an

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[11] 'In the mid nineties we had the role of supporting the LAGs and bringing them together at the European level. So every time, for instance, there was some meetings in a member state, we always tried to send our people over there to give the full information about what our aims are, what we are looking for, so on and so forth, to discuss the operation etc'. (Former senior Official in the Commission)

observer rather than a member. They quite often get involved in answering a few questions (Defra representative)

I mean they have to approve the annual report, but generally, we were told by them, that because they don't consider us a problem programne they don't have to look at it in great detail. If we were considered a problem programme then they might. I think the rule is that three months after receipt if you do not hear anything or get a letter saying that it is approved then it is considered approved. That is normally the process. We have to liaise with them over modifications to the programme, so we recently modified some budget profiles. We have to send that to them, and it takes months for the approval to happen. It can be quite a slow process with the Commission. If you want advice, it can take a long time to get any advice back, and everything has to be done quite officially, sending formal requests by letter or whatever, and then a reply comes back saying this is not formal advice you cannot count on it. You have to wait longer for formal advice, and quite often when it does arrive you think what does that mean? (Defra representative)

This perspective was reinforced at the EU level through a representative of the Commission, who had experience working for a managing authority within a member state:

I have found through my experience that some desk officers based here, that look after member states, have an attitude that the managing authorities should be aware of all the regulations, and it's up to them to take responsibility to understand the rules and it's not the Commission's responsibility to be always telling them what the rules are, it's up to the managing authority to manage that programme that is what they are meant to do (Representative of the Commission).

In this context Defra has a primary role in the implementation of the LEADER programme. The relationship between this level and the Commission is highly judicial. This is the case even in respect of the advice Defra receives on the implementation of the programme. The Commission does not appear to be attempting to reinforce the LEADER approach in the implementation process through these kinds of institutional interactions. This point can also be made with respect to the relationship between Defra and the Commission at the beginning of the current programme. It was Defra's responsibility to interpret the guidelines passed on from the Commission[12]. This process was carried out early in the current programme, which in itself leads to confusion within Defra, with the current managers of the programme not involved at that stage.

[M]ost of the interpretation has already been done, or was done very early on in the programme. And I think some of the guidance notes that were issued at the start of the programme were not quite as clear as they

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[12] 'We also had to interpret the EU regulations in relation to the scheme, and deal with lots of enquiries and stuff like that, and get the network sorted out so that it was delivering what the groups wanted' (Defra representative)

could have been and should have been. As such when we have read them

we have had to ask what does that mean? (Defra representative).

However, despite some of the confusion over the guidelines put together at the national level, it seems that asking the Commission for advice on the implementation of the programme does not take place on a regular basis. As is pointed out here, the Commission does not respond to calls for advice speedily, and this may be one reason the national level does not make requests on a more regular basis. It also seems apparent that Defra is far more inclined to request advice on financial issues with respect to the programme, rather than broader issues attached to the approach itself. This situation is likely to exist given that the Commission does actively hold the member states to account over financial issues within the programme, whereas issues regarding 'the approach' and the nature of the LAG partnerships within the member states is more of a passing concern. However, even within the financial aspects of LEADER the onus is on the member states to get things right.

I would like to see a more proactive approach from the Commission with regards engaging with us because there has been the odd thing where, for instance, altering these budgetary tables, we weren't aware that we had to do it, and there was no, you know year on year, clue from the Commission that it was something that you ought to be looking at. So when it came to us realising accidentally that we had to change them or we are going to be in trouble with collecting our payments for them, it was too late to change them

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fully, the way we wanted to. There was no flexibility at all, but because there was no real engagement in terms of them checking a few essential things being done by the managing authority, and every UK country fell into the same trap, so it wasn't as though we were alone (Defra representative)

This insight suggests that there is a paradox in terms of the way LEADER is implemented. The member states have a great deal of flexibility over the implementation of the LEADER approach, yet when it comes to the financial concerns Defra has very little flexibility. This is further evident through the mechanisms the Commission employs in monitoring the programme, and this also explains the concern for the same issues within the monitoring of the programme at the national level.

7.8 Monitoring committees and audit

As I explained in a previous chapter the English LEADER programme is governed through two principal monitoring committees that met around every six months: the Regional Programme Monitoring Committee (RPMC) and the national level Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC). The national level committee is made up of regional representatives, such as regional government officers or LAG managers; national organisations representatives such as the NFU and Business Link; national government institutions, such as the RDA and Natural England, and a small element of voluntary representation with a regional slant. The secretariat for the PMC is provided by Defra. The RPMC has a similar make up, but clearly with a more regional focus, and also

includes the LAG managers. The focus of the PMC is primarily financial and it is not concerned with individual LAGs and the day-to-day management of the programme:

It meets twice a year, and there are regular things which get sent out to it for information or approval, but generally it is looking to approve the annual report which goes to the Commission, the Commission require them to approve it, any modifications to the overall programme. So if there are changes to the budget profile for the programme stuff like that. There could be a few other little tweaks here and there. Generally it monitors the financial side of things, are we going to meet our plus two target, where basically we have to spend a certain amount of money each year or the Commission will claw money back. Outputs, you know, quite often the meetings go together with the annual report, and we will discuss at the meeting the progress made and are there any areas where the outputs are really poor and something can be done about it. They also have to approve things like evaluations, like the mid-term evaluation. (Defra representative)

The PMC approved final instructions as they went out; in previous years they have actually taken money off groups who didn't spend it and that was a PMC decision. The PMC was involved in making decision about how much money they can keep, how much was coming back in, once they had decided how that was going to work, once all the money was back in, it was then up to groups who wanted more money to put a bid in, it was up to the PMC to

decide who got the extra money back out from the pot (Government office for the South West representative).

The PMC would not be concerned with individual LAG management. The RPMC, because the programme managers are a part of that group, they would obviously be interested in how the other groups are doing. But the PMC would assume that the regional people are running after the day-to-day management of the programme (Government office for the South West representative).

The RPMC in contrast to the PMC plays an important strategic role at the regional level. It has to make important financial decisions with the responsibility for approving projects in the region that request more than £60,000. It also has the responsibility for approving changes within the LAGs. However, the RPMC, other than taking an interest in the LAGs within the region, does not systematically monitor individual programmes beyond its mandate to approve financial outgoings (above 60,000 EAGGF) and operational changes. There is nothing to suggest that the PMC or the RPMC plays a role beyond ensuring that the LEADER programme operates within its predefined limits and objectives. As their title suggests, these committees fulfil their role in monitoring the programme, but there is no evidence to suggest that this role has been extended to having a strategic influence. In effect, both committees operate judicially, and represent a judicial process that can be traced all the way to the Commission through the laying down of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001.

As part of this regulation a 'sufficient audit trail' must be taken by the member states. I was fortunate enough to be able to interview the officer who completed the audit of the focus LAG. This actor at the time of the audit was working for the Rural Development Service (RDS) (now disbanded). The audit process was broken up into four different levels (1-4). The first two levels represent basic monitoring carried out by the LAG itself, while levels three and four were carried out by the RDS. Level three audits where undertaken to assess 5% of all individual projects funded trough the LAGs within the English programme, while level four refers to the compliance monitoring of all the LAGs in the English programme. The audit that was undertaken by the interviewee was a level four, which can be summarized as follows:

> A principal objective of Level 4 compliance monitoring is to ensure that LAGs are complying with the terms and conditions of their offer letters and have put their own effective management and control procedures in place. This is important because they are effectively responsible for ensuring the propriety of the expenditure of final beneficiary projects, and, in the case of Action Plan Groups, for making payment, with a necessity to check the separation of function of assessment, monitoring and payment (Compliance and Monitoring Instructions)

Within this audit there is clearly a concern for two central themes. The first is the most common theme running throughout the audit and monitoring process: the financial

management of the LAG. The second, although still linked with financial management, concerns the 'separation of powers' within the process of assessing projects, monitoring them and providing them with financial resources. This second concern shows that there is some concern with the process that goes on inside the LAG, and in ensuring that the process is run fairly. However, this does not ensure that the LEADER approach to bottom-up rural development is supported to a level beyond the basic wording attached to the regulation outlined above, which represents further evidence of the protracted nature, and contradictions, at the heart of LEADER.

The RDS officer responsible for carrying out a level four audit within the focus LAG found that the strict monitoring guidelines they had to follow did not correspond to the rhetoric attached to the LEADER approach and the principal of bottom-up rural development.

> [W]e didn't look at a lot of the soft outcomes, although I possibly talked verbally about the soft outcomes a lot more than I wrote in the report because I wasn't required to do that... it says bottom-up, but there isn't a deep concern with it (RDS officer).

> From my monitoring point of view, yes it was definitely government procedures of where the money was being spent, and whether it was being spent in the right place [that was important]. I was not looking at how they

were getting information from the community to develop these projects (RDS officer).

What I was meant to be focusing on was the accounts record and the audit trail. That was the main purpose of the visit but, obviously we did look at the project progress quite heavily as well and made sure that the money that was spent met targets. Because obviously one of the concerns is whether there is going to be overspend or under spend, because obviously we don't want to send any money back to Europe so that's another one of the things because obviously if there is under spend we want to encourage them to do something about it (RDS officer).

These statements reaffirm the lack of concern by government for the underlying features of the LEADER approach. This emphasises the 'empty' nature of government rhetoric in relation to partnership forms of engagement, and the need to question why such a strong discourse in relation to community empowerment has been mobilised. This discourse appears to get lost in practice behind a smokescreen of financial auditing. These procedures are undoubtedly important, but there is clearly a risk that we lose sight of what the LEADER approach can offer to the 'new' rural governance.

At the LAG level, and in particular the focus LAG as outlined above, the programme manager is responsible for level 1 and 2 audit trails. The focus of each of these is as follows:

- Level 1 monitoring - routine monitoring of a project's progress, normally undertaken when processing a claim from the project for payment. All projects will be monitored in this way to ensure that they are meeting the targets agreed in the offer letter or to identify where targets are not being met so remedial action can be taken, and to ensure that expenditure is eligible.

- This monitoring will be undertaken by LAGs (whether they are operating under Action Plans or Local Strategic Plans). For Local Strategic Plan local action groups, Government Office secretariats will verify this monitoring when authorising claims for payment and will also undertake their own monitoring checks for all projects over £60,000.

- Level 2 (Article 4) monitoring - on the spot checks carried out via a site visit. All projects should receive at least one spot check to verify that they are meeting the targets agreed in their offer letter and to verify their progress reports. These checks will be undertaken by Local Action Groups (LAGs) (whether they are operating under Action Plans or Local Strategic Plans). For Local Strategic Plan LAGs, Government Office secretariats will undertake their own spot checks on all projects over £60,000 (Compliance and Monitoring Instructions).

The focus here is clearly at the operational level, representing the kind of monitoring you would come to expect in this kind of programme.

In addition to this, the LAGs also produced a business plan once a year, which was used by Government Office to ensure that the programme was being run effectively in line with its objectives, and its budget. It is also interesting to note that the LAG manager does not monitor the decision making process within the LAG, and at no point is there any review of those practices that make-up the key principles of the bottom-up approach. This means that these principles are not subject to monitoring or appraisal at any level of the LEADER programme, and this questions the validity of these principles further.

It is also worth highlighting that the flexibility found at the national level passes through the Government Office for the South West down to the focus LAG.

> I think the LAG has surprisingly good freedom, and that's one of the refreshing things about it. The decision-making process within the LAG needs to be formally approved and passes to Government Office for the South West were it just gets checked through as a kind of administration thing and it only comes back if there are any procedural problems, I think it's one of its strengths (LAG member)

> [W]e are certainly given enough freedom to get on with the job and without the government office trying to intervene with what we are trying to do... we

have regular south west meetings, that originally started because all the programme managers in the south west were new to LEADER. That started as means for us to get together and share information, Government Office were not invited to the first one, because at first we were not quite sure what our relationship was going to be, and as soon as we realised they were quite nice and friendly we would let them come along. It worked well because it means we can share that information, and guidance, but it is still very much led by us by us rather than the government office saying you will meet us every so often, you will do this. (Focus LAG manager).

From an EU down perspective I think the concept works very effectively. The EU have come up with a stroke of brilliance on a policy level, which Defra have chosen to implement in quite a broad framework, and for us government office are then working very flexibly to make stuff happen on the ground, on a 'working up from us process'. I know this isn't the same with government offices across the board, some of the LAGs in other areas have had nightmares with their's. Our government office, I think we have been very lucky with, they have been very focused on recognising that we are doing, what is locally appropriate for each different area, and so how the six of us are working is actually quite different, they have taken that on board, and took that on board very early, so they have been very focused on making sure that they enable us to be able to deliver. So rather than telling us what we can't do, we work together to find a way of doing the things that we need to do, which

has been very positive, so they have been very delivery focused, and very focused on having that link between the programming documents and the criteria and the legalities on what has to be done, and interfacing that with actually working on the ground with us, and finding ways of making the two fit together. So I think they have worked very well as that interface between programme documentation and programme delivery. Defra, we have had less to do with, but in relation to previous experiences of them, they have also been very flexible about that delivery process, and then our EU perspective is even more limited because we have significantly less to do with that..., they seem to be delivering or supporting the programme in the spirit of the initial programming documentation as well. (LAG manger).

The Government Office for the South West provides a link between the LAGs and Defra, and oversees the running of the programme, providing a check point to ensure the LAG projects fit the programme and report back to the national level on the outputs achieved, and the costs incurred. It also plays an important networking role by facilitating the LAGs in the region to come together, and to ensure the best possible transfer of knowledge between groups, and between itself and the groups.

7.9 The focus LAG and 'local' governing structures

The focus LAG, in conjunction within the governing processes passed down from the EU through the LEADER approach, and from Defra, is also conditioned by local governing

structures. The focus LAG, as discussed in chapter three, is managed by a team employed within RegCo. RegCo, as outlined in previous chapter has been a part of local governing structures for a number of years, and has constructed a strong policy community linked to its work. It has its own distinct procedures that differ greatly from other such agencies, as was outlined in the previous chapter. In conjunction with this RegCo is core funded by two district councils. However, the district councils play little active role in the running of the focus LAG, and as a consequence, because LEADER has such a flexible mandate, it is possible that actors at the local level have an unrestrained degree of agency when putting together its governing structures, resulting in un-codified (or 'un-codifiable') norms.

One Torridge district council officer spoke of the LAG and the regeneration company as one and the same thing, and appeared to view them as a delivery agency to aid the district councils meet their objectives.

> We see it more of a delivery agency than a governance agency to be honest. Yeah, I mean it all helps, I mean you can't govern unless you have got a means to deliver. So the two functions aren't completely separate, the emphasis within LEADER, within the regeneration company is delivery. The emphasis within local authorities is governance; you know it's called democracy (laughing). It isn't perfect but it does the job. It is an interesting relationship, but it does help to deliver in rural communities and it's part of

our purpose as local authorities to deliver. LEADER helps us to deliver priority areas, so it's a very good alignment (District council representative).

However, although this council representative presents the LAG as a delivery mechanism, LEADER is not a part of the local authority's core strategy to deliver rural policy. The interviewee is implying that LEADER is part of a wider strategy to improve policy delivery in rural communities, and in this broad sense it is easily seen as a delivery mechanism. In fact, given the structure of the LEADER programme, and its processes outlined in relation to the focus LAG, LEADER has limited dependency on local government. This point was reinforced by LAG representative:

We don't really have any relationship at all with local government... As far as local government in the form of... [the district councils], we really don't have a link, there is no string there, there is nothing there to suggest that we are working together in partnership, otherwise they would not be inviting me to their scrutiny committee because they would know about us and what we do. They would know what we do, they would know what our influence is and they would be able to say look let's join our policy to your thinking, and perhaps together we can do something, but that just doesn't happen (LAG representative)

The LEADER programme is an example of the new governance, and as such it is dependent on a separation of powers at the local level that act to reinforce the

technologies of involvement. It is likely that LEADER does reinforce council objectives, after all the LEADER objectives are incredibly broad, and it is unlikely that the council would be opposed toward the development of the rural economy. This does not mean however that LEADER is being steered by the council as the first statement above implies.

The view that the focus LAG represents a delivery mechanism is more significant in relation to RegCo. RegCo is core funded by the districts councils, and although the district council does not appear to be able to affect its day-to-day working practices, it does have a high level of strategic input with regards to the position of RegCo in the framework of local governance. I found that the district councils faced severe criticism within the LAG area, and there was a view that their position in local governance was weak by interviewees across the LAG network, largely due to their lack of resources and constant attempts at cost cutting. This weakness transpired through the strategy it employed over local governance and the increasing emphasis on devolving power to agencies, and reformulating these agencies to take on a greater role, in an attempt to save money.

> [D]istrict councils, not by my reckoning, but by the audit commission's reckoning, are either poor or weak aren't they, and here they are poor and weak, and that sums it up. They are poor and weak, at worse, there is no real political drive. They are quite happy to try and get rid of things to save themselves money (LAG representative).

The District councils do not appear to influence the focus LAG beyond the fact that they are the core funders of RegCo, which has taken on the management of the LAG. District council officers or district councillors do not attend the LAG meetings, and their involvement is purely statutory. This implies that the onus of organising the management of the LAG rests with RegCo, who in this instance, are the accountable body. RegCo offers an important set of resources for the LAG to draw on, and the role this type of agency can play has been identified.

> The added value of (...) [such agencies] is that when a project comes in they have got the knowledge, a much broader knowledge across that particular sector, and across that particular theme. Ultimately they don't make the decisions, because there will be a separate decision making panel (Rural policy consultant).

My own experiences of RegCo are mixed. I did attempt on several occasions to speak with representatives of this agency, outside of the LEADER management team, with little success. I received no response after writing letters, e-mails, and leaving answer phone messages. I did manage to speak to three individuals who sat on the committee of RegCo, but they were not actively engaged in its day-to-day management, and had little to say on its institutional practices. This was disappointing given the important role of this particular agency within the governance of LEADER, and the fact that it is handling public funds. Furthermore, RegCo effectively acted as a gatekeeper when I attempted to attend the LAG committee meetings, as stated previously, the LAG manager had to ask

for permission from senior members of staff within the agency. This is again disappointing given the approach LEADER should conform to. As a result, the closest I got to RegCo's managing team was at a LAG committee meeting, and through interviews with the focus LAG management team. On speaking with other LAG managers in other areas I found that some followed the same approach as the focus LAG and had closed meetings, while others had open meetings, who could be attended freely by the general public. This is indicative of the freedom at the LAG level, and the control over the implementation of the 'bottom-up' approach. However, contrary to the perception that the LEADER approach supports governing processes that are based around community preferences, it appears more likely that RegCo and the wider policy community, as outlined in chapter 6, was largely responsible for conditioning the nature of the governing processes involved, and the level of civic engagement achievable. This resulted is a 'closed' programme that has failed to effectively communicate what LEADER is about to the whole of the LAG territory. There are no regular newsletters to inform the local community, and press releases are a rarity. As a representative of the LAG management team testifies:

> Where we probably fall down is informing people what we have done and what is available. It's not just the time involved in writing press releases, it's capacity within the office really. I suppose a way around it would be to employ a PR person to pass the information on and put it in a press release, a lot of it has come down to time (LAG management team representative).

Many of these processes fall short of what could have been possible under the vestiges of the LEADER approach. In this instance RegCo reflects some of the dangers within the new governance framework. The freedom therein allows these agencies too much control over policy networks, given the lack of democratic accountability and legitimacy they face. They are undoubtedly effective implementation devices, and operate highly efficiently, but there is a dangerous significance to their presence in public policy, especially when they begin to 'take a on a life of their own'[13].

> Well it's a slightly confusing one isn't it because they are a separate company, but they are a company, a not for profit company, they clearly have a strategy that does bear some relationship to other strategies, but it's not a particularly democratic process. But obviously then there are people involved who are democratically accountable in some way. I have very mixed feelings, I mean, I think partnership companies like that are quite a good mechanism for delivering things. (...) I have to say, I think in most of these local strategic partnerships, and certainly (...) [the regeneration company], is very economic and business focused, more than I think is appropriate (Devon Rural Network Representative).

The focus LAG represents an interesting mix of the technologies of agency and performance. Agency is a principle at the heart of the LEADER approach, and yet it is given little judicial concern through the LEADER network from the EU to the LAG.

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[13] '[T]hey are often set up by local authorities, but they rapidly take on a life of their own (...).They are certainly not creatures of the local authority. Local authorities are important to their existence' (Devon Rural Network Representative)

Despite this it is reinforced through the LEADER discourse, and the freedom over the processes employed at the LAG level in respect of the bottom-up approach has ensured that some LAGs have fulfilled the 'soft' guidelines attached to this approach much better. However, the focus LAG has made its own interpretation of this process, influenced by the market led management techniques of RegCo. There is little experience here in effective deliberative and participative practice. The freedom ensured throughout the LAG network over such practices, and the judicial nature of those concerns related to financial issues, risks undermining the LEADER approach.

It is difficult to discern who has control over the technologies of agency, there is certainly much in the argument that subnational actors play an important function in the conditioning of agency. At first sight the government does not seem concerned with the delivery mechanisms used by the LAG through the LEADER programme. If it did, it does have the option to control these mechanisms more stringently through its interpretation of the guidelines. Rhetoric on community engagement and partnership attached to LEADER stands out as a highly contradictory element within the focus LAG, and the wider English programme. The most obvious assumption is that government uses this rhetoric in an attempt to condition the agency of the actors involved without having to call on the wider and more expensive apparatus of the state. In reality there is little attempt to engage rural communities in progressive ways. This is deliberative democracy on the cheap! It is possible the government has underestimated the ability of subnational actors, or local policy communities, to hijack wider government strategy, and (re-)condition policy delivery. It is also likely that government is stretched, and does not

have the appropriate resources or knowledge to empower community engagement effectively.

Furthermore, I contend that the construction of territorially defined communities represents a tool that is seen as a means to reinforce and shape conditions of agency, and focus the performative element of the programme to specific areas of need. In effect, the construction of territory is seen to provide a means to implement policy over the top of traditional state boundaries in an attempt to secure more effective policy implementation in those areas that need it the most. However, this process breaks down if the processes, by which these needs are identified, are not sufficient. In the previous chapter, I outlined the problems with this approach, especially the potential for these communities to be closed to certain groups within these territories. This point is reinforced through the dominant position in the focus LAG of RegCo, and its strategic concerns, that largely overlook the importance of a highly tuned democratic process that is inclusive of community needs. The danger is that the following approach is employed:

> You have to start when you are writing these things thinking how am I going to win it? What is the criteria Defra is setting, and therefore you go for the areas in greatest need. (...) I think that you have to be pragmatic, go for what the programme is actually aiming to achieve, bid on that and then work on how to deliver it to a natural area. If you can join things up at the beginning then great, but if you can't, try and join them up mid way through (Former RegCo employee).

This is indicative of the potential for the LAG territory to be married together, without much foresight on the binding of disparate community groups together.

7.10 Conclusion

There is clearly a tension within the implementation of LEADER between the flexibility required to secure an effective approach to bottom-up rural development, and the danger that this freedom gives national and subnational actors too much control over the implementation of the approach. The result is the emergence of a *quasi* form of bottom-up rural development conditioned by the complexities of an open system of governance. It is possible that these tensions emerge from those 'conflicts' between the member states and the Commission over cohesion policy, which has seen national governments reclaiming some of the power it lost to the Commission in the late eighties. The Commission clearly does not play the role it once did within LEADER, and the early years of the programme, which saw LEADER as a 'laboratory' for EU rural policy and governance is over. Nevertheless, the spirit of LEADER lives on, but it is no longer driven by the ideals of European social democrats. LEADER has been hijacked, under the conditions of advanced liberalism, within which the technologies of agency and performance have been wrestled from the Commission, and are now commanded by the member states.

However, the lack of concern over which governance mechanisms are employed at the LAG level by the Labour government, has the effect of empowering subnational actors in unpredictable ways. In some LAGs subnational actors play a crucial role in shaping the governance structure by promoting civic engagement at the local level. In the focus LAG, however, the policy community surrounding LEADER has been empowered to deliver rural policy through the existing machinery of RegCo, and a policy community relating to the previous LEADER programme. This has ensured the focus LAG is managed in a technocratic way, with little concern for the LEADER *approach*.

At first sight, the LEADER programme, appears to reflect a form of multilevel governance with power passing between the EU and national levels down to the subnational level, but as we look closer, we realise that the state continues to play a powerful position due to the weak demands, set out in the programme's legislative structure. The British government does not empower the LAGs in a strategic way, or play an active role in monitoring the programme in terms of its 'softer' outputs. Its primary concern is the programme's budget, and to see that it is spent efficiently and effectively. This ensures that the effectiveness of the LAG is dependent on the structures, cultures and traditions that already exist at the local level, and the 'blueprint' for rural development at the heart of the LEADER approach is lost. A more multilevel approach may have ensured that the central features of LEADER were not lost within the realms of political dyspraxia, by ensuring a clear agenda was set at the EU level and transferring this through the member states to the local level. Unfortunately, the complexity within

'European Governance', and the renationalisation of the structural funds, has seen the 'cohesive' qualities sought through the LEADER programme diminished.

8. Conclusion: Positioning 'bottom-up' rural development in the 'new world order'?

8.1 Introduction: the new world order reassessed

This chapter aims to position my LEADER narrative within the context of the wider governance turn, and more explicitly the perception that this turn has led to the emergence of a 'new world order', first discussed in chapter four. This provides the means to unpack and explore some of the tensions that exist within the new governance narrative and an opportunity to try to understand some of the peculiarities of the LEADER case in the context of the wider governance literature. In a sense, this chapter is a means to bring my analysis together and to think critically about broader governance issues relating to changing state structure and interactions of power, brought about by changing modes of coordination. I begin this chapter by exploring why it might be useful to see the governance turn in terms of a new world order, and I go on to relate this proposition to the governance of LEADER. I argue that new world order is highly significant because it has re-engendered politics by acknowledging the disaggregated nature of the emergent political order, at the heart of which lie the globalising forces of integration and fragmentation (fragmegration).

This point has been supported through this research by recognising the following trends within the governance of LEADER. First, and foremost, LEADER can be seen as a response to the challenges posed by the emerging epoch. The LEADER approach to

governance attempts to reconcile these forces by attempting to deal with global challenges within a localised setting. The official discourse suggests this is possible through a linear process of 'multilevel' governance, with both the member states and the Commission playing a steering role. It is at this juncture, where it becomes clear that states are no longer willing, or in many cases able, to steer policy networks in a systematic way. This is elaborated by a second observation, this being the increasing potential for *unstable policy interactions*, especially through partnership forms of governance and the extension of horizontal networks. Governments are no longer the dominant organization, they are not able to steer interactions effectively, despite their best efforts. This means interactions are potentially driven by actors and organisations that are not bound by public forms of accountability. These unstable interactions engender an intricate web of power relations, with different actors and organisations playing off one another in numerous ways, the result of which is a set of unfamiliar networks relations, unstable in nature, and highly mutable, especially when exposed to discourses of power, and subtle techniques of meta-governance. Thirdly, this results in the emergence of *new dangers* within policy making and public administration, given the increasing flexibility of policy choices, decision making and implementation. This flexibility is built into the LEADER policy network, as a means to meet the challenges posed by those processes associated with globalisation. However, the success of this approach is reliant upon those actors across the policy network to have the same objectives as policy makers. In my explication of LEADER I showed how interactions across the network are subject to a complex process of associational dynamics. The result been a protracted version of bottom-up rural development, conditioned by a relatively

closed policy community at the local level; and through misplaced attempts to steer the governance process from the EU/national level predominantly focusing on financial outputs.

In chapter 3 it was made clear how other interpretations of the LEADER governance have focused upon the varied or differentiated nature of rural territories and their communities. Local forces play a significant role in how territories engage with the new governance, and in the case of LEADER these leaves room for a series of different potential outcomes. There is potential for territories to build extensive vertical and horizontal relations through the auspices of the LEADER approach. However, this is not always the preferred option for the dominant groups within a community. I have attempted to show how the policy interactions in the focus LAG have been dominated and steered by RegCo, and this organisation does not seem to favour opening-up the policy community and integrate it into wider networks. This does not mean, however, that the potential to do this does not exist. In fact, those interpretations of LEADER governance outlined in Chapter 3 underline the potential that exists within the new governance for rural territories to take advantage of overlapping network structures.

Governance as a new world order is contingent upon a set of mobile dependencies that are both global and local. The increasing tendency for these polarities to emerge reflects those processes of centralization and integration, along with those of decentralization and fragmentation (Roseneau, Vol 2, 2006: 74). 'While these polarities move the course of events in opposite directions, they are continuously, simultaneously, and often causally

interactive, giving rise to the prime tensions with which individuals and their collectivities must contend' (ibid, 74). In other words, interactions between the global and local level are common and fluid with actors now able to cascade through time and across space like never before. The result is a series of global and local policy networks that at any one time are connected, disconnected, or erratically swinging from the global to the local level.

This thesis is built on a set of interpretative methods. These methods have been employed by placing the narrative that has emerged in my own research alongside existing discourses on the new governance, participatory decision-making and the changing rural policy arena. This discourse has been made up of a diverse array of themes and ideas which at times seem almost unrelated. This has been a necessary exercise in framing patterns of knowledge that shape the governance of LEADER at the local level and beyond. The exercise of looking through an 'interpretative lens' has provided a good basis from which to show how the narrative formed through this research does not just build on existing interpretations of LEADER, but also upon a wider set of narratives and discourses that bring new ideas and perspectives to the fore. In many respects this research has provided the opportunity to build a greater understanding of the context in which the LEADER programme has grown and developed, and build stronger links to the emerging narratives associated with the new governance.

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I attempted to show throughout this thesis the extent to which power flows in and through both global and local settings. I also hope to have made clear that the tensions within the LEADER programme come from the associational flows of power across the network. The process of fragmegration is evident within the LEADER programme. The EU has been enrolled in the process of rural development, specifically because of its global vantage point, and the pre-existing rural policy community at the EU level. Power has been consciously passed to this supranational body by member states, as it is seen as the most suitable arena to meet the challenges posed by the global economy, and the extension of horizontal networks of association. In response, the EU has developed an approach to economic development based on the perceived benefits of community based interaction, discussed in chapter three. This approach attempts to deal with global issues at a very local level by strengthening the quality of interactions and institutional arrangements. This has had the effect, in the case of LEADER, of opening up the local level to an unstable and complex web of collectivities and actors. In the focus LAG, as discussed in the previous chapter, this process has been dominated by a local development agency (RegCo), and a set of related associational actors who represent a relatively closed policy network. In the case of LEADER the fragmentation process has been instigated by the member states and the Commission, and facilitated through stunted forms of network design and framing. Unfortunately, the overall success of this form of endogenous development has been impeded by strong local institutional ties, an unwillingness to open-up the policy network at the local level, and reluctance on the part of the government to provide the appropriate resources to empower a process of community engagement.

LEADER has offered a fascinating insight into the new governance, particularly by highlighting a set of contingent weaknesses, and the influence of such on the new social interactions promoted through partnership, and the extension of previously embedded networks. A key feature of the LEADER governance narrative is the variance offered by the particular set of social, economic, political and cultural interactions taking place across the policy network. The nature of these interactions, and their influence, vary across the network. The varying level of interdependence induced through these interactions is reliant upon the level of contact between different actors. As stressed, the quality of these interactions is conditioned by the design features of the network; the type of actors involved and their willingness to engage fully in these interactions; and the culture or pattern of network relations familiar to those actors involved.

8.2 Disaggregation, the State and LEADER

The emerging global system is framed in chapter four as a 'dissagregated system of diverse transnational collectivities' within a multi-centric world 'that competes, cooperates, or otherwise interacts with the state centric world'. This system is made up of 'a wide range of fast moving, boundary-spanning actors'. Within this context the new governance represents a global system that no longer rests simply on the conditions of market and hierarchical interactions within international arenas.

This disaggregated system implies that regulatory power now resides with collectivities of actors, who interact 'efficiently' with hierarchical, market and network modes of coordination. The scope for extending networks and the level of interaction within the process of economic development is broader than ever. Add to this the scope of meta-governance, and the potential of 'powerful' insurgencies across the network, and it is evident that the new governance is a medium that is not solely the domain of state led forms of coordination. The new world order thesis has much to offer in terms of how we perceive policy networks from the global to the local and vice versa. In response to this it is important to reinforce those narratives that bring attention to the fluidity and potential disjointed nature of the emerging political system. The Latourian understanding of power employed in this thesis provides a good theoretical basis from which to explore this, and to describe the power relations that underpin new network structures. As part of this there is a need to understand the potential for differentiation and fragmegration. These forces underpinned by the nature of power relations within the new governance.

The state is still able to steer network relations and collectivities of actors within the new governance despite the increasingly non-linear nature of flows within the political system. Nevertheless, states are finding it increasingly difficult to steer network relations effectively due to the way in which authority is being relocated horizontally across networks, and undermining the principle of national sovereignty (ibid, 41). In chapter four, I drew on Fukuyama to show how the extension of networks has emerged around the state's desire to devolve power, and downsize its primary functions. This has resulted in the extension of policy networks, and the active engagement and promotion of more

mobile capital and organizational relations. It is possible that the state has underestimated the ability of network collectivities to hijack the processes of centralization and decentralization away from the state.

The LEADER programme, as a decentralised policy initiative within an EU setting, is characterised by disaggregated non-linear flows of power between the EU level, the national level, and the sub-national level. These flows take place against the backdrop of a highly contested policy arena framed within the pretext of the multilevel governance discourse, as discussed in the previous chapter. The complexity underpinning the debate over multilevel governance, in relation to cohesion policy, should not be confused with the unique set of complexities surrounding LEADER. LEADER holds a unique position as a Community initiative, which sees the Commission commanding special dispensation over its operation. Nevertheless, the flows of power that characterise the LEADER programme are no less complex.

LEADER is not framed as a disaggregated system within the official discourse, because so much emphasis is given to its potential as an endogenous process. This hides the fact that the LEADER approach is a highly disaggregated model of governance over which the member states coordinate network interactions through forms of meta-governance, network design and framing. In the previous chapter I attempted to show that the network interactions between the national level and the EU level represented state led forms of disaggregation, characterised by relatively linear flows of power, and void of potentially dangerous mobile network interactions. However, as developed in the previous chapter

disaggregation takes on a different form at the local level, with non-state actors and a set of complex social, cultural, economic and political interactions taking place. I developed this point in chapter 6 by highlighting the dangers of partnership governance especially in relationship to issues surrounding local democracy. It is at this level that the potential for 'fragmegration' is at its greatest, with the non-linearity of policy most evident, along with the emerging tensions that reflect a set of mobile or unstable set of policy interactions.

8.3 Network framing: area based partnership and top-down flows?

One of the features of the LEADER programme, as discussed above, is the balance between top down and bottom-up features of the LEADER approach, and the tensions this creates. The state centric features of this approach are constructed as an extension of the localised networks in the official discourse, as a means to enhance cooperation and innovation. The fact that power flows in the alternative direction is largely overlooked. This is indicative of the way a particular perception of the governance system is constructed through the discourse, but does not match up to the relations and interactions that characterise the flows of power. Top down flows of power play a significant role in the LEADER programme, and yet at the same time these forces are atypical and based upon a complex set of interactions between the state and the Commission. It would not have been possible to understand the complexity of these interactions without employing a network approach, and then using the overlapping discourses as a framing device to understand the context in which network 'outcomes' emerge.

The theory of European Governance, discussed in chapter four, highlights the complexity within the European system of governance, and is indicative of how the system shifts between the state and new power associations formed around the EU. This model reflects the view that European policy making can be likened to a pendulum, whereby power swings between the Commission and the member states (See Wallace and Wallace, 1999). This process is very clear in the case of cohesion policy, explored in the previous chapter. However, the new world order thesis, explored above, encourages us to consider the ever increasing associations of power across horizontal policy networks. In this regard, the policy pendulum does not reflect the ever increasing number of collectivities and the non-linear flows that are now possible within the new governance. In this sense, it might be appropriate to replace the pendulum with a series of interconnected roulette wheels that are conjoined at multiple points, whereby 'the token' can pass in multiple directions, and between various wheels. This reflects rather better the multi-centric and multi-organisational character of policy networks and flows of power. This gives further reference to a Latourian understanding of power relations, whereby flows are dependent upon actors 'turning the wheel' and shifting power forward to the next. What happens at the next wheel depends on whether the actors that reside there choose to turn the wheel, and how far they turn it. The decisions they make are conditioned by the context in which they reside, and the discourses that shape their decisions.

This contention is reflected through the principle of partnership at the heart of the new governance. Partnership is framed around a new ethos of participation, in line with the heterogeneous view of power and society underpinning the emergent epoch. This is no

more evident than in the discourse attached to LEADER which paints a picture of a diverse rural economy, a potential means of innovative development policy, facilitated by the LEADER approach and positioned within the context of an area-based partnership approach. However, the new governance opens up new challenges for rural policy makers, quite simply because the policy process has to adjust to a new set of policy interactions, formed around different sets of actors and organisations. As stressed in the preceding chapters, RegCo dominates the LEADER policy network at the local level, and it is here where tensions seem most prevalent.

I developed in chapter four the way in which LEADER represents an ambitious programme to try to redevelop the relationships between state, citizen and community in rural areas. This comes as part of the wider policy agenda that seeks to develop rural economic development by promoting the heterogeneous character of rural space and removing the focus away from agriculture. In the case of LEADER, through its bottom-up approach, the focus has been on promoting interaction at the local level. As I developed in chapter three, this focus on bottom-up forms of development is part of a wider discourse on the perceived benefits of this approach in dealing with the challenges posed by globalisation. The LEADER programme seeks to superimpose a set of complex dynamics within the LAG. In doing so it overlooks complex processes and conditions required to usher self-organizing systems of governance within the context of bottom-up control mechanisms. These are not constructed by top-down control mechanisms, but develop out of the shared needs of groups, and lead to mutually acceptable shared instruments of control (Roseneau, Vol 2, 2006: 125).

Governance does not just suddenly happen. Circumstances have to be suitable, people have to be amenable to collective decisions being made, tendencies toward organization have to develop, habits of cooperation have to evolve, and a readiness not to impede the process of emergence and evolution has to persist. The proliferation of organisations and their ever greater interdependence may stimulate felt needs for new forms of governance, but the transformation of these needs into established and institutionalised control mechanisms is never automatic and can be marked by a volatility that consumes long stretches of time (ibid, 125).

This implies that attempts at the EU level to impose a system of bottom-up governance, as in the case of LEADER, are destined to be strewn with complex tensions at the local level. It may have been appropriate to build into the LEADER programme a greater level of top-down control as a means to ensure pre-existing local networks did not impede the emergence and evolution of the LEADER network. In the case of the focus LAG this may involve ensuring that resources are more evenly distributed at the local level, creating competition for the RegCo, and ensuring partnership arrangements that are open to all.

This process is dependent upon a well developed partnership made up of people with varied backgrounds and experiences. These actors must show a willingness to break away from the shackles of previous institutional experiences and forge a new and deliberative approach to policy issues. This experience was also shared by those interpretations of the

LEADER governance discussed in Chapter 3. Within the new network governance there is room for actors to build new economic and social ties, but as stressed in that chapter, this is dependent on territories actively positioning themselves within overlapping network structures, while also ensuring their own policy networks are more extensive and ready to forge new relationships and take advantage of new opportunities. In chapter 6 I showed how the focus LAG relies on the perceived expertise of the 'usual suspects', and their knowledge of the policy making process. There is a danger here that bottom-up processes are not enrolled and the new governance is not monitored to ensure their outputs conform, most importantly, with the needs of those local communities involved – their cultures, traditions, and economies; and that governance mechanisms are not operated by powerful associations of actors at the local level whose dependencies are not local, or directly accountable. There is a widespread assumption within the LEADER programme that by giving the local level the means to make decisions and contribute to decision-making, endogenous development has been implemented effectively. This assumption reinforces the pre-existing association of power in the focus LAG, and removes any pressures that might exist to extend the policy network.

In the previous chapter I showed how interactions at the local level were now framed by RegCo. These interactions were limited on account of the closed character of the partnership that was set up, and the extent to which the LAG management team attempted to engage new partners. There was an unwillingness to look beyond the domain of the pre-existing policy network coordinated by the RegCo. This network is made up of rural businesses, environmental groups and to a lesser extent charities and voluntary

organisations. The network shows no sign of agricultural exceptionalism, associated with some other rural policy networks. In fact, RegCo has played a role in removing agricultural ties, by actively seeking to reinforce a set of post-Fordist discourses that place agriculture on the edge of rural policy concerns. This was evident in the negative way agriculture was discussed by LAG members, and reflected by the fact that there seemed to be few attempts to engage the agricultural community, and there was little support for projects relating to agriculture. The actors within the LEADER network at the local level have the particular resources required to operate within the new governance. They have the skill and experience of working within a mobile environment made up of fluid policy interactions. In this sense, the LEADER programme has reinforced a set of pre-existing policy networks. These networks have become dominated by a set of new rural protagonists who are highly skilled and resourced, and in the best position to be able to take advantage of mobile network interactions. In this sense, the focus LAG has not been able to extend the engagement of actors in dramatically new directions. This indicates that processes at the local level are both resistant to top-down attempts at coordination. Yet, the influence of wider discourses can be seen through the scepticism toward agricultural interests.

The LEADER approach offers the opportunity to go some way in readdressing the balance of power in rural areas in favour of non-agricultural interests. It may also be a way of putting continued pressure on the CAP, by highlighting the ability of a bottom-up approach to engage a whole host of other interests. This view is supported by those influences behind the LEADER programme, discussed in chapter three, which framed

LEADER as a means to reinvigorate the rural economy, and put right the lack of investment in 'rural capital'. However, the extent to which the balance of power in rural areas can be readdressed is questionable given the continuing expenditure of the CAP and its ongoing defensive modernisation. The consequence is that policies such as LEADER remain limited in terms of their budgets, profile and impact. This is not to say that LEADER does not offer a way forward for rural policy. It is clear that the potential within the LEADER programme is increasingly being acknowledged by a number of different actors within the rural policy arena. In fact, when I interviewed a Defra representative he was keen to stress that at first LEADER was subjected to a great deal of cynicism from within the organization, but over time the programme has increasingly received positive attention. The mainstreaming of the LEADER programme in the next programming period 2006-2013, is likely to open up the potential of the LEADER approach to an even wider audience. The biggest danger for the next programming period is that the failings of the current programme through the LEADER approach become even further embedded within the process of governing rural development. At the local level it is also important that LAG partnerships do not alienate the agricultural community by positively discriminating against agricultural interests.

There was some concern from the LAG manager with the way the make-up of the focus LAG varied on a long term and short term basis. The simple fact is that people come and go on a regular basis from this type of partnership. During my interviews, some interviewees, particularly from the voluntary sector, suggested that they ought to be paid for their participation in the LAG. This suggested that personal resources, in terms of

time and money, were put under pressure by their involvement in these partnerships; in a different way to those people who could draw on the resources of the business or charity they work for. The instability of the LEADER policy network is also reinforced by the fact that the partnership that has been brought together for a limited programming period. There is no certainty that the focus LAG will be awarded funding for the next round of LEADER[14]. Once the programme is removed, the network breaks down. It might be that the local network reforms, in part, under another partnership initiative led by the RegCo, but by its nature this policy network is potentially unstable.

It is not surprising that in putting these partnerships together, pre-existing policy communities are called upon to draw out interested partners. It is only through calling on these pre-existing communities, like that formed around RegCo, that a programme like LEADER can find a platform and set of working practices to get off the ground. The habits and effective organisational practices that need time to develop within bottom-up forms of development, as outlined above, are heavily restricted by the unstable nature of the LAG partnership. Unfortunately, the programming period does not allow these practices to take on a life of their own, and develop the bottom-up approach further. This directly implicates upon the potential of bottom-up forms of rural development and future programmes. These unstable policy interactions are added to by the dangers in the decision making options open to the LAG partnerships. The result has been an approach to bottom-up rural development that does not reflect how it is depicted in the official

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[14] The focus LAG was finally awarded funding under the new LEADER programme (2008-2013) by the South West Regional Development Agency (RDA). The LAG has changed its name to Torridge and North Devon, and is managed by North Devon+. This new organisation has seen the amalgamation of RegCo with the North Devon Marketing Bureau and the North Devon Enterprise Agency.

discourse, but instead reflects those processes, and collectivities that pre-exist along the network.

The focus LAG runs relatively well, and if it were not for a rich discourse on the bottom-up nature of the programme, I doubt there would be much room for criticism. All project funds are accounted for, the LAG is run efficiently, no money is sent back to the EU, and worthy projects are supported. However, the quality of the bottom-up approach, as discussed in chapter five, does not meet expectations. In response, an academic discourse, discussed in chapter 3, has emerged that continually reasserts the programme's failings. There is every justification for this stance. If a liberal democratic institution, whether this be the EU (arguably so) or the member states that make up this supranational body, lay claim to a policy initiative that promotes these democratic principles, there is need for concern if these principles are not respected. A number of critics have begun to question the sanctity of liberal democracy, in relation to new governance forms (See Sorensen, 2007). The relationship between official discourses and governance outputs within this research highlights the subtle pressures on liberal democracy, particularly on the changing perceptions of what democracy ought to be. The changes associated with the new governance, networks and the emerging epoch are being subsumed within the democratic system, principally by advanced liberal democracies. The new governance has been defined as a means to re-engender a set of social, economic, political and cultural relations. As such, governance becomes a potential platform for new associations of power. These associations have the potential to promote new forms of social and economic development; but alternatively they may also have a negative impact, as

resource dependencies shift back towards the market, the state, or those collectivities that save limited resources to achieve democratic governance and positive forms of socio-economic development.

The states attempts to impose bottom-up forms of governance on the local level are motivated by the perceived benefits of this approach to development. However, as I have tried to emphasise, network design and framing at the national level create tensions within this approach. In the case of LEADER, the state still holds a powerful position, but it is important to acknowledge that decisions are now made over public policy within the context of the new governance by an array of different actors, from different backgrounds, and with different experiences and levels of 'expertise'. This means decisions are not conditioned by the same processes, objectives and institutional norms that are found within traditional top-down systems of government. LEADER is conditioned by an increasingly disaggregated political system. This system is made up of both top-down and bottom-up flows and interactions. These flows are non-linear and reflect the associations of power along the LEADER network, primarily at the EU, national and local level.

In this section, I have explored the tensions between top-down and bottom-up governance within the LEADER programme. These tensions are typical of those associated with the emergence of the new world order. They are indicative of the current mobility of actors and organizations, the increasing freedom and confidence of non-state actors to form or control collectivities (at the expense of the state), and the ability of the state to use this

emerging political system as a means to continue to devolve some of its primary functions, while simultaneously attempting to steer the political system. The potential for unstable policy interactions, new dangers in the flexibility of policy choices and decision making, and attempts to ameliorate changing nodes of power through a global economy help frame these changes as part of the new governance. The new world order thesis does not imply that we are unequivocally entering into a system defined by linear network governance mechanisms.

Fragmegrative processes sustain authority flows that are not neatly structured and go every which way, emanating from a vast array of actors whose rule systems seek to evoke compliance through a variety of means. Global governance involves crazy-quilt like arrangements wherein authority is exercised partly by hierarchical structures, partly by horizontal networks, and partly by oblique links among overlapping vertical and horizontal spheres of authority (SOAs). Taken in its entirety, the prevailing system of global governance is comparable to a mobius strip or web. It is a system marked by patterns that unfold when the impetus to steer a course of events derives from networked and hierarchical interactions across levels of aggregation among transnational corporations (TNCs), international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), NGOs, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), states, elites, mass publics, and local or provincial communities, interactions that are elaborate and diverse enough to constitute a hybrid structure in which the

dynamics of governance are so overlapping among the several levels as to form a singular, web-like process that is continuous and, like a mobius, neither begins nor culminates at any level or at any point in time. A mobius web is top-down, bottom-up and side-by-side governance all at once (Roseneau, 2006, Vol. 1: 152).

The new governance is a global web of diverse network interactions, multi-layered, and coordinated by collectivities at multiple sites across policy networks. The shift from hierarchical to network forms of coordination (from government to governance) has brought about the potential for a set of social, economic, political and interpersonal relations to influence public policy in new and more pervasive ways. Power now resides through network relations in unconventional ways, governed by new sets of actor interactions. A key feature of network coordination is not necessarily the more extensive range of actors now present across policy networks, but the channels open to pre-existing actors, as a means to influence, steer, channel resources and evade responsibility for actions within a policy setting. Power remains resource dependent but there is also much to be said for the ability of actors to be able to negotiate there way across the network and condition interactions.

The interactions evident through the LEADER programme are led by governments, based on a *flexible method of coordination* developed at the EU level by the Commission. The flexibility set into the system at the EU level is primarily for the managing authorities to use at their own discretion. The relationship between the EU, national and regional level

appear hierarchical in nature, and as a consequence relatively linear. The interactions along this part of the network are primarily technocratic, and based upon predetermined rules. In the work of Marks and Hooghe, drawn upon in the previous chapter, the EU system was viewed as multi-layered, made up of EU institutions, national government representatives (including subnational representation), and a whole host of third sector bodies. This system of multilevel governance is held to characterise the EU, and in broad policy sectors, such as cohesion policy, there is evidence to suggest that this system shapes policy in new and direct ways. However, although LEADER is part of cohesion policy, its governance is not characterised by the linear flows of multilevel governance because of the tensions and disaggregated interactions that take place at the local level, and conditioned by the bottom-up approach.

The smooth relationship between the Commission, Defra and the regional level tends to hide these unstable collectivities. The forces at work here are embedded in a set of area-based interactions, over which the rest of the LEADER network has little control, and dare I say it, interest. The guidelines set out on the partnership process and the level of scrutiny and monitoring it receives is limited, compared to the financial side of the programme, even at the LAG level. In chapter 6 the freedom entrusted to the LAG to run an effective partnership was made clear. However, it is here that the potential dangers inherent within the new governance are at their greatest, and the implications of the LEADER approach are most closely felt. This is the site at which actors and their organisations interact across networks relatively freely from the state. This has enabled collectivities, such as RegCo, to dominate the local policy arena and take advantage of

the possibilities within the emergent order. The technocratic nature of this organisation may limit the level of innovation within network structures, and condition how these structures are engaged with. As a result territorial identity and networks are framed by *extra* local tendencies. This not only limits the focus LAG's participation in wider networks, but also shapes relationships at the local level and potentially leads to restricted forms of decision making and governance.

The LEADER network is coordinated by a web of multilevel, state-centric, top-down and bottom-up processes. This web is framed by a host of collective, political, economic, cultural, structural and interpersonal relationships. It is these relationships that condition which mode or modes of coordination are most prevalent or influential at sites across the network. In conjunction, the design of the LEADER network, its inbuilt rules and operative processes also determine which forms of coordination dominate, and what kinds of interaction are permissible. This means we cannot overlook the centralised forces that continue to negotiate positions of power within the new governance framework despite its bottom-up credentials. LEADER is a community initiative, and as such the Commission has great control over its coordination. However, as we have seen the British government has ensured the LEADER network is designed to meet their own neo-liberal policy agenda. Through network design and framing the government is highly influential, but it shows a striking unwillingness to regulate those interactions at the local level, perhaps out of a belief that this is the best way to induce appropriate forms of collective action at the local level. As a consequence, interactions at the local level are allowed to enforce pre-existing norms that may not support wider political objectives. This highlights the

tensions and the dangers of a disaggregated system, and implies there is a need to understand that modes of coordination are highly interlinked and constantly under threat from those collective forces across the network.

I attempted to show in the previous chapter that the process of devolution attached to LEADER, both upwards and downwards, works to the advantage of the British state and the New Labour government. The Labour government has been able to take advantage of the potential for 'self-governance' within the LEADER approach, and marry it to their neo-liberal policy agenda. In effect, the notion of bottom-up rural development, with all its potential for wider public participation and inclusive forms of community development, becomes a means for the government to pursue its own policy objectives. Within this process New Labour, is in part, able to steer the LEADER network in directions that meet its own objectives through a stringent process of financial regulation, while only paying lip service to the fundamental features of endogenous development. In conjunction with this, government is prone to constructing what the networks of rural policy should look like through a rich policy discourse on the heterogeneity of rural areas. This process sees government engaging with the 'rural problem', a problem framed by the global market place, and the globalisation of food networks; and yet, the government simultaneously disengages with the problems faced by rural areas, by broadly applying a 'post-productivist' discourse to describe the complex and longstanding relationship between nature and society, and society and 'the rural'.

It is time that we began to recognise that many of the interactions across the horizontal networks that define the new governance are incredibly fluid and none comparable. The debate between intergovernmentalists and neo-functionalists that framed the multilevel governance framework of cohesion policy has not disappeared within the EU, but this system is now perceived to sit alongside a number of other processes. The European multilevel governance system is a highly developed mechanism employed by the British state to decrease its own primary functions. However, it is important to recognise that state power is far more likely to be displaced than in the past, at new and emerging sites of interaction within this multilevel governance framework. The non-linear flows that characterise the relationship between local level collectivities and those collectivities at the national and EU level are central to understanding the flows of power that define the way LEADER is coordinated.

This point is made drawing upon the following observations that best describe the flows of power across the network and characterise the LEADER system of governance.

1. Interactions between the Commission, the state, and the local level are not embedded, but prone to change;

2. The state does not yet understand its new role in the policy process, despite having the means to frame networks, its objectives are state-centric and not joined-up with other nodal points across the policy network;

3. The opening up of policy networks at the local level, through bottom-up governance mechanisms, is not effective if the interactions that condition coordination do not comply with the basic principles associated with a bottom-up approach.

In addition, I have tried to develop the idea that that these features are not alone in conditioning the flows of power across the LEADER network. These features are contingent upon a set of political, social, economic, and cultural interactions. The LEADER governance system, emanating in the flexibility of its *non-pervasive extended networks*, is open to manipulation through these contingent processes, along with forms of meta-governance, and its subtle pervasions.

8.4 Positioning LEADER: the final thesis

A great deal has been said in this thesis about the particular system of governance evident within the LEADER programme. Much has been made of the potential of the LEADER approach at its numerous sites of interaction. This thesis has gone a long way to reinforce a pre-existing critique of the LEADER programme. This critique is founded on a set of discourses which depicts LEADER as a progressive approach to rural governance, through the principle of area based bottom-up forms of development. I have tried to show that although this type of approach does indeed carry a great deal of potential, this is yet to be fully realised because of a number of weaknesses within the mechanisms used to operate the approach. These weaknesses are born out of the flexibility built into the

programme and the mobility afforded to its actors. I have attempted to show that this flexibility and mobility is greatest at the LAG level and produced through the weak structural ties of the programme, and an illegitimate democratic model enforced by a lack of community involvement.

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight the significance of the new world order thesis, while also attempting to show the competing forces, operating within this disaggregated system. These forces help define the character of the new governance. The new governance is a complex agglomeration of linear and non-linear flows, led by state and non-state interactions, or a combination of both, in variance over time and space. This process is shaped by complex sets of dependencies, resource exchanges and interests. Within this remit there is no clear example of what the new governance should look like, and what the character of interactions across policy networks should be. In effect, the new governance does not connote to a set of easily definable structures, common rules or interactions. Its defining feature is in fact its disjointed, differentiated and yet fluid nature. This ensures that there is increasing opportunities for non-state actors to drive the agenda, or maintain the status quo, depending on what best meets their agenda. The Multilevel governance framework, first discussed in chapter four, attempts to give the flows and interactions, across policy networks, within the EU a greater level of structure than is in fact broadly evident. As I have discussed the new world order thesis helps to situate the new governance by exploring the non-linear flows and interactions that characterise the European system, and its links to the wider global stage. This puts

neofunctional and state-centrist features side by side ready to interact, contest and merge within various policy fields.

On reflection, it might be wise to look at what is holding the political system together, in many senses the new governance appears to suggest we live in a constant state of flux and turmoil. This is clearly not the case, despite the disaggregated nature of the new world order. This says a great deal for the ability of collectivities and associations of power to organise themselves and operate functionally alongside and within markets, hierarchies and networks. These modes of coordination are designed to reinforce and develop effective rule by powerful collectivities. In the past this role has been predominantly taken up by the state, but the increasing use of markets and networks has passed power, and the capacity to rule, to a whole host of non-state actors. The role of the state has changed, and it will continue to change, as it finds its place in the new world order. However, we need to be careful not to deride the power states hold, the resources they command, and the functions they provide. Nevertheless, there is a risk that states fail to recognise the true nature of these changes; that they sit by and watch new collectivities challenge them for basic resources, undermine the principles of liberal democracy, and slowly recondition the state for their own ends. We should not be surprised by this possibility; state power has always been subject to change and derision, from powerful collectivities within society. However, power is now more mobile, interactions have global significance, and there is a general apathy towards the political system, that instead of breeding widespread demands for change has bred contempt. There is a distinct need for the state to understand the nature of these changes better, to get back to a set of basic

principles that reinforce liberal democracy, that bind society into a clear set of beliefs, and use this power to steer the political system, direct supranational policy making and meet clearly defined objectives.

These suggestions may seem rather grand based on my empirical research into LEADER. I would deflect major criticisms by arguing that these suggestions are based upon the narrative I have formed on LEADER in this thesis. This narrative has been formed tracing a policy network that carries with it a set of discourses, and these discourses have shaped my understanding of the processes that underpin the new governance. As such these suggestions are formed out of the narrative formed here, and I would not wish to suggest that the same assumptions could be directly formed through looking at other examples of the new governance. I am aware that different case studies would throw up different results, and this is of course a key feature of the disaggregated system we find ourselves in. This is just one narrative, among many potential narratives, it is based around one policy initiative, and for these reasons it should not be the basis for broad assumptions. Nevertheless, I would hope that these suggestions provide the basis for further research, as a means to look at how these assumptions tie in with other features of the new world order.

The LEADER example has alluded to the potential pitfalls evident within the new governance, and more widely supports the new world order thesis. LEADER has shown the potential dangers of an open system of governance due to increasingly mobile interactions, and the potential of existing collectivities to keep devolved networks closed,

despite the best efforts of policy rhetoric to open policy networks up. I have also shown how this process has been reinforced by the tendency for neo-liberal efficiency to override wider policy objectives, and reduce the capacity of the bottom-up approach. LEADER is a complex arrangement of collectivities that interact across the network. It is founded upon a set of global pressures, and challenges. It reflects the increasing tendency towards fragmegration, while the state still has the ability to punctuate the policy network and control its flows. There are many processes at work here and, if nothing else, I hope to have shown that LEADER and its governance is conditioned by these complex processes. It is these processes that at different times and in different combinations speed up and slow down the flows of power across the LEADER network.

Appendix – Research Interviewees

1. Charlotte Benson – Devon Community Council (November, 2006)

2. Defra Representatives, LEADER Management team, London (January, 2007)

3. Heather Hillman, Devon County Council (October, 2006)

4. Malcolm Moseley, University of Gloucestershire, Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) (March, 2007) (Telephone Interview)

5. Penny Archer, Community Accountancy (March, 2007) (Telephone Interview)

6. Natural England Representative (formerly of the countryside agency), Exeter (December, 2006)

7. Des Shadrick, Devon County Council/LAG member (February, 2007)

8. Jean-Michel Courades, Directorate-General for Agriculture, European Commission (March, 2007)

9. Focus LAG manager (February, 2006)

10. Robin Makeig-Jones, North Devon+ (April, 2007)

11. Len Smith, former LAG manager (not focus LAG) (October, 2006)

12. Gordon Morris, former employee of Countryside Agency (October, 2006)

13. Jerry Bix, Bideford Folk Festival (May, 2007) (Telephone Interview)

14. Michael Winter, Director Rural Policy Research Centre, University of Exeter (May, 2007)

15. Sarah Watson, LAG Manager (not focus LAG) (November, 2006)

16. Clair Sampson, Government Office South West (November, 2006)

17. Zita Murphy, Country based officer, Directorate-General for Agriculture, European Commission (March, 2007)

18. Andy Bell, LAG member (May, 2007)

19. Dane Stanley, LAG member (April, 2007) (Telephone Interview)

20. Greg Jones, South West Office, Brussels (March, 2007)

21. Laurent Van Depoele, former rural development representative, Directorate-General for Agriculture, European Commission (March, 2007) (Telephone Interview

22. Lucy Gaskin, LEADER network, London (March, 2007)

23. Oz Osbourne, LAG member (April, 2007)

24. Steve Pitcher, North Devon District Council ((November, 2006)

25. Vanessa Vollans, LAG Manager (not focus LAG) (January, 2007)

26. Vivian Gale, focus LAG member

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