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Chapter 4

Theorising the 'good farmer': from common sense category to analytical construct

In the historical literature, the term 'good farmer' was employed in a multitude of ways. Early authors such as Tusser and Fitzherbert sought to develop a moral peasantry, agriculturalists used it to validate their ideas by citing "good farmers" as approving (where there was no experimental evidence), while improvers used the concept to dismiss customs by seeking to synonymise the term with productive commercial agriculture. Ultimately, it was the improvers who took control of the term. Throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries a relentless narrative supporting modernisation sought to move agriculture from a peasant way of life to an industry. While the good farmer could be 'good' at caring for God, the family and community, or 'good' at farming in a customary manner where productive tidy agriculture was not the priority, increasingly the 'good farmer' became he/she who fought superstition and tradition to produce as much as possible out of the land – for Queen, country and for the sake of progress itself. This narrative of the 'good farmer' as a good producer accompanied the professionalisation of agriculture, where the "farmer" progressively moved away from a definition encompassing the whole personhood, including explicit references to morality and the place and role in the family and the community, to a dimension related mainly to the mastering of specialised skills and techniques in the name of production. Through this process, moral and cultural aspects of modern farming have been hidden under a veil of scientific rationality.

As a consequence much of the literature on the good farmer provides us with 'official' perspectives on good farming – be it the agricultural improvers from the 18th and 19th Centuries, the demonstration farm developers in the US around the turn of the 20th Century, or the policy-makers of the post-World War II productivist era in the mid-20th Century. These production-oriented perspectives have been motivated by a wide range of factors such as food insecurity, wars, population growth, a desire for economic development, and so on. However, while increasing production was important from the perspective of those in power, it does not

necessarily represent the primary objective of the farmers themselves. Many of the 'common' farmers those days were not involved in defining the 'good farmer' as most were illiterate. For example, Verral (1799, p. 100) observing of farmers in his region:

> Books treating scientifically on agriculture are of little, if any utility, to the small wealdish [referring to the Weald − a geological feature in Sussex, UK] farmer. For want of education, his capacity, expanded only in a very limited degree, is not capable of understanding the improving lessons genius exhibits.

Thus, the historical literature analysis provides us with an indication of the kind of 'good farmer' the elites wanted – with a very normative tone aimed at transforming contemporary agriculture and very few texts written by practical farmers themselves. While in Chapter 3 we pieced together an understanding of how symbols of the 'good famer' change from historical literature, this is of limited assistance in understanding other aspects of the good farmer – such as the role of cultural capital in the generation of social capital (e.g. Sutherland and Burton, 2012), how concepts of the 'good farmer' affect farmer identities, and how the desire to be a 'good farmer' contributes to the everyday practice of farming. From the perspective of contemporary research, the good farmer concept is important precisely because it offers these kinds of insights into the farming culture. The understanding of how symbols of good farming develop and change over time – presented for the first time in this book – is an significant step towards being able to utilise the 'good farmer' concept as an analytical tool, however, we also need to understand how the concept fits in with contemporary social theory.

This leads us to a key issue for the book. Numerous researchers have employed the concept of the 'good farmer' as a theoretical framework – and have done so in a variety of ways. However, as noted in Chapter 1, the 'good farmer' is not a theory. Unlike Mead's/Goffman's symbolic interactionism or Bourdieu's theory of the economy of practices, for the 'good farmer' there is no conceptual ownership, no body of literature outlining, defending and theoretically developing the concept – nor is there any single theoretical framework around which the 'good farmer' literature is based. Frameworks are selected generally on the basis they might assist the researcher to understand the particular aspect of behaviour under investigation, whether it be why productivist behaviours are symbolically meaningful to farmers (Burton, 2004), why conventional farmers are resistant to agri-environmental policy (Burton et al., 2008), how

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farmer identity affects conversion to organic farming (Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012; Sutherland, 2013) or adaptation to a multifunctionality regime (Forney, 2010), how farming cultural values change under market liberalisation (Haggerty et al., 2009), or any of the many other topics relating to the cultures of agriculture.

Thus, in order to be able to operationalise the good farmer in research an understanding of the theoretical frameworks underlying the use of the term is essential. To this end, here we present the main frameworks that have been used with the concept of the good farmer, an analysis of their various strengths and weaknesses, and a discussion concerning how the concept has evolved from what we call a 'common sense category' to an 'analytical framework'.

The good farmer – from common sense category to analytical construct?

In its most basic understanding, the term 'good farmer' simply reflects how the observer regards the observed – 's/he is a good farmer' or 's/he is a bad farmer' – and is the language necessary to express a preference. It is an external judgement, made by more or less qualified observers; a 'common sense category' that represents an evaluation of cultural competency (as described in Chapter 1). This common sense category approach is employed specifically to understand the issue from the actor's perspective.

Here we view the term 'good farmer' primarily as a 'positional label' – reflecting identification with a particular group and determined by the performance of roles that are culturally viewed as defining group belonging (see Stryker, 1980). For example, in order to be classified as a farmer one might need to 'produce crops', 'manage livestock', 'keep the farm tidy', 'get your boots dirty', 'demonstrate independence', 'keep the name on the land', and so on. In this sense, the term 'good farmer' emerges because being able to self-identify as a farmer is not only a matter of performing the role, but performing the role to the level of competency expected by others within the social group. For example, as a result of bad management livestock can be injured, crops can fail, and farms can be 'tidy' to the point that production roles are compromised. To be recognised as a 'farmer' each behavioural role must be performed well – reward for which is peer group recognition as a 'good farmer'. The 'good farmer' is therefore, in this simplest sense, a 'farmer' who has reached the necessary level of competency.

Recognition, however, also depends on which farming behaviours, beliefs, values or symbols are important in identification and for much 'good farmer' research the focus of investigation is on the conventional productivist farmer. However, while a focus on production continues to dominate farming communities (see Walford, 2003; Mather et al., 2006; Wilson and Burton, 2015), farmers comprise many different cultural groups and sub-groups – each with their own set of 'good farming' practices. Factors such as local environmental conditions, the targeting of different sectors of the market (e.g. organic farming), or the geographical isolation of the community, promote the emergence of distinct definitions of the 'good farmer' (further discussed in Chapter 7). This is also evident in the 'farming styles' work of van der Ploeg and others (e.g. Howden and Vanclay, 2000; van der Ploeg, 2001, 2004; Vanclay et al. 2007) as well as research into how the 'good farmer' is constructed from the perspective of organic farmers (Stock, 2007; Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012; Sutherland, 2013). While these definitions share common elements – in particular the production role which remains the core of the farmer identity – in other areas there can be important differences. For example, the prioritisation of conservation, profit achievement, non-farming roles, or traditional production approaches can serve to define the farmer as a 'good farmer' within his or her peer group, but may exclude their membership of a different peer group with alternative visions of farming (see Burton and Wilson, 2006).

Understanding the symbolism behind these behaviours moves the concept of the 'good farmer' away from a simple categorically descriptive term towards presenting a meaningful cultural construction defined by, a cultural repertoire of normative and strategic ideas about what constitutes good practice. In a sense, the researcher moves from focusing on the 'good farmer' with unspecified roles (for example, mentions of "he is a good farmer" in interview texts), to focusing investigation on the roles themselves and their cultural construction in order to define specific identity groups and explore contrasts, conflicts, alterations, etc. in the repertoire. In this sense, the good farmer becomes an analytical category underlain by and embedded within a cultural system and it is in understanding the significance of being recognised as a good farmer at both the individual and community level that its utility as a research tool emerges. Examples include how good farmer credentials lead to the development of social capital within the farming community and thus place a social value on agricultural behaviours (e.g. Sutherland and Burton, 2011), how transitioning to part-time farming may lead to loss of 'good farmer' identity (Sutherland, 2019), and how the importance of being visually recognised as a good

farmer affects the 'tidy farm' ethos (e.g. Burton et al., 2008; Burton, 2012). In this way, the 'good farmer' acts as a focus for understanding the cultural importance of farming activities and therefore farming culture itself.

The concept of the 'good farmer' as an analytical category has been used by numerous authors seeking to understand how farmer's self-conceptions and cultural influences influence their behaviour within the wider context of agrarian change. In the next section of this chapter we review this literature to illustrate the different uses of the good farmer concept. In particular, as the good farmer is an analytical rather than a theoretical concept, we explore how researchers have borrowed theoretical perspectives in order to conceptualise and operationalise the cultural norms underlying the 'good farmer'.

Symbolic interactionist interpretations of the 'good farmer'

For symbolic interactionists, the individual and society are characterised as part of a dynamic, constantly interacting system in which the self is conceptualised as "essentially a social structure [that] ... arises from its social experiences" (Mead, 1934, p. 140). Mead argues that "our thinking always takes place by means of some sort of symbols" (p. 146), and that, as the meaning of these symbols has been negotiated through interaction with society, every action and object has a meaning of shared significance to both parties. Self-identity develops as the individual interacts with the social group and learns the group meanings. Through such interactions meaning is being constantly renegotiated. Eventually, social structures such as language, interpretative procedures, attitudes, roles, and social class perspectives become internalised (Coughenour, 1976; Weigert *et al.,* 1986) – i.e. the individual begins to view them as his/her own – and adopts the 'self-referent label' or 'positional label' (Stryker, 1980) of the group, e.g. 'I am a *farmer*'. Membership of the group in the eyes of others is developed and maintained through displaying commitment to the same symbolic meanings as held by the wider group by performing the appropriate role behaviours 'Farmers do …'. In this way, every individual is a reflection of his/her socio-cultural upbringing.

Two conceptualisations of the good farmer employ a symbolic interactionist perspective, namely Silvasti (2003a, b) and Burton (Burton, 1998, 2004a, Burton and Wilson, 2006). In the first of these cases, Silvasti (2003a) applied the notion of "social scripting" (also termed

"cultural scripting" – Vanclay and Enticott, 2011) to establishing a cultural model of "the good farmer" in Finland. Social scripting is "a logical extension of symbolic interactionism" – based on the work of Blumer and Mead, but often associated with Goffman and the metaphor of the theatrical production (Wiederman, 2015, 10). In outlining the core theoretical framework for her approach, Silvasti contends that:

> Social interactionism (sic) defines "social scripting" as a process, where persons are subconsciously and consciously conditioned to follow rules, and adapt values and behavioural patterns determined by society, its subculture, or some ethnic or socioeconomic group. (p. 144)

As is standard with symbolic interactionism, this process is seen as a matter of the socialisation of cultural meanings, instilling beliefs about appropriate role-behaviours and collective symbolic understandings. According to Silvasti, these are termed "scripts", and their internalisation allows people to organise behaviours along socially appropriate lines – including behaviours related to 'good farming'. As with many other interpretations of the 'good farmer', Silvasti's use of the good farmer concept within the social scripting framework is based around the notion of farm work and, in particular, what is seen as "real work" – working the fields, caring for farm animals and maintaining the buildings. Symbolically, she notes, the appearance of the farm is seen by others within the community as representative of the "kind of farmer that farms there" with farmers gaining considerable intrinsic satisfaction from the concrete results of their actions. Social scripts create strong emotional ties between the family and the farm and influence the way of life of the farm family.

The notion of scripting as outlined by Silvasti has been applied by other researchers in studies of farming culture. For example, Rogers et al. (2013, p. 255) refer to social scripting as "farmer talk ... such as what it means to be a good farmer" with, again, an emphasis on socialisation as a means of embedding "rules" that farmers subconsciously follow. Again following Silvasti, Herman (2015) contends that normalised social scripts define what behaviours are acceptable if one is to be seen as a 'good farmer' and argues that these normalised social scripts determining what defines the 'good farmer' provide a boundary framework within which social resilience takes place. Finally, in perhaps the most theoretically elaborated piece, Vanclay and Enticott (2011) argue that scripts represent a "story of common line of argument" that provides

farmers with a rationale or justification for a particular course of action. The authors identify a number of different types of script that exist in rural communities, namely, scripts as expected routines, scripts as catch phrases, scripts as parables or short stories, and scripts as commonly used lines of argument. These scripts provide group members with a sense of “the right thing to do” that can be applied in different contexts.

The second use of a symbolic interactionist framework connected to the ‘good farmer’ literature can be found in the early work of Burton (Burton, 1998, 2004a; Burton and Wilson, 2006). Whereas the social scripting approach draws from sociologist Erving Goffman’s interpretation of Mead (Vanclay and Enticott, 2011), Burton’s draws from social psychologist Sheldon Stryker’s social structuralist “identity theory”. Identity theory was developed to clarify some of the ideas of Mead (1934) and translate them into terms with clearer empirical refinement (Stryker, 1994). In particular, the theory focuses on two aspects connected to behaviour, namely the salience of an identity within a hierarchy of identities (where identity is seen as multiple, structured and hierarchical), and the degree of commitment expressed by the individual to the roles that define the identity group. Identity theory deals only with role behaviours where the individual has a choice between alternative courses of action and sees the selection of a behaviour as determined by a combination of the salience of the identity and the commitment the individual has to the social group. Commitment is measured as the loss of relationships with significant others (measured both in terms of affective loss and quantitative loss of interactions) were the person to choose a course of action that falls outside the remit of the identity group (Stryker, 1968, 1987) – in our case, the roles of the good farmer (see Burton, 1998; Burton and Wilson, 2006 for further details on Stryker’s theory). In choosing a behaviour, the individual thus weighs up – often subconsciously – how much they stand to lose or gain from the salient identity group if they choose to undertake the behaviour.

Burton’s (2004) work “Seeing through the ‘good farmer’s’ eyes: towards developing an understanding of the social symbolic value of ‘productivist’ behaviour” was arguably the first publication to emerge using this theoretical framework. This paper does not employ identity theory in its entirety, but rather uses the theory to justify the exploration of the symbolic value of production activities to explore how the “farmer” identity is constructed – i.e. the symbolic meanings of the role performances associated with the ‘good farmer’. While Goffman’s “dramaturgical metaphor” is mentioned in the paper, the paper does not follow the “social

scripting" approach of Silvasti (2003). Rather, it explores the meanings behind practical farming behaviour and, importantly, how symbols of good farming are identified, generated and transmitted – a concept Burton later investigates using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu (see section below).

Nevertheless, the symbolic interactionist theory of Stryker has been applied. Burton and Wilson (2006), in particular, explore the connection between the salience of known farmer identities (commonly typologised groups) with behaviour on the farm. The authors conclude that complex and mobile identity structures are one explanation for farmers being able to see themselves as conservation-oriented while carrying out seemingly contrary behaviours. In other words, despite concerns that farmer's behaviour is still overwhelmingly productivist, nature conservation role-behaviours can be part of the good farmer identity, but these may not always be salient. McGuire et al. (2013) used this framework to develop a "Good farmer identity control model" to explain how a farmer's identity could shift from being predominantly productivist to predominantly conservationist. This was used to distinguish between farmers with conservationist identities and productivist identities and explore how this affected their willingness to undertake water quality improvements. The authors concluded that through engagement with water quality measures the position of the "conservationist" identity moved higher up in the identity hierarchy – with the result that roles associated with 'good farming' were gradually changing. The multiple identity approach as applied by Burton and Wilson (2006), while offering an interesting perspective on farmer identity, is difficult to operationalise and perhaps is methodologically unsuited as a framework for looking at the 'good farmer' relying, as it does, on a rather rigorous quantitative methodology.

Bourdieusian approaches

While interest in symbolic interactionist approaches to the good farmer appears to have been limited, the theories of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu are perhaps the most widespread theories used in 'good farmer' analyses (e.g. Burton et al, 2008; Burton and Paragahawewa, 2011; Droz, 2002; Forney, 2007; Glover, 2008; Hunt, 2010; Raedeke et al., 2003; Riley, 2016a, 2016b; Riley et al., 2018; Sutherland and Burton, 2011; Saunders, 2016; Shortall et al., 2017; Sutherland and Darnhofer, 2012; Sutherland, 2013; Sutherland, 2019). Fundamentally

Bourdieu's (1998) theory contains three components – habitus, field and capital. In brief, Bourdieu defines the habitus (and field) as

> a socialised body, a structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world – a field – and which structures the perception of that world as well as action within that world. (p. 81)

Habitus, he contends, is the centre for the formulation of "generative schemes" which guide action – predominantly because the individual has the sense that it is the right thing to do rather than as the result of conscious reasoning. In an often-quoted phrase, it provides a "feel for the game" or practical sense (Bourdieu, 1990, p 66). The concept of capital is thoroughly outlined in Bourdieu's (1986) paper which details a "general science of the economy of practices" (p. 243). Here Bourdieu postulates that our focus on economic capital is due to the unambiguous immediacy of economic exchange – whereas capital can be stored in the other more ambiguous forms of social, and cultural capital. Capital can be transformed from one form to another via symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is no specific form of capital but rather a condition whereby those with a shared habitus are able to recognise the significance of the capital through having developed a shared understanding of its symbolic value because "for a symbolic exchange to function, the two parties must have identical categories of perception and appreciation" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 100)[1].

Pierre Bourdieu's (2008) early work in the Bearn dealt with the transformation of the rural society in the 1960's, where the peasants' habitus became a disadvantage to individuals on the matrimonial "market". He himself did not engage in any discussion on the cultural and social construction of the good farmer. One of the first references to Bourdieu in the context of the 'good farmer' can be found in Shucksmith's (1993, p. 468) paper on farm household transition to post-productivism. Here Shucksmith contends that for farmers, the habitus derives in large part from the "subconscious and cumulative assimilation of an established ethos of being a farmer". In another early paper, Tsouvalis et al. (2000, p. 912) employ habitus to conceptualise farmer knowledge cultures as "socially negotiated structures of meaning that enable and constrain social actions" which they contend enable us to "acknowledge the fluid and

[1] For a detailed overall analysis of Bourdieu's work, see Jenkins (1992) and for original works see Bourdieu (1986, 1990, 1998).

interactive nature of different ways of sense-making" and highlight "the formative contexts within which meaningful, symbolic actions and knowledges are shaped." Raedeke et al. (2003) use the notion of habitus to explain internalised subconscious directives for action that provide farmers with a feel for the game. In their analysis of agroforestry adoption, they recognise the economic importance of being seen within a community as a 'good farmer' in that landlords are more likely to rent out farms to those who maintain a good farming ethos.

A Bourdieusian framework was also employed in an ethnographic study of a farming community in the Swiss Jura in the late 1990's by anthropologist Yvan Droz (Droz and Miéville-Ott 2001; Droz 2002). Droz and colleagues' approach was based on another Bourdieusian concept, that of "ethos". Ethos, as defined by Droz and Lavigne (2006) is a non-structured set of guiding principles for action that are both laden with moral values and symbols and generally acknowledged as legitimate and just. As part of the habitus, the ethos is constructed, embodied, and reproduced through a socialization process that includes direct experiences and learning processes (Droz and Lavigne 2006, p. 48). The embodied nature of the ethos differentiates it from ethics or morality: the ethos is anchored as much in small habits, everyday practices, bodily postures, as it is in explicitly moral or normative narratives.

Haggerty et al. (2009) advanced the notion of habitus to explore the deregulation and intensification of sheep farming in New Zealand. Here the authors examine how notions of good farming with respect to animal health change with the intensification of agriculture beginning with the Bourdieusian premise that farmer responses to structural changes in the broader "field" are generated in part by the relationship between habitus and field, and suggest farmers have acquired their "feel for the game" through long term participation in agriculture. They note:

> If Bourdieu is correct, and the pursuit of social status is fundamental to social life, farmers will strive to be ''good farmers" not ''bad farmers", to accrue ''good farmer" capital, and this drive will inform their farming strategies. (p. 769)

The strength of Bourdieu's theory, according to Haggerty and colleagues, lies in its ability to explain social reproduction and resistance to change, and more concretely in the case of the New Zealand sheep farmers "that it helps makes sense of the lack of the development of

environmental subjectivities" (p. 769). However, beyond narratives of conservatism, it places these resistances in a context of social struggles between differently positioned actors, as well as "between strategies, dispositions, and thinkable and unthinkable courses of actions" (p. 769). Haggerty and colleagues further note that the cultural capital associated with competency in stockmanship has become a core part of the 'good farmer' identity amongst New Zealand sheep farmers, and that market intensification has forced farmers to abandon some of these values in order to maintain profitability. As with the previous studies focusing on habitus, this paper leaves the issue of how practices become part of the 'good farmer' ethos largely unaddressed.

The third way Bourdieusian theory has been employed is to use systems of capital rather than habitus as the key to understanding good farming. The first application of this approach was Burton et al.'s (2008) study into farmers' adoption of agri-environmental behaviours. Burton and colleagues adopted Bourdieu's systems of capital as a framework because of its acknowledgement of the non-economic symbolic importance of farming behaviours – strongly indicated by earlier findings on the social symbolic value of productivist behaviours (Burton, 2004b). The notion that farming behaviours could be of cultural and social as well as economic value provided a framework for understanding why farmers might 'sacrifice' profit (for example, by spending uneconomic amounts of money on machinery or keeping roadsides tidy) in order to be seen as a good farmer by others or, conversely, might reject agri-environmental schemes because of the loss of status as a good farmer.

In the 2008 study, Burton and colleagues explored how the "identical categories of perception and appreciation" noted as Bourdieu as critical for the establishment of symbolic capital develop through the everyday practice of agriculture. Three qualities required for behaviours to become symbols of good farming are postulated. First, the outcome of the application of cultural capital should reflect the extent of the capital held by the farmer (predominantly in the form of skills and knowledge). An action where skill/knowledge have little impact on the outcome is unlikely to become of symbolic importance. Second, the outcome of the application of cultural capital needs to be visibly manifest as opposed to hidden. Financial returns and yields that are known only to the farmer him/herself are less important as symbols of good farming than those where the farmer is unable to hide the outcome (e.g. the production of a tidy crop or a well-maintained property) (Burton, 2004a). Third, other farmers must have access to the displays of cultural competency. This is generally through observation from the roadsides and is the basis

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of the notion of roadside framing (see Chapter 1) but may also be through more formal learning processes such as farm discussion groups.

Later papers developed these ideas further. For example, Burton and Paragahawewa, (2011) explore how agri-environmental schemes might be made more culturally sustainable, Sutherland and Burton (2011) explore how cultural capital can be converted into social capital, and Burton (2012) examines how the cultural importance of visual displays of farming affect farmer's aesthetic appreciation of landscape. Others have also focused on the importance of capital to the good farmer concept. Butler and Holliday (2015), for example, hypothesise on the role of "hybrid-capitals" for redefining what is culturally valuable as 'good farming' in farming systems where rapid technological changes are altering the relationships between farmers and livestock. Conway et al. (2016) use the concept of symbolic capital as a framework for understanding how older farmers prioritise the maintenance of non-economic capital over ceasing agricultural activity – even where the activities are economically unviable. Riley (2016, p. 96) similarly uses "Bourdieusian-inspired discussions of good farming" to explore the issue of how symbols of good farming change as the farmer ages.

Sutherland and Darnhofer (2012) and Sutherland (2013) focus more specifically on the processes underlying the formation and alteration of good farming identity, and by this offer an original and useful contribution. Their papers demonstrate specific conditions under which symbols change, drawing on an English dataset of organic, conventional and farmers in conversion. In line with Burton, the papers draw on Bourdieusian concepts of capital exchange: economic capital (material and financial property), social capital (networks of social connections and mutual obligations) and cultural capital (prestige, status in the community). In Sutherland and Darnhofer (2012) the conceptual focus is on Bourdieu's concepts 'habitus', 'field' and 'rules of the game'. Following Bourdieu (1998), the habitus is conceptualised as an unconscious disposition to act, developed through interactions within specific 'fields' – arenas of production characterised by actors who compete to accumulate different forms of capital (Swartz, 1997: 117). By engaging in these fields (e.g. agricultural commodity markets), the 'rules of the game' become internalised in the participants' habitus. When the rules of the game change, creative responses are required. Change may also occur without changing rules, through creative action (e.g. Jenkins, 1992), but the focus in the good farming literature has largely been on resilience.

Sutherland and Darnhofer (2012) identify several processes that lead to change in the symbols of good farming: devaluation of current symbols, reflexivity and experimentation (further elaborated in Chapter 7). The unprofitability of 'good farming practices' devalues associated symbols, leading to an openness to consider other farming options, and enter different 'fields', with associated new 'rules of the game'. Through reflexive consideration of new practices, new skill development, and rewards for new practices (e.g. higher prices for organic produce, positive feedback from customers), current symbols are renegotiated and sometimes replaced. Sutherland (2013) took these arguments further by introducing Bourdieu's concept of the 'taste of necessity'. Bourdieu (1984) argues that a taste for luxury is evident when cultural capital (e.g. evident in works of contemporary art) has limited connection to the production of economic capital. Luxury is evident in appreciating and owning objects with little practical utility. In contrast, a 'taste of necessity' is reflected in a direct economic relationship between cultural symbols and economic limitations (e.g. a preference for beer and cheap, high calorie food among lower socio-economic classes) (Bourdieu 1984, p. 173). In essence, virtue is made of necessity.

Sutherland (2013) argues that the symbols characterising cultural capital in contemporary farming largely reflect necessity – weed free fields represent higher productivity and thus greater household income; healthy animals are more likely to reproduce and gain maximum value at auction sales (also see Burton, 2012). Although the cultural value of particular symbols (pedigree livestock, for example) may exceed their apparent commercial value, the link between economic and cultural capital remains readily apparent. 'Good farmers' are successful farmers, who maintain a profitable farming enterprise. However, it was also clear that this connection, while direct, is not the only issue – farmers seek ideals to aspire to beyond the financial. Their discourse is overtly negative when farmers are seen as solely profit oriented. 'Good farming' thus lies on a continuum between necessity and luxury. Formerly commercial farmers who opted to continue farming on a recreational or hobby basis thus identified their actions as a step towards luxury – the opportunity to engage in a valued activity without need for commercial gain.

Particular aspects of rule changes are reflected in the speed of symbolic change. The ease of change is important – incremental shifts are more easily implemented. For example, keeping

up with technology leads to new symbols with limited resistance – the objectified cultural capital of a new piece of farm machinery devalues over time, as newer models are introduced. The consistency of these rules is very important – inconsistent signals in any of the fields in which farmers engage makes it difficult to form new symbols: the direct connection between symbols and outcomes is not evident. In the Sutherland and Darnhofer cases studied, once it became evident that new policies (e.g. environmental regulations) and opportunities (such as agri-environmental schemes) were long-term, they became embedded in the rules of the game. The fluctuating value of organic farming commodity prices was a different story – organic conversion represented both a major change to farming trajectory and an uncertain outcome – subsidies oriented towards enabling organic farming conversion initiated shortly before the study had led to a market glut and resultant drop in commodity prices. The potential for new symbols to be visually perceived and evaluated, in line with 'roadside farming' is also a factor – new practices that have no visual symbol (or appear negative, such as the weedy fields characteristic of organic farming) are particularly problematic. Key in organic farm conversion was the potential to develop new symbols, such as varied fields, and visual appreciation of environmental actions such as beetle banks.

While many others have addressed the good farmer concept using a Bourdieusian framework, Mark Riley and colleagues' work represents probably the most significant single body of research. Riley's work appears in a number of key papers. First, Riley (2016a) explored how farmers' participation in agri-environmental schemes shapes environmental identities. In this paper, Riley introduces the notion of hysteresis into the good farmer literature. Hysteresis, it is contended, occurs when there is discord between the habitus and the field and causes a structural lag between the opportunities available and the dispositions to grasp them (Bourdieu, 1990). Riley uses the concept of hysteresis to explore changes in symbolic meaning, in particular, how definitions of the good farmer vary spatially and how the good farmer concept evolves over time. In a second paper, Riley (2016b) used the good farmer notion as a conceptual framework to explore how farmers maintain farming identities even after retirement from the farm. Again looking at the evolution of meaning, the study found that the symbolic significance of farming activities changes during the life course of the farmer – thus enabling semi-retired farmers to maintain their self-identity as a 'good farmer' even when they are no longer performing key symbolic roles. A third paper, Riley et al. (2018) focusing again on agri-environmental measures using a Bourdieusian framework, observes how collective agri-environmental scheme

participation plays out in a social arena where maintaining reputation as a good farmer plays a critical role. Collective environmental behaviours are thus moderated by concerns for the maintenance of social and cultural capital. Riley and colleagues have also looked at alternative communities and productions following the good farmer concept, in particular Gustavsson et al.'s (2017) work looking at the development of social capital and networks of reciprocity in fishing communities, and Thomas et al.'s (2019) exploration of riparian environments which found that farmers engagement with rivers is limited by their inability to generate cultural capital.

Other theoretical engagements with the 'good farmer' analytical construct

While the symbolic interactionist and Bourdieusian approaches dominate as theoretical frameworks behind the good farmer construct, other approaches to theorising the good farmer exist – some of which make only minor reference to the concept, while others present promising frameworks for future exploration. One example is Dessein and Neven's (2007) framing of "farmer pride" drawing on the social and economic psychology literature on self-esteem. As with other good farmer theories the authors focus on multiple aspects of identity that comprise personal and collective identity, postulating that it is the interaction between the personal and collective identities in a constantly changing context that results in "farmers' pride".

Forney (2010) having initially contributed to the Bourdieusian theorization of the good farmer through the concept of ethos (as above), proposed a theorization based on the concept of social representation as defined by the French social psychologists Moscovici, Abric and Jodelet (Abric, 1994; Jodelet, 2007). The purpose was to better include social interactions and a dynamic and evolving dimension in the conceptualization of farmers' identities. Social representations are "a kind of knowledge socially constructed and shared, with a practical aim, and participating to the common construction of reality within a social group" (Jodelet, 2007, p. 36)[2]. The social representation framing stays close to the ethos perspective developed by Droz et al. (see above), however it introduces nuance and flexibility in what is otherwise a slightly rigid conceptualisation. Rather than assembling a complete array of values covering diverse facets of farmers' identities, social representations simply frame the narratives and

[2] Authors' translation from the french : « une forme de connaissance socialement élaborée et partagée ayant une visée pratique et concourant à la construction d'une réalité commune à un ensemble social »

practices that form diverse and sometimes competing images (figures) of what is or should be a farmer. Social representations also focus not on individuals and how their inclusion in a group influences its behaviour – the *farmer's* ethos – but rather on the object of the representation and on the interactions that creates it, i.e. representations *of the profession*.

Using this framework, Forney identified four different representations (figures) of the good farmer: food producer; succeeded successor; the independent worker; the manager. Those figures do not correspond to four categories of farmers, rather they summarize four general patterns of this self-representation, that are transversally acknowledged as legitimate, even if individuals might not identify as strongly to each of them. Drawing on the concept of posture developed with Droz and colleagues to describe landscape representations (Droz et al., 2009), he suggests that every farmer articulates in a personal and varying way these four representations. This framing allows the integration of diversity and individual interpretations while acknowledging a shared identification with a 'good farmer' ideal.

The theory of the core of social representations that differentiate between peripheral and central elements of the representations (Abric, 1994) is useful to understand the evolving nature of the 'good farmer'. Drawing on Flament's (Flament, 2007) development on the dynamism of representations, Forney suggests that peripheral elements evolve in time and vary from one person to the other, without affecting the core of the farmers' self-representations. This explains how self-representations adapt to external changes at their periphery (e.g. a good production move from quantitative criteria to qualitative ones), while remaining fundamentally untouched at the core (the importance of producing food). More fundamental changes happen progressively, step-by-step, or after a major shock due to radical changes in the context.

The concept of social representation also allows the role played by non-farmers to be included in the construction of the 'good farmer'. Representations are constructed in social interactions between farmers, but also with other actors (farmer's organisation, the administration, the industry, citizens, etc.). As an illustration of this co-production of self-representations, the four figures constituting the 'good farmer' ideal in the early 21th Century Swiss farming milieu clearly echoes some aspects of the normative discourses on the farmers developed by agrarian political elites in the early twentieth century, who played an influential role in the construction of post-war productivist agricultural policies (Forney, 2011). This illustrates the role of elite

discourses in the shaping of the 'good farmer' narrative as outlined in Chapter 2. As a relatively recent introduction to the good farmer literature, conceptualisations based on the notion of social representation have yet to emerge in the wider literature, however, the approach is broadly applied in a wide array of fields (e.g. renewable energy, health and disease).

Huttunen and Peltoma (2016) integrate Bourdieusian inspired 'good farming' concepts with practice theory, making the connection through Bourdieu's 'logic of practices'. The power of 'practice' is in its performance, which is situated in time and space. Practice theory thus draws attention to the materiality of good farming symbols. Consistent with Sutherland and Darnhofer (2012), Huttunen and Peltoma argue that through engaging in environmental practices, the meaning and practices associated with long-held ideals (e.g. of farmers as environmental stewards, farming as productive) are renegotiated, and new symbols are identified and reinforced. New symbols are more likely to be adopted if they represent a progression, rather running counter, to existing farming practices and symbols.

Finally, Emery (2010) engages in a sophisticated theoretical discussion on farming cultures and the 'good farmer'. Inspired by the rhetoric-culture approach by Carrithers (2005a, b), his theorisation starts from a definition of culture as dynamic. Culture is made and re-made by actors who use it strategically and negotiate it continuously. Three aspects are central here: the interaction; the persuasion of oneself or of others; and the creation of new cultural forms through reinterpretation and re-making of existing elements. In this general discussion on culture, Emery (2010) insists on the propensity for individuals to be both agent and patient, to both act on, and be acted upon. While all people are capable of strategically and creatively using cultural elements in order to adapt to changing situations or to pursue their own interests, social interactions are embedded in structural power relations. In this rhetorical approach to culture, power is understood first as the capacity to use effectively the 'means of persuasion', and second, in a more pervasive way, as the ability to determine what those means of persuasion will be.

Applying this to the discussion on the 'good farmer' and changing farming cultures, this means that changes in values reflect a continued negotiation/renegotiation between farmers and others, where individual farmers use and negotiate strategically this repertoire of values to build their identity – or 'personhood' – but acknowledges that this repertoire includes also structures of

social power. Here, identification with those values is not necessarily related to a social competition for prestige or domination. Emery recalls Burke's (1969) argument on the necessity of identification (and its accompanying concepts of particularisation and differentiation) as constitutive to the facts of being human and of communicating. The need to identify and be identified is the major driving force for engaging with farming values. From this perspective, personhood is only momentarily constructed through "rhetorical attempts in the play of agents and patients and contingent upon their setting or *situation*" (pp. 22), as identification is a matter of continuous efforts of rhetorical persuasion. However, the rhetoric culture approach should not be misinterpreted as a reduction of identity to discourses. The values expressed by farmers in their processes of identification are tied to practice as much as to narratives and are embodied in the landscape, in the farm work and in the livestock.

The rhetoric culture approach to farming cultures emphasises the agency of the farmers in the use and negotiation of symbols of the 'good farmer' and, therefore, the flexibility and diversity of possible interpretations and enactments of what is a good farmer. Farming values are seen as 'things of possibility', capable of being interpreted and used in many different ways and situations. Therefore, there is never one definition of the 'good farmer', but only momentary attempts at convincing others and oneself that someone is a good farmer.

Theorisation of the good farmer: a discussion

This diverse range of theories underlying the 'good farmer' construct all contribute to a movement of the term away from a normative and common-sense construct towards a more theoretical – and from our perspective useful – conceptualisation. The differences in focuses and framing above define the explanatory potential of a specific theorization, by highlighting (or neglecting) specific processes in the social and cultural production of farming cultures. Moreover, the 'good farmer' analytical framing is often referred to in more or less applied research endeavours. Consequently, its theorization will impact on how scientists, extensionists, rural developers, or any other actors using this framing, address the question of the cultural dimension of farming, and what answers to addressing 'cultural resistance' they might propose. It is therefore important to discuss, in brief, the pros and cons of the different theorizations.

Silvasti's (Silvasti, 2003) use of symbolic interactionism makes an important contribution of the theorization of the good farmer by highlighting the importance of socialization and cultural transmission, by referring to social scripting as "a process, where individuals are subconsciously and consciously conditioned to follow rules, and adapt values and behavioural patterns determined by society, its subculture, or some ethnic or socioeconomic group" (p. 144). The processes of socialization, notably by the relatives and the social milieu, and the role of the belonging to a group are undoubtedly important facets of the cultural dimension of farming. However, in her discussion of Thompson's "three religious-philosophical tenets behind productionism" (p. 144), her analysis remains largely attached to discourses and narratives and do not engage with practices and social interactions as important aspects of culture. Although there are clearly a broad set of socially transmitted beliefs concerning the need for tidy farming, maintaining the name on the land, and so on (as identified by Silvasti, 2003 and many others), we contend that role-behaviours associated with good farming (i.e. the set of behaviours and values that can be used to identify a good farmer) develop mostly through the *practice of agriculture* as farmers learn what it means to be able to farm well and how to evaluate the 'good farmer' credentials of others. Similarly, her conceptualization of "script" does not provide any conceptual means of understanding how the values and symbols of the good farmer are generated and transformed through time.

Some applications of the Bourdieusian concept of habitus to the good farmer concept present a similar emphasis on social belonging and reproduction. When Droz (Droz, 2002, 2001) and colleagues (Droz and Forney, 2007; Droz and Miéville-Ott, 2001) describe the "peasant ethos", the focus is in the embodiment of values that are transmitted and shared within the farming community and contested by changes in public policies. Because of their insistence on the strength and importance of the cultural dimension of farming, there is a tendency to enact a slightly monolithic and static definition of culture. The confrontation with the new logics carried by a changing agricultural policy is consequently interpreted as a cultural and identity clash, resulting from a process of harsh symbolic and political domination.

Both Silvasti and Droz and colleagues produce an image of a farming culture "under threat" (Silvasti's wording). Interestingly, the two approaches nevertheless diverge in their fundamental positioning. While Silvasti's aim is to understand why Finnish farmers do not accept a critical environmental reading of their practices, Droz criticizes the pressures on the

Swiss farmers' identity resulting from a neoliberal turn in agricultural policies. These diverging approaches however both concentrate on resistances produced by the social reproduction of farming cultures. We can note that both authors refer to the figure of the "peasant" in their writings. While this is justified by the social and cultural context (e.g. in Switzerland most of the farmers still call themselves "*paysans/Bauer/contadino*", i.e. "peasant" in French/German/Italian), this category conveys a sense of strong belonging, tradition and timelessness. Using it in academic publications, even reflexively, might not help in integrating a more dynamic and negotiated definition of identity and culture.

However, the conceptualization of habitus and ethos as embodied social structures allows a better inclusion of the practical dimension of culture. For Droz and colleagues, as well as for Haggerty and colleagues, the farmers' ethos is expressed not only in narratives and discourses, but also and above all in farming practices, everyday actions, and physical symbols. This material and practical manifestation of the good farmer contributes to understanding how the cultural dimension of farming is anchored in farmers' everyday life and how it is more than a narrative on the profession and its morality. The 'good farmer' then is more about doing than talking or even thinking. This practical dimension might be weaker, even if not absent, in the social representation theorisation. Forney's conceptualisation is useful in highlighting the co-constructed (through interaction), negotiated (with the concept of posture) and dynamic (due to the differentiation between core and marginal elements) nature of the 'good farmer'. But its socio-psychology origins anchor this framing firstly in the things of the mind, even if the embodied and enacted dimension of representation is acknowledged.

The attention paid to practices is even clearer in Burton's theorization of the symbolic value of farming practices, above all when he draws on Bourdieu's theory of capitals (Burton et al., 2008). By focusing on the competitive dimension of the 'good farmer', also emphasized by Haggerty et al., (2009), Burton highlights that production of 'good farmer' symbols is mostly achieved through actions that are open to scrutiny by the peer group and therefore unable to be manipulated. Consequently, this framing places the look and judgement of others at the centre of the identification to the 'good farmer', while Silvasti and Droz implicitly focus on farmer self-identification to the ideal. The idea of 'roadside' or 'hedgerow' farming illustrates clearly the importance given to social interaction and social control. Burton goes far deeper in presenting a detailed theorization of the mechanisms at work in the identification to the 'good

farmer'. The cultural dimension of farming becomes here more dynamic, interactive, and pragmatic. Moreover, it evolves with the appearance of new practices and new symbols and the vanishing of old ones. Interestingly, this theoretical development allows us to consider how governance policies could act with purpose on these social mechanisms, for instance in order to promote a cultural valorisation of environmentaly friendly practices (Burton and Paragahawewa, 2011).

Although addressing the development of symbolic significance of farming practices in considerable detail and noting the transmission of cultural understandings from generation to generation, in Burton's work the processes of transmission (and transformation) remain hidden and relatively unexplored. In fact, he does not seek to outline the complete 'good farmer' as a person at all. Rather, he considers that much of farmers' social and culturally significant behaviour (the symbolically important production values) is mediated through an internalised 'good farmer' who, while often claimed to be external, is in fact a reflection of the self. This draws on his earlier use of identity theory with the symbolically important behaviours the equivalent of role behaviours that serve to define the identity of the farmer. It is by understanding how these behaviours come to symbolise the good farmer that, he contends, we will understand the cultural value of agricultural activities and, thus, the role culture plays in agricultural decision-making. We believe that a more holistic view of the good farmer could be developed by integrating Burton's work on how good farming identities are constructed from farming activities with other concepts associated with the good farmer such as the moral and social role of the good farmer – along with developing a greater understanding of how the cultural values are transmitted between generations and between peers.

Finally, a fundamental difference in the way these diverse theoretical frames understand action in its relation the cultural dimension. The Bourdieusian concept of habitus – while explicitly not ruling out conscious decision-making (see Bourdieu, 1990) – gives predominance to embodied, subconscious behaviours that often escape the reflexive capacity of individuals. In contrast, conscious decision-making and strategic behaviours are arguably more central to a symbolic interactionism approach. Here, individuals act more strategically, playing consciously with the rules defined by culture and social structures. While this opposition is a classic of social theory debates, the literature on the good farmer does not address it centrally. One explanation could be that both the focus on the theory of capital (on the Bourdieusian side) and the attention

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which should be used for any reference to this work

paid to cultural scripts and identity (on the interactionist side) have contributed to mitigate the tension between structure and agency. Indeed, capitals are used by actors to play in a social field, and this implies some degree of strategy and agency, while a certain level of determinism underlies the concepts of scripts and identity. Forney's (2010) use of the social representation framing can be understood as an attempt to integrate social interactions in the making of cultural values. However, Emery (2010) probably addresses more directly this tension between structure and agency in his theoretical discussion around the rhetoric-culture approach, highlighting the importance of interactions and a creative use of values and culture in an "incessant play of agents and patients doing-and-being-done-to in culturally transient situations" (p.25-26).

To understand theorisations underlying the good farmer construct it is important to recognise, as noted in the introduction, that the 'good farmer' is not a theory *per se* but an analytical construct – one that needs to be underlain by sociological or behavioural theory in order to be of value to researchers beyond its meaning as a 'common sense category'. The multitude of different approaches to theorising the 'good farmer' illustrates how the concept of the good farmer emerges from a multitude of literatures and in a multitude of ways. They all have in common a rejection of a normative stance (i.e. the author defines what are the characteristics of a good farmer), and all seek to develop an understanding of the cultural dimension of farming that goes beyond its descriptive synthesis, engaging with the significance and mechanisms of culture in farming.

Our analysis in this chapter revealed that there are two key components to good farmer theorisations. The first is that of cultural transmission – where the 'good farmer' is perceived to be the result of socialisation into agriculture and thus evolves from the transmission of established cultural beliefs and values. The famed, almost mythical, 'traditional' nature of agriculture would appear to support this notion. However, without explaining how cultural values and beliefs evolve over time we contend a pure "cultural transmission" approach, such as cultural scripting, is of limited value to understanding the changing identity of the 'good farmer'. The second dimension sees the good farmer identity as developing largely through the practice of agriculture. Here the focus is more on the practice-based development of cultural significance and in particular, how the need to express aspects of the good farmer that are culturally significant (e.g. generate cultural and symbolic capital) affects the adoption of new roles and behaviours. This too can be problematic where issues of cultural transmission and

non-production related facets of the 'good farmer' identity, such as morality and social obligation, are ignored. To evolve as an analytical construct, we contend that more attention needs to be paid to theorisations that integrate these two dimensions.

As a final note, we can highlight the fact that, so far, theorisations of the 'good farmer' have remained strongly rooted in a 'representational' paradigm, as part of a wider 'cultural turn' in rural and agricultural studies. Since it was first developed however, novel approaches have emerged in social sciences that have resulted in what has been labelled as a 'non-representational' or 'more-than-representational' turn (see Lorimer, 2005; Vannini, 2015). As we will develop in Chapter 8, these approaches might offer stimulating opportunities to rethink the conceptualization of the 'good farmer' that would pay more attention to the role of non-human actants, 'non-representational' (e.g. sensuous or affective) aspects in the construction the 'good farmer', or reframe it as a co-production resulting of multiple interaction within complex agricultural and food assemblages. However, this kind of theorization of the good farmer has yet to be developed.

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