

# **Identity and Environmental Governance: Institutional Change in Contemporary British Forestry Policy and Practice**

**Pernille Schiellerup**  
**University College London**  
Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD.

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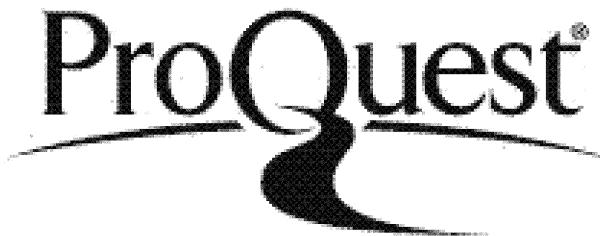
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## Abstract

This research is about institutional change in contemporary British public sector forestry with particular reference to issues of institutional and individual identity, drawing on the internal perspectives of staff working for the Forestry Commission (FC). Methodologically, the research was based on a grounded theory approach to the research process and data analysis using a combination of multi-site participant-observation of the FC across GB and long semi-structured interviews. Theoretically, the research seeks to balance between structure/agency, group/individual, and performance/meaning, drawing on a symbolic interactionist perspective on identity, structuration theory and discourse theory to construct a conceptual framework expressing the relationship between institutional and individual change processes. The research reveals the 'storyline' of social forestry as a symptom that the identity of the FC had become problematised, resulting in a debate about the future of forestry among a group of people for whom the FC and its work were both important and meaningful. The perception that the relationship between the FC and its setting of action had become destabilised led actors to initiate different kinds of work on the institutional self of the FC, and on the selves of important 'others' in the institution's setting of action, perceived to be able to confer legitimacy. A 're-constituted' narrative of self is developed on the basis of internal oral narratives of important events in the history of the FC, identifying the institutional self-identity which had become problematised and the identity structures with which the FC was now 'confronting' its present. Finally, the research shows how the structures of the FC's self were brought into play, challenged and transformed in negotiation with a very mobile setting of action in the early 2000s, explaining what challenges and opportunities the FC was responding to, and the consequences for the identities of the institution and of its staff.

## Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank very warmly the many people whom I met in the course of the fieldwork and who gave so generously of their reflections and time, and helped in many different ways to make the fieldwork the enjoyable and interesting experience it was. These were mainly, but not exclusively so, staff at the Forestry Commission. In this context I want especially to thank my supervisor at the Forestry Commission's Forest Research Agency, Paul Tabbush. I also want to thank my supervisor at the Department of Geography, UCL, Professor Jacquie Burgess for her reflections, time and encouragement, and for sharing her experience of the research process with me. Finally I want to thank my friends and family for diversion and support on the journey. A special thank you to Limeuls big and small.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

This research is about the Forestry Commission, one of the oldest of Britain's institutions of environmental governance. The Forestry Commission was established in 1919. In recent years the institutional identity of the Forestry Commission has been challenged by a set of developments in its 'setting of action' (Goffman 1959). In what follows I investigate the response of the Forestry Commission to such challenges and the consequences for its institutional identity and the work-based identities of the people who work for it. The creation of the Forestry Commission grew out of war time concerns about the security of supply of timber in the context of a British economy which was, at the time, highly dependent on British coal, and for which pit props for the mines were therefore essential. The primary concern of the Forestry Commission was with afforestation. In the 85 years since the Forestry Commission was established afforestation has been justified in different ways, but has rarely been lost from view.

The Commission has for most of its life been *one* organisation covering policy development and policy delivery, delivering policy through direct state action (the state as forester) as well as seeking to influence the actions of private actors through regulation and incentives (the state as regulator). This began to change from 1993. First the Forestry Commission reorganised itself and the functions associated with the state as forester and the state as regulator were split into the Forest Authority and Forest Enterprise. This separation of the different *functions* of the Forestry Commission was consolidated when Forest Enterprise was turned into a next steps executive agency in 1996. From the late 1990s the Forestry Commission also began to be broken apart vertically. In 1999 forestry policy formally became a devolved matter and responsibility for forestry policy was

transferred to Scottish Ministers and the Assembly for Wales, with the UK government retaining responsibility for England and international issues. From April 2003 Forest Enterprise was devolved into three bodies charged with managing separately the public forests in England, Scotland and Wales. At the same time closer integration between the Forestry Commission's regulatory and incentives functions with the rural affairs department in each of the three countries was strengthened by concordats between the rural affairs departments and the Forestry Commission's National Offices, and the three countries set about reviewing the Woodland Grant Scheme. This meant that *geographically*, the Forestry Commission began to become more differentiated. It also meant that in the course of my fieldwork which mainly took place between February 2002 and November 2003, the policy contexts of the Forestry Commission became considerably more complex. So whereas in the first phase of fieldwork which lasted until April 2003, I engaged in participant observation on a range of locations in England, Scotland and Wales, for the second phase of fieldwork which lasted from the end of August to the beginning of November 2003, I based myself in England. The conceptual framework which underpinned the second phase of fieldwork and the narrative of the thesis, was however developed during this first phase of fieldwork.

This is a story about how institutions respond to changes in their setting of action and about how that response in turn affects the setting of action of the individuals who work in it. It uses the metaphor of the individual to understand the institutional actor as well as the person inside the institution. It takes ideas normally used to understand the relationship of the identity of the individual to his or her setting of action to understand the relationship of the group to its setting of action. I will thus be anthropomorphising the Forestry Commission. It is also an attempt to tell a story about institutional change from the inside.

The research began life as an enquiry into social learning in forestry policy networks with particular reference to social forestry. I thus began with an enquiry into the meaning, and then the meanings, of social forestry. Interacting with the Forestry Commission through participant observation and interviews I realised that much which I had been seeking to understand about the Forestry

Commission in this context could be interpreted as an expression of a problematisation of the Forestry Commission's existing identity and an attempt at institutional re-invention. What was 'going on' (Strauss and Corbyn 1998) for the people I was interacting with was not so much a process of social learning with social forestry as a clearly defined object of learning, but rather an attempt to negotiate a mobile setting of action which challenged key elements of the Forestry Commission's identity, but which also offered new opportunities. Thus the focus of the research emerged in an inductive and grounded way through participation in the field which I was studying.

I have sought to retain this internal perspective in the account which follows. Thus the changes in the setting of institutional action which are identified as important are based on what emerged as important in the course of the ethnographic fieldwork. I do not seek to make a *structural* account of changes to the Forestry Commission from the outside looking in (e.g. Mather 2001). Indeed, throughout the account I seek to strike a balance between structure and agency. I have also sought to strike a balance between an account which privileges the group as actor, how the Forestry Commission as a collectivity sought to negotiate changes to its setting of action ('how we responded'), and an account which privileges the individual as actor in terms of how institutional change resulted in changes to the setting of action of individuals ('what it was like for me'). Finally I have sought to keep in tension within the narrative the instrumental as well as the ethical meaning of action, allowing for the presence of both. Thus I take from symbolic interactionism the emphasis on the situated actor, interpreting his or her setting of action and acting on the basis of such 'bounded rationality.' I take from Giddens (1984) structuration theory the emphasis on structure as both rule and resource applying it both to the setting of action, and to the identity of the actor. I take from Goffman (1959) the emphasis on the collaborative construction of identity and apply it both in the diagnosis of an institutional crisis of identity as well as in the interpretation of the attempt to create a modified identity for the Forestry Commission, more suited to the changes in its setting of action. I also use Goffman's dramaturgical extension to symbolic interactionism to understand how the changes in the setting of action affects the individual. Indeed the conceptual framework is based on an anthropomorphisation of the Forestry

Commission, using a set of ideas normally associated with attempting to understand the individual to understand not only the individual's response to changes in his or her setting of action, but *also* the response of the institutional actor. In this account the Forestry Commission, becomes a person with a personality rooted in multiple belongings developed over time and in place. While Goffman's (1959; 1986) ideas about performance work well as a heuristic for illuminating the strategically acting institution, it works less well for understanding the *meaningfulness* of actions for individuals. I therefore also draw on Foucault's discourse theory (1990; 1992; 1998).

## 1.1 Intellectual context

With the exception of some of the writings of Yi Fu Tuan in the 1970s, it is only recently that several geographers have begun to draw on different ways of thinking about performance and performativity in their interpretative work (Gregson and Rose 2000, p. 434). Gregson and Rose suggest that the reason why geographers are becoming interested in performance is because such a perspective allows geographers to see social identities as performed and constructed in and through social action, rather than existing anterior to social processes, and that as such performance offers possibilities for thinking about the constructedness of identity, subjectivity, and agency. According to Gregson and Rose (2000) most geographers currently working with the perspective of performance draw on Goffman although some also draw on Butler (1990; 1993). Geographers use Goffman to study of the particular practices demanded by specific, usually service sector, workplaces (Cockburn 1983, 1985; Cockburn and Ormrod 1993; Crang 1994, McDowell, 1995; McDowell and Court 1994a, 1995). Such studies conceptualise performance as staged, as played for spectators both behind the scenes and in the auditorium of the marketplace, these studies construe performance as theatrical and dramaturgical, the product of intentional, conscious agents (Gregson and Rose 2000, p. 436). Butler who draws on Foucault, rejects theatrical notions of performance (1993, p. 12) and does not work with a notion of a social agent existing prior to its production through enacted discourse. Instead she argues that the 'doing' of discourse (e.g. 'doing skinhead' in Bell *et al* (1994), or 'doing forester') cites already established

formations of knowledge and it is this citation which produces social subjects.

*“Performance – what individual subjects do, say, ‘act-out’ – and performativity – the citational practices which produce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances – are intrinsically connected, through the saturation of performers with power.”* (Gregson and Rose 2000, p. 434). It would seem that in the work of Judith Butler performance and meaning merge through the citational practices which at once “enable and discipline subjects” (Gregson and Rose 2000, p. 441). While my concern to strike a balance between performance and meaning in the account of institutional change in the Forestry Commission clearly relates to this debate, my way into it has been through Goffman, Foucault and Giddens rather than through the geographical literature on performance and performativity, let alone non-representational theory.

Jones and Cloke (2002, p. 4) point to the relative lack of attention to flora, and in particular to trees, in the context of recent geographical attempts to bring nature back into social theory, but also draw attention to where trees, woods and forests have been considered in recent geographical and related thought. Daniels (1988) has for example considered woodlands through the notions of the iconography of landscape, whereas, Harrison (1992) has considered the forest as a symbolic other to western civilisation, and Cloke *et al.* (1996) have considered forests as social nature in the context of a study of the National Forest. Watkins (1998) and McManus (1999) have considered national and international histories of how woodlands and forests have been constructed. Tsouvalis (2000) makes a similar point, noting that although geographers have long been interested in society-nature relations, they have, with some exceptions, neglected the “*complex relationship human beings have with forests*” and have tended to treat forests either as an economic resource or portrayed as a factor in climate and environmental change (p. 8).

In her own study of the Forestry Commission, Tsouvalis (2000) provides a critical geography of Britain’s state forests in which she investigates,

*“the relation between vision of the world and the practices that come to be associated with them, and considers the radically different reality formation to which they can lead. [The book] questions how particular visions become prominent through symbolic power struggles and how they are transformed into material realities through practice. It also looks at how, in time, they come to be mistaken for reality per se. This book then considers how change can come about, both in terms of how reality is perceived and in terms of how it is produced”* (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 3).

Whereas there is an overlap between the present study and the work of Tsouvalis in as much as both are concerned with the Forestry Commission, the research also shares a concern with institutional change and with meaning and the way in which that meaning is materialised through practice. However, whereas Tsouvalis draws her data to a large extent from the kind of institutional accounts of self which can be found in the annual reports of the Forestry Commission, and to a lesser extent on interview material, the present study is a multi-site ethnography of the Forestry Commission based on interaction through participant observation and through long semi-structured interviews. Moreover, as noted the definition of the research object of the present study was grounded in interaction with staff at the Forestry Commission in the first phase of fieldwork. It is therefore interesting to note that the studies, independently, came to share a concern with the identity of the Forestry Commission. But while Tsouvalis flirts with anthropomorphising the Forestry Commission, her theoretical perspective and interests were different from those which have animated my research. She draws for example on Bourdieu (e.g. 1990a; 1990b) where I have drawn on Giddens (1984; 1990; 1991). And she makes use of Foucault’s idea of docile bodies from Discipline and Punish (Foucault 1991) in discussing ‘forest workers’ whereas my concern to strike a balance between structure and agency, drawn in part from my experiences in the field, led me to draw on the History of Sexuality (1990; 1992; 1998) instead, where the actor has a more ‘actorly’ relationship to structures of meaning. Early fieldwork suggested that whatever the institutional processes were, staff working in the Forestry Commission sought to actively position themselves in relation to such processes. Tsouvalis argues that the Forestry Commission began to problematise its self during the 1980s, becoming

more ‘reflective’ during the 1990s, and this forms part of the context to the present study, discussed in Chapter 6. My study thus complements Tsouvalis’ work in that it confirms the reflexivity (drawing on Giddens rather than Bourdieu) and continues the story where Tsouvalis left it in the late 1990s, by setting out what happened next.

Bruce Braun (2002) is another geographer with a critical social constructivist eye on the forest. In his politically engaged study of nature, culture and power in the context of the rainforest on Canada’s west coast he explores the “*intersecting discursive, social, technological, and institutional relations that shape the way that nature in the region is constituted – and ultimately transformed – as an object of scientific, economic, political, or aesthetic calculation*” (p. 25). Whereas my own study follows the Forestry Commission and its meaning making practices in the context of a setting of action which challenged its existing identity and offered new possibilities of being, Braun (2002) follows British Columbia’s temperate rainforest, and provides a series of accounts of its social production from different perspectives: through histories of displacement, industrial forestry, local environmental groups, adventure travel and tourism and landscape art. Tsouvalis (2000), also follows the Forestry Commission, but to a greater extent takes account of other perspectives on the forest, and the way in which British forests come to be constructed anew through ‘symbolic struggles.’ But whereas the focus of Braun (2002) and Tsouvalis (2000) is on the social construction of the forest, my own focus is more on the social re-construction of the Forestry Commission, of which the retelling of the forest forms a part. And whereas Braun (2002) and Tsouvalis (2000) look at how the forest is constructed differently in the context of different practices, I see the Forestry Commission *itself* as a constellation of a number of social practices (Wenger 1998) rooted in the multiple belongings of the Forestry Commission, resulting in a heterogeneous identity.

The Forestry Commission is, although a small government department, clearly a powerful actor in relation to a number of other actors as well as a relatively powerless actor in relation to yet others. Moreover the interactive perspective on identity used here suggests that when an actor begins to change, it can affect the

identity of other actors which are connected to it through different kinds of relationship and for which it forms part of their setting of action. Given that the Forestry Commission is trying to change itself, we should look to see what effects this has on the actors through which it is already related or to which it becomes related through changes to itself resulting in shifting fields of relationality. This could for example lead to a closer examination of the implications of the Forestry Commission's attempt to adopt a more participative identity in the context of its relationship to 'communities.' A more participative style for the Forestry Commission requires that other actors are willing to *participate*. This is not a given. And yet, from the point of view of re-constructing itself as a more participate organisation, the Forestry Commission needs 'a community' which will participate. This takes place in the context of relations of power, which are mediated by differential access to different kinds of resources (Giddens 1984). However, this study focuses substantially on the implications for actors inside the Forestry Commission. It is a study which keeps a sympathetic eye on the actors within the Forestry Commission, and which tries to understand what the world looked like from the situated position of industrial foresters in the process of transformation. In doing so it has much in common in spirit with Burton's (2004) work to understand the social symbolic value of productivist behaviour in farmers. A balance I am therefore *not* trying to strike is one between *verstehen* (Fielding and Fielding 1986, p. 40) and an outside perspective which critically evaluates in *normative* terms industrial forestry or the attempts at renewal of the Forestry Commission. This has its roots in the situatedness of the research itself. I did not have a background in forestry, and from this position of ignorance, I did not feel comfortable to adopt the perspective on British forest politics of one group or another. This creates a homelessness in the research process the discomforts of which has also been commented upon by Law (1994).

As a study of an organisation charged with implementing and to a large extent engaged in developing public policy, my research also connects with the public policy studies literature. Winter (1996) notes that there has been little by way of systematic analysis of forestry by political scientists. Howlett and Ramesh (1995), John (1998) and Sabatier (1999) all provide classifications of the main

theoretical approaches to the study of public policy in the context of academia, the most prominent of which in terms of the study of British government, is the policy network approach (Bevir and Rhodes 1999). John (1998, p. 15) summarises ‘group and network approaches’ in political science as based on the idea that “*associations and informal relationships, both within and outside political institutions, shape decisions and outcomes.*” In general the contribution of group approaches has been to highlight the importance of groups other than those constituted by the formal institutions of government such as Parliament, the House of Lords, the judiciary, etc. in the public policy process. Group approaches, which became prevalent in the 1950s and early 1960s, were a response to the perceived inadequacies of institutionalism. Associational accounts of the everyday practice of decision making rather than accounts based on the formal structure of political institutions. The network approach, which became popular in the 1980s and 1990s continued this theme. During the 1980s, the new institutionalists responded by reasserting the importance of the state and the salience of routines in politics (John 1998, p. 17). However, such approaches tend to privilege ‘external’ academic definitions of networks and networking, over the definitions by actors themselves (Hay and Richards 2000, p. 3) and my fieldwork was making me increasingly interested in the meanings attributed by actors themselves.

Although I moved away from the policy studies literature my approach has similarities with the decentered approach to studying government of Bevir and Rhodes (1999). Bevir and Rhodes (1999) argue for an anti-foundational approach to the study of British government and take network approaches as an example, outlining an anti-foundational epistemology which emphasises the constructed nature of all claims to knowledge. They apply this both to the study of British Government, i.e. that there is an inevitable element of interpretation in the human sciences, and to the understanding their research subject: “[n]either scholars nor their subjects have pure perceptions or pure reason. So we cannot read off their beliefs, desires or actions from allegedly objective social facts about them. Rather, we must allow that they construct their beliefs against the background of a tradition (or episteme or paradigm), and often in response to dilemmas (or problems, or anomalies).” (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 224).

For Bevir and Rhodes (1999), a *tradition* is a set of theories or narratives and associated practices that people inherit, which provide the background against which they form beliefs and perform actions. Traditions are contingent, constantly evolving, and necessarily located in a historical context. A *decentered* study of an institution explores the way it is created, sustained or modified through the ideas and actions of individuals. Such a decentered account, argue Bevir and Rhodes (1999) will produce a radical emphasis on the capacity of the individual subject to imbue his or her actions with meaning and to redefine that meaning in, for example, organisational dialogue.

A decentered study of a network thus shifts the focus from the institution to the individual. It focuses on the social construction of policy networks through the ability to create meaning. It uses ethnographic tools to study behaviour in everyday contexts. While it requires a micro-analysis, it does not necessarily require a bottom-up approach, decentered studies of networks “*build a multifaceted picture of how the several actors understand and enact them*” (p. 229). The role of the researcher is to construct stories about how other people understand what they are doing in networks. For Bevir and Rhodes, these stories will be built out of the “*several organisational, network and political traditions actors have learnt and constructed as they enact and remake networks in their everyday lives*” (p. 229). While other accounts of networks emphasise the reasons behind the growth of networks with reference to external factors such as functional and institutional specialisation and the fragmentation of policies and politics (Rhodes 1988, p. 371-387), Bevir and Rhodes’ anti-foundational approach stresses how from within diverse *traditions*, people understand and respond to networks, and how members of networks construct and reconstruct their own traditions. For Bevir and Rhodes “[i]ndividuals learn about the network and its constituent organisations through stories of famous events and characters. *Traditions are passed on from person to person. Much will be taken for granted as common sense. Some will be challenged; for example, when beliefs collide and have to be changed or reconciled. The several traditions will produce different stories which we might tell and compare*” (p. 230). A dilemma arises for an individual or institution when a new idea stands in opposition to an

existing idea, and so forces a reconsideration. We understand how people's beliefs and actions change by exploring the ways in which people think about and respond to dilemmas and reinterpret and reconstruct their traditions. Thus for Bevir and Rhodes, an analysis of change and developments in British government must take place through a study of the relevant dilemmas.

## **1.2 Approach and outline of the thesis**

My approach to the research process was informed by grounded theory (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Pidgeon and Henwood in press; Henwood and Pidgeon in press). This meant that the research process consisted of periods which were mainly spent in the field, followed by other periods mainly spent on reflection in the context of an engagement with the literature and 'the data' which I had 'collected', followed by more fieldwork, followed by more focused attempts at interpreting the experience in the field in the context of an engagement with social science, and so forth. Nevertheless, the fieldwork fell into two main phases from February 2001 to April 2003, consisting of participant observation and six long semi-structured interviews, and from August 2003 to November 2003 where the fieldwork consisted of 34 long semi-structured interviews.

In Chapter 2, I give an account of the first phase of the fieldwork, my early experiences in the field, and my attempts to make sense of them. In the course of this account I gradually clarify what the 'interesting story' which I want to examine is, and through this process of clarifying what the research is about, gradually gain greater ownership of the research project.

In Chapter 3 I shift from a chronological to a logical narrative, setting out the conceptual framework which emerged during July and August 2003 as a product of my successive engagements with the Forestry Commission and with social theory. In it I take a set of ideas which are normally associated with understanding the individual and turn them into a perspective from which to consider not only the experience of the individual in the Forestry Commission as the institution engages in a change process and his or her setting of action

changes, but also the response of the institution itself to changes to its setting of action. I end this chapter by setting out a conceptual model of the relationship between institutional and individual change.

In Chapter 4 I explain how I operationalised the conceptual framework in the context of a second, now more focussed phase of fieldwork which sought to test the solidity of the conceptual framework. It shows how I sought to turn a highly abstract conceptual framework into a set of questions capable of connecting up with the life worlds of the people I interviewed. In this chapter I also reflect across the two phases of fieldwork about the methodological issues which they had in common in terms of data collection and interpretation.

The conceptual framework was confirmed in the second phase of fieldwork and in Chapter 5 I pull together empirical material from the two phases of the research to substantiate the conceptual framework as set out at the end of Chapter 3, mainly in terms of the early, institutional parts of the conceptual diagram. I show that the Forestry Commission had come to problematise its self, and that as a result it was engaging in work on its self and on its ‘others’, in order to modify its existing identity. Although a picture of the changes in the setting of action which were challenging the institutional self-identity of the Forestry Commission inevitably emerges, the picture is partial and I do not focus on it. The purpose of the chapter is precisely to give the reader an impression of what the field looked like for me after the first phase of the fieldwork, and to make him or her, want to know more about the institutional self which had come to be problematised, and the kinds of changes in the setting of action of the institution which had challenged the existing identity of the Forestry Commission. In doing so it draws on material from both Scotland, England and Wales and makes an argument which applies to the Forestry Commission GB, as it was then.

Chapter 6 then tells the story of the development of the institutional self which I encountered during 2002 and 2003. It does so through an account of the key moments in the history of the Forestry Commission as they emerged in the context of the participant observation and interviews. It provides a chronological account with interventions from the interview material illustrating how the events

in questions were perceived and experienced by actors inside the Forestry Commission. In doing so the chapter provides what might be called a 're-constituted' narrative of self, since it was re-constituted from the narratives of research subjects. Such experiences lay down structures of action, meaning and materiality with which actors (whether institutional or individuals) negotiate the present. I end the chapter by setting out the key points about the Forestry Commission's identity on the basis of my interpretation of the fieldwork material.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I turn to the present which the Forestry Commission was negotiating during 2002 and 2003 and I narrow the geographical focus of the account to England as devolution was beginning to render more complex the institutional and policy picture. Here I continue the chronological account this time taking as my point of departure the way in which the Forestry Commission was negotiating its setting of action by drawing on the identity structures established in the past and engaging with challenges to its existing identity, as well as opportunities for shifting this identity in a different direction. In doing so I get behind the sense of uncertainty to which the work on self described in Chapter 5 was a response, to show what the changes in the Forestry Commission's setting of action were that it was responding to and which led me to form the impression in the first part of the fieldwork that the Commission was experiencing an identity crisis. I also, to a greater extent than Chapter 5 and 6, move down the conceptual model to consider how the response of the Forestry Commission was changing the setting of action for individuals inside the organisation and how they experienced this and responded to it.

## Chapter 2 Early experiences in the field: phase I fieldwork

In this chapter and in Chapter 4 I want to give an account of the research process. I want to set out what research actions I took, why, and what implications these had for what I did next in the course of the research. This is in order to demonstrate that the analysis presented in the other chapters is “*much more than just ‘quarrying out the good bits’ or using field material to lend an eyewitness authority*” (Cook and Crang 1995, p. 86). It is also to give myself an opportunity to reflect on the experience of the research process (in dialogue with the methodological literature).

Grounded theory (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corby 1998; Pidgeon and Henwood in press; Henwood and Pidgeon in press) has both provided an approach to the research process and an approach to the analysis, i.e. the broad cycles of the overall research trajectory, iterative cycles of reading, fieldwork, and ‘sense making.’ Each attempt at trying to make sense of experiences, in and out of the field, mobilised existing structures of meaning. Making sense of ‘the data’ was an *iterative* process (Cook and Crang 1995, p. 83). The account is thus punctuated by the main conceptualisations of what the research was about. The PhD was funded by an ESRC CASE studentship.<sup>1</sup> The first conceptualisation of the research therefore predated my own engagement with the research.

There are three narrative strands which run through the account: interaction with forestry, interaction with social science, and ‘sense making.’ Sense making was my way of finding a more satisfactory way of talking about the process of

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<sup>1</sup> This means that a University and a non-academic partner put together a proposal to the ESRC which, if successful, they then advertise to attract applicants for the research.

creating meaning out of the experience produced by interacting with forestry and social science. Neither of these were in practice discrete. ‘Interaction’ and ‘meaning making’ were deeply implicated. And so was ‘forestry’ and ‘social science’ from the very beginning as the fact that it was a ESRC *CASE* studentship suggests. Sense making does not begin with self-conscious attempts at ‘data-analysis’ such as using ATLAS.ti to code transcripts, nor is interaction with social science easily isolated into a ‘review of the literature’. The fieldwork fell into two broad phases, February 2001 - April 2003 and August – November 2003. I refer to these as Phase I and Phase II fieldwork. Phase I was dominated by participant observation with a few long semi-structured interviews, while Phase II consisted of 34 interviews testing the conceptual framework which I had by then developed. I have set out the participation events I attended in Appendix 2.1, the ‘conversations’ I had in the course of such events in Appendix 2.2, and the formal interviews in Appendix 2.3. These appendices together give an overview of my interaction with forestry, which mostly meant with the Forestry Commission, in the course of the research. Interaction with social science was also an important research action, and the engagement with the literature, geographic and (often) otherwise, attending conferences, talking to colleagues and my academic supervisor, Professor Jacquie Burgess, contributed to the sense making process in an analogue way to interacting with forestry.

The experience of the research (including data collection) is embedded within the totality of the life experience of the researcher while the researcher is undertaking the research and it is therefore not surprising that it is not only ‘research actions’ which lead to research insights. Therefore I will on a few occasions make reference to my life outside the PhD. At the other end of the spectrum of the ‘expanded field’ the researcher can become the research subject. For Cook (2001), the contradictions in his position as a PhD research student became such that the *how* overwhelmed the *what* (Holstein and Gubrium 1997) and itself became the *what* of his thesis. For Ribbens (1998), her own experience of a second round of motherhood in her early 40s meant that her own life provided material for research in the context of a research career substantially concerned with motherhood.

Although I had an ESRC CASE studentship, and so to an extent the scope of the research was substantially defined, Jacquie encouraged me to 'make the research mine' in order to be able to sustain the work over the three years to come. The title of the research proposal from UCL Department of Geography and the Forestry Commission's Forest Research was *Social Learning in Forestry Policy Networks*. Over the next years this early conceptualisation of what the research was about would change substantially. But the research proposal was a crucial part of the dialogic context in which the thesis took shape and so I have included it in Appendix 2.4.

The approach to the research process has been substantially a grounded one (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corby 1998). The tenor of this first phase of the research process was on engagement with the field interspersed with engagement with the literature. Early in the research, Jacquie encouraged me to set out what literatures I thought were relevant to the research with a view to undertaking a series of thematic readings. This resulted in several rounds of focussed reading with literature on social learning, forestry, public policy processes and meaning which fed into the different conceptualisations of the research along the way. However, the engagement with the literature is to a large extent the silent partner in this account, mainly because, in practice, it was difficult to sustain three narrative threads, methodological, empirical and theoretical within the same account without turning the present chapter into the thesis. Therefore the product of the theoretical engagements are set out in Chapter 3. For the same reason I have also mostly written the contribution of my supervisors out of the narrative, although these relationships were of course another crucial part of the dialogic context of the research.

## 2.1 Social learning in forestry policy networks:

### October 2001 – June 2002

Being a ESRC CASE student meant that as well as an academic supervisor I also had a supervisor from the non-academic organisation, in my case the Forestry Commission, which had put together the research proposal to the ESRC with the Department of Geography at UCL. My Forestry Commission supervisor was

Paul Tabbush, Head of Silviculture and Seed Branch at the Forestry Commission Research Station at Alice Holt near Farnham in Surrey.<sup>2</sup> He also leads the Social Forestry Research Unit at Forest Research. I met Paul and Jacquie for the first time at an informal interview at the Department in April 2001. Paul and Jacquie had met each other at a conference on social forestry research. The Forestry Commission had subsequently funded Paul to take a one year MSc in the Public Understanding of Science, based at the Department. The relationship between my two supervisors thus pre-dated my relationship with either of them.

As well as regular supervisions with Jacquie, the proposal to the ESRC set out that I would see my Forestry Commission supervisor once every two weeks in the first year and approximately once a month after that. It was envisioned that I would work at Forest Research on a regular basis. In practice I worked from the Department of Geography which was 15 minutes on foot in my first year as opposed to two hours of transport by bicycle, train and foot. I therefore saw Paul about once a month during this phase of the research.

On my visits to Alice Holt Paul would introduce me to people such as other people working in the Silviculture and Seed Branch, a sociologist who had recently joined the Social Forestry Research Unit and the Chief Executive of Forest Research. On my own I met staff at the library and another PhD student, studying weevils, a beetle which destroys crops. During the first few supervisions Paul told me about the creation and structure of the Forestry Commission, who to talk to about using the library, about where I could work when I was at Forest Research, who to talk to about getting access to printing and the internet. He also told me of his own experience of working in forestry. At this stage in the research Paul was therefore my most important source of interaction with forestry and foresters. He was the reason I went to Alice Holt, where he was the most important facilitator of contact with other people working for the Forestry Commission. Paul was my ‘gate keeper’ and with Jacquie, my most important ‘live’ source of representations of forestry.

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<sup>2</sup> Forest Research, the research agency of the Forestry Commission, has a research station near Edinburgh which is referred to by people in the Forestry Commission as NRS (the Northern Research Station), and a research station at Alice Holt near Farnham in Surrey which is referred to as Alice Holt. This is how I will refer to them too.

Jacquie and Paul were 'the same' in that they were both 'supervisors'. But they were also different although I was not quite sure how. The fact that he was my 'supervisor' suggested that he was not part of the field. Most supervisors are not. But then most supervisors are not part of the research object however broadly defined it continued to be. Later I decided that, on balance, Paul was more field than non-field and assigned retrospective fieldwork status to all our meetings including the informal interview in April 2001. I have therefore included conversations with Paul in Appendix 2.2, and anonymised him in the remainder of the thesis. I was interacting with forestry, and therefore with the field, from the beginning of the research process, even before the studentship began, if I include the informal interview. I was therefore 'doing fieldwork', 'collecting data' and trying to make sense of it all, well before relations with the Department, the ESRC and the Forestry Commission had been formalised. The entanglement of field and non-field had begun early.

Because I was 'going into the field' from the outset, the issue of *how* I should relate to forestry was also there at the outset. How should I be, what should I say about myself, what role should I project in my interactions with the people I would meet at Alice Holt? Jacquie suggested that vagueness would be good at this point, that I should say that I was a new CASE student, learning about forestry. She also expected my role to change over time. In the course of the PhD I would be running into a few different representations, either implicit or explicit, of what my role was. Before I had begun the PhD, my Forestry Commission supervisor had already circulated a representation of me and the research in an e-mail circulated to all Forest Research staff as well as a couple of people in policy positions within the Forestry Commission England. Perhaps if I had asked myself who these people were at the time, I would have had some answers to my growing concerns about my positionality. But it is only know when I understand so much more about the Forestry Commission than I can decode this e-mail. In June 2001, I knew next to nothing about the Forestry Commission. While I had a MSc in Environmental Change and Management and five years of experience in energy efficiency policy research and consultancy from the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford, I had no background in forestry,

nor had I had any engagement with geographical theory since doing half a modular degree in geography at Oxford Brookes University in the early 1990s. I thought however that I could bring my experience of the policy process from my work at the Environmental Change Institute to the research.

What was the organisational *context* for the studentship? Why had it come about in the first place? What were the motivations of my Forestry Commission supervisor, of other people in the Forestry Commission who had had an influence on the studentship, of Jacque? These concerns touched on my own *positionality* and the way in which the research project I had embarked on in taking up the CASE studentship, was situated (Cook *et al.* 2005). Cook *et al.* (2005, p. 1) have noted how work by reflexive anthropologists, sociologists of science and feminist writers have, since the mid-1980s, made the point that “*academic and other knowledges are always situated, always produced by positioned actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of research relations(hips)*.” Academic knowledge, as other knowledge, is relationally produced, and that makes “*a huge difference to what exactly gets done by whom, how and where it is done, how it's turned into a finished product, for whom*” (Cook *et al.* 2005, p. 1). In this context he encourages geographers to be more reflexive by drawing attention to the way in which their knowledge products are situated. By doing the CASE studentship I was participating in something, but I could not, in December 2001, see what it was. I did have some thoughts about it though. Perhaps the objectives of the studentship could be seen as part of the internal struggle over the future of forestry in as much as the objectives included an exploration of the development of social forestry in the Forestry Commission, the use of social scientific knowledge and the extent to which deliberative and inclusive processes were leading to institutional change. All of these appeared to be contested practices within the Forestry Commission. On a less political note, my Forestry Commission supervisor had said that he saw the thesis as fitting within the ‘governance’ part of the social forestry research programme. This suggested another way of understanding the studentship as a way of getting someone to look at ‘what we are doing’ as a contribution to a change process. As such the CASE studentship could be seen as part of the ‘reflective turn’ of the Forestry Commission discussed by Tsouvalis (2000). I

thought that social forestry research and social forestry practice might have a relatively weak position within the Forestry Commission. But at the same time the Forestry Commission appeared to be going through a time of challenge to its established way of doing things. It was not clear to me what the boundaries of social forestry were: it seemed to encompass much that went before the usage of the term 'social forestry'. However, both my Forestry Commission supervisor and Jacquie seemed to see social forestry as 'a good thing'. Nevertheless, I wondered to what extent social forestry was the latest rhetorical device to ensure the continued existence of the Forestry Commission? There had been proposals for the abolition of the Forestry Commission in the past. This suggested that social forestry was mainly directed at an external audience. But the social forestry programme could also have an internal audience. Perhaps it expressed an internal political compromise with those who were keen on social forestry. In the draft proceedings of a conference at Cardiff University on Social Science Research into Woodlands and the Natural Environment organised by Forest Research in June 2001 I came across the following observation,

*"At the same time, social forestry offers the Forestry Commission an opportunity to demonstrate its value to the national and local culture in a time of declining timber revenues and ever-increasing limits on non-sustainable rural land use. For the foresters in the Forestry Commission this represents both an opportunity and a challenge. As the public's affection for forest grows, the Forestry Commission can be assured that its value to the nation will rise accordingly. At the same time, training in scientific forestry may not have adequately prepared many staff to manage the symbolic resources which can be strongly contested in the public sphere."*

Evans (2002), R. in O'Brien, L. and Claridge, J. (eds), p. 92.

I wondered whether such 'rhetorical devices' were best understood as justifications (i.e. rationalisations). I was becoming increasingly interested in 'meaning' and I thought that social forestry could also be understood as an attempt at making meaning. Event in my own life at the time had made me consider that all actions have meaning, that we will always try to make sense of

(attribute meaning to) what we do, including things we do at work whether we happen to be an artist or a bin man. This made me think of forestry as being meaningful (probably in many different ways) to foresters, whatever the merits of the practice may be considered to be at the wider societal level. Such meanings can be contested (e.g. Tomkins 1989), and new meanings can develop. But there is a certain amount of inertia in the process. I thought that it would be necessary to be sensitive to the meanings of forestry practices to foresters.

My Forestry Commission supervisor was my most important source of interaction with forestry at this stage in the research, later on I would develop additional relationships with people working for the Forestry Commission and they would in turn result in other possibilities for interaction. At this stage however, my Forestry Commission supervisor was *the ‘gate keeper’* (Burton 2000; Cook and Crang 1995). As a CASE student with the Head of Silviculture and Seed as my supervisor, I did not have the problems of access to the Forestry Commission which Whyte for example had in gaining access to ‘Cornerville’ until he met his gate keeper (Whyte 1943, p. 288-292). Just as ‘Doc’ gave Whyte access Cornerville by virtue of his embeddedness in the social network of Cornerville, my Forestry Commission supervisor was able to help me orient myself and facilitate my access by virtue of having worked for the Forestry Commission for nearly three decades.

### **2.1.1 Interviews at HQ and Forest Research, Edinburgh, February 2002**

It was the middle of December 2001 and I was just over two months into the PhD. My Forestry Commission supervisor had already suggested a couple of possible opportunities for fieldwork. Among them a course run by Forest Training Services<sup>3</sup> on Forestry for Non-Foresters, which I was waiting to attend. He had also suggested attending the Institute of Chartered Foresters’ annual conference, coming up in April 2002, for which he was organising the speakers. Now, he suggested that I arrange to interview some people in the forestry policy network to understand how they think and work and to help me find a good story

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<sup>3</sup> Forest Training Services is the Forestry Commission’s internal training division.

to investigate. I did not feel 'ready'. And not feeling ready, I felt afraid of wasting people's time. My Forestry Commission supervisor suggested about ten people spread over the Forestry Commission's Head Quarters in Edinburgh, the Forestry Commission's national office for the England in Cambridge, Forest Enterprise national office for England in Bristol and finally at the Red Rose Community Forest close to Manchester. While this is all very meaningful to me now, and moreover redolent of missed opportunities, it is worth noting that at that time, I was barely aware of the content and distinctions behind labels such as Forest Enterprise, Forestry Commission, Forest Training Services, Forest Research and 'community forest', let alone the relationships between these different entities.

I decided to start with the three people based at the Forestry Commission Head Quarters in Edinburgh and see what would happen. I got in touch with my Forestry Commission supervisor to tell him what I had decided and when I would like to do the interviews. He replied to me the next day, inviting me, at the same time, to attend a seminar he was giving at NRS (which was close to Edinburgh) in the same week I was proposing to do the interviews. All three prospective interviewees had been carbon copied into his reply to me along with my original e-mail to him. I felt quite uncomfortable. The e-mail had been intended for my supervisor and it showed something about how I wanted to approach the interviews. Thinking about it now, with hindsight, there was nothing problematic in the e-mail, nothing that could not be shared, knowing what I know *now* about doing research on the Forestry Commission and about the people I was proposing to interview. I was concerned about keeping control of not only *my* presentation of myself, but *the* presentation of myself in general in the context of the fieldwork.

I was able to arrange an interview with two of the three people my supervisor had suggested. A third interviewee declined and an alternative interviewee was added. The three interviewees were Head of the Policy and Practice Division of the Forestry Commission GB, the Principal Advisor on Social Benefits in the Division, and the Head of Environment and Communication at Forest Enterprise GB. On Jacquie's suggestion, I also arranged to interview a researcher who was

part of the Social Research Unit, but based at NRS, whom she had met at the conference at Cardiff University in June 2001.

My Forestry Commission supervisor's suggestion of doing interviews at this early stage of the research turned out to be fortuitous as the literature on social forestry appeared mainly to be addressed to a developing world context. In January 2002 I was therefore beginning to think that if I wanted to understand about social forestry in the UK and Europe I needed to speak to people.

During February 2002 I prepared for the interviews. My academic supervisor encouraged me not to prepare too much, and just to 'be.' I wanted to try this approach since I knew I had a tendency to over prepare. I developed an interview schedule based on the themes in the research proposal, a couple of additional ideas which had emerged for me over the last few months, and a few open questions designed to help me identify 'good stories' to explore in the research. The interview schedule is included in Appendix 2.5. I will discuss the methodological issues arising from semi-structured interviewing in Chapter 4 as it was during Phase II of the fieldwork that most of the interviews took place. These interviews also led to my first adventures in qualitative data analysis, which are also discussed as a whole in Chapter 4.

Towards the end of February 2002, I duly set off for my first engagement with the Forestry Commission outside my relationship with my supervisor and my visits to Alice Holt. I felt that a good rapport was established with everybody I met and that this provided a good basis for approaching the people I had met in the future as the research developed. The interviewees generally used of a lot of social scientific discourse and historical perspective. Different pictures of 'the forester' emerged, for example as someone who in the past had been more part of the community and as someone with a military background/and or culture. Interviewees made reference to institutional, economic, and social drivers behind forestry policy developments rather than individual agency, although most also gave accounts of policy change where they gave themselves an important role. Industrialisation, urbanisation, decline of timber prices, a new Labour government, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, rural development, and

EU regional funds were cast as important drivers behind forestry practice at different times. What forestry/the countryside is for appeared to be a central question of concern, in particular whether the countryside was about ‘production’ or ‘services.’ There seemed to be quite a lot of room for questioning ‘forestry truths’ as well and each other, even the continued existence of the Forestry Commission, and what forestry was for.

While at NRS for my supervisor’s seminar I took the opportunity to have conversations as much as I could in an opportunistic manner based on whom I happened to be sitting or standing next to. Here the presence of both my Forestry Commission supervisor, some of the interviewees, as well as staff I had previously met at Alice Holt, made contact relatively easy. At one point I was in a conversation in a group which included researchers as well as policy staff. The conversation went to ‘useless things we do’. One was a golfer, the other was taking a welding course. At this point I thought I ought to share something about myself. So I told them I danced Argentinean tango, although I was careful to play down the more lurid images of tango dancing. I felt, although I did not articulate it to myself at the time, that it might somehow jeopardise the presentation of myself which I was trying to make. It was not entirely clear in my mind what this was, but something serious which did not seem compatible with what I knew about popular representations of the tango (rose in mouth, net stockings, high heels and cleavage).

Thus in this early phase of the research I was very concerned about the way in which I was presenting myself and the way in which others, in particular my Forestry Commission supervisor, was re-presenting me. In retrospect this seems like an entirely normal part of responding to an unfamiliar setting of action. But in the context of an ethnographic research project my presentation of self became doubly important as it impinged on the issue of access. As Crang notes, “[*m*]uch can depend on how you can be placed or positioned by these early contacts [...]. It is necessary to consider how you are portraying yourself and your research to these and every other ‘gatekeeper’” (Crang, 1995 p. 16). The normal response to unfamiliar setting of actions can thus be reflexively incorporated into the research process.

## **2.1.2 Forestry for Non-foresters Course, Alice Holt, May 2002**

Meanwhile I attended the Institute of Chartered Foresters Annual Conference 3-5<sup>th</sup> April 2002. The subject was 'ICF Messages for the Second Earth Summit: UK Forestry and Rural Development', the technical co-ordinator was my forestry supervisor, who had suggested that I attended in November 2001. I met and had conversations with several people including the Operations Manager for Forest Enterprise Scotland, a member of staff from the Mersey Community Forest and the Director of Tir Coed.<sup>4</sup>

During the first half of May I went to the Forest of Dean with my forestry supervisor. I wanted to hear him talk about social forestry while we were actually in the forest, and I wanted to develop the relationship with him since we did not see each other quite as often as I saw my academic supervisor. He also arranged a meeting with the Deputy Surveyor of the Forest of Dean – 'deputy', not to the Surveyor, but to the Queen, a post going back to 1633.

Later in May it was finally possible to go on the course Forestry for Non-Foresters put on by Forest Training Services. I had wanted to do the course because I was keen to understand more about what the people I was interested in were actually *doing* and the language they used to talk about. The course took place at Alice Holt near Farnham in Surrey over four days. The other people on the course were all working for the Forestry Commission, but they had not trained as foresters. Several of them had worked for the Forestry Commission for many years, others were new recruits. Four days with people working for the Forestry Commission deepened my understanding of participant observation. There was quite a lot of opportunity to talk with people, especially in the context of various excursions out of the class room and breaks. I noticed that I was struggling with a sense of being intrusive, of almost not wanting people to tell me things at times.

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<sup>4</sup> Tir Coed was set up in 1999 by an alliance of countryside organisations, including the Forestry Commission to promote the benefits of creating new woodland, and to provide countryside organisations in Wales with a strategic and holistic framework for their tree planting schemes.

I also noticed that some people left a strong impression on me. I looked for evidence of their 'impressiveness', but this seemed the wrong place to look. It was as if my mind had registered something which I had difficulty putting into words. There was more to my experience of the field than what I could capture with words. As Taylor has put it, "*[r]ather than representations being the primary focus of understanding, they are islands in the sea of our unformulated practical grasp of the world*" (Taylor, 1993, p. 50 in Thrift 1996, p. 10). Crang (2003) has drawn attention to how qualitative research in geography tends to be very verbally focussed and how the body could be more drawn in to the research as a way of gathering data. Silverman (2000 p. 126) has also advised that if the researcher is physically present, what s/he hears, sees, how s/he is behaving and being treated should never be neglected. I resolved to widen my range of observational parameters. However, at the same time writing up field notes was often tedious, exhausting and took a long time. A choice had to be made. The world may be 'full' but only a partial account can be made as Heidegger has argued (Braun 2002, p. 15). It is not even possible to get behind the partiality and get full information on which bits to focus on. I decided to accept that a certain amount of intuition, of following 'what strikes me', had to be involved in the data collection process. The point was to keep a critical awareness of what tended to strike me, and from time to time think about 'playing' with other parameters.

During the course on Forestry for Non-Foresters I got to know more people for whom forestry, or perhaps more precisely, the Forestry Commission, was important. There was a lot of debate about the Forestry Commission: about policy, about structure, about funding, about culture, about different ways of doing forestry. Towards the end of the week I was beginning to feel the 'pull of the group':

*At this point in the week I felt so much part of the group that I wrote down frustrated in my notes 'bloody hell - what can I contribute to this?' Thinking that here are these deeply informed, experienced and reflective people talking about forestry policy, what can I possibly contribute that they don't already know. A classic social science moment it seems! There are*

*some issues here to do with 'going native', policy related research, the contribution of science to society, what the priorities should be in a PhD, what I want them to be, whether I subscribe to the objectives of the Forestry Commission anyway, group processes/socialisation - wanting to be part of/be legitimate in a group, my position as wanting from them (data) but not sure that I am going to give anything back.*

**Field notes on Forestry For Non-Foresters Course 21-24 May 2002**

In retrospect this may also be seen as part of the socialising experience of participating in a group with the researcher now feeling more at ease, perhaps becoming more competent in participating in the group. I felt the experience of the course had been so enriching that I wanted to be in contact with the field on a regular basis. I wanted to approach this on the basis of 'good things coming my way', exploration mode, rather than trying to think of what the best way might be, going with what would present itself as the best option now, rather than trying to second guess what might be available later. In other words a 'forest floor' rather than 'bird's eye' perspective. Baszanger and Dodier (1997, p. 10) talk about a balance between method and openness:

*"To satisfy this principle of openness, which is deliberately taken quite far, the ethnographer must graft his/her study onto pre-existing systems of activity. As opposed to the researcher, who channels subject matter into the laboratory, the ethnographer leaves the laboratory and tries to make his/her data gathering compatible with the study population's other commitments."*

Attending the course influenced subsequent fieldwork by putting me in contact with Forest Training Services staff who were involved in the development of a new course on social forestry. One of the people participating in the course was a trainer recently appointed by Forest Training Services to take forward Forest Training Services' work in the area of social forestry. There was some ambiguity as to whether it was social forestry or social inclusion and what these terms meant. The new trainer would be travelling the country over the next few months

identifying best practice in preparation for either a new course or for inclusion of new content in existing courses and was very open about me contacting him about his work. I thought it would be useful to sit in on some of his meetings. I had met the line manager of the new trainer on the course as he was one of the two Forest Training Services trainers delivering the course. I thought that this person would be first in line to learn from the new trainer in terms of the new trainer's background in community work and I also thought that he would be able to give me an insight into Forest Training Services and the context of the appointment. However I procrastinated. In spite of the rewarding experiences of being in the field, once I was there, I would often procrastinate about making contacts with the field. I think out of anxiety. Whyte (1943) has described how he would rationalize himself out of going to Cornerville:

*"I had to admit that I felt more comfortable among these familiar surroundings than I did wandering around Cornerville and spending time with people in whose presence I felt distinctly uncomfortable at first"* (p. 294).

I did not really feel uncomfortable, but I think the anxiety came from the inherent 'riskiness' of an unfamiliar environment. I would generally feel exhausted after fieldwork. I think this is because the fieldwork was a mini 'culture shock' (Furnham and Bochner 1986; Ward *et al.* 2001) where the monitoring of the setting of action kicks into high drive. This can be used self-consciously as a resource in the fieldwork. And in this sense it would be a bad sign if I did not feel anxious before and did not feel tired after fieldwork. This would suggest that I now felt more like a 'competent actor', sufficiently so to let most of the setting recede into the background, but not so helpful for observation-based research. On the other hand it may be that this is the price that one pays for being able to appreciate the meaningfulness of the setting to other competent actors within it. In the ethnographic fieldwork, I therefore had to let myself be socialised into being a 'competent actor' to the extent that my role as a researcher would allow me to, keep a watchful eye on the learning process involved in this socialisation, not letting the setting recede into the background, and in this way gain an

understanding of the meaningfulness of the setting to existing competent actors within the setting. A difficult balance to strike.

For the first round of interviews I had relied on my Forestry Commission supervisor to make contact on my behalf. As noted earlier, he was *the 'gate keeper'* at this point in the research. However with these two interviews and with approaching the new Forest Training Services trainer for permission to sit in on his consultation meetings about the Forest Training Services social forestry course I was unsure whether to approach the trainer and his line manager directly or whether to go through my supervisor. Although it is hard to remember how it felt at the time, I *knew* so much less about *how to interact* with people in the Forestry Commission. And although I had established a good connection with both of them, there might be other considerations which I could not know about. I was afraid of committing a *faux pas*. I therefore got in touch with my supervisor to ask him his opinion. He was happy for me to contact these individuals directly. I still procrastinated though. Eventually I was bounced into action when the new trainer copied me into an e-mail in the middle of June inviting comments on a draft version of the new course in social forestry.

Around the same time, in the middle of June 2002, I had dinner with an old friend, and our conversation about social science and other things made the first re-conceptualisation of the research gel in my mind the next morning:

*How does the Forestry Commission learn and how could it learn better? This will be investigated through the Forestry Commission's engagement with social forestry/social inclusion. The role of social science in the Forestry Commission's learning process will be investigated and this will be used to reflect on the role of social science in society more generally.<sup>5</sup> Social forestry/social inclusion is the point that links up the two legs of this research: the change in what forestry is seen to be about towards a greater importance of social issues in forestry requires a greater understanding of the social and therefore arguably social science can be of help. And on the other hand (leg) the role of social science in society, the (rise*

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<sup>5</sup> Social science has been associated with concern about better government since its Enlightenment beginnings. In contemporary geography there is concern about the policy (ir)relevance of geography (Demeritt and Dyer 2002).

of) policy oriented social science. So social forestry can be seen from two perspectives: as an area for policy oriented social science and as an area for change in the priorities of forestry. It links together the two questions, what is forestry about/for? And what is social science for?

Research diary 14 June 2002

This had a symmetry between the researcher and the researched that I liked and an engagement with two issues I was interested in. However I was concerned that it might be social scientific navel gazing, and that by including social science in the field I was doing myself out of a place to be *away from the field*. My academic supervisor would become part of the field as well as my Forestry Commission supervisor. However, the main concern was intuitive, and was to do with placing social forestry at the centre of the research, as something 'out there' which could be learned about, it seemed that the meaning of social forestry was too ambiguous to sustain this conceptualisation of the research.

## 2.2 Social forestry falls apart: July – September 2002

In the middle of July 2002 I went to interview the new Forest Training Services trainer and his line manager at Forest Training Services' offices in the Forest of Dean. Interview schedules are included in Appendix 2.6. The interviews were sandwiched between observing two meetings which were part of the consultation process for the new social forestry course: first in the New Forest and then Peninsula Forest District.<sup>6</sup> In the course of this fieldwork, the new trainer suggested it might be possible to attend a networking event for staff working in the social forestry area in September 2002. Most of my data has come from talking with people about their work (less so from observing people talk with others, and even less so observing people *doing* their work). I have therefore been very dependent on people's willingness to talk with me (or to let me be around when they are talking with each other).

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<sup>6</sup> Forest districts and conservancies are the administrative level of the Forestry Commission at which the practical work of managing the public estate (forest districts) and administering grants and licences (conservancies) is done.

It also seemed to me that I was met with a lot of trust. This made me conscious of relationships as a crucial conduit of data, and the way in which I made use of myself in the research work. The better I was at striking up a rapport with people, the more successful I was likely to be as data collector. This raised the issue of instrumentality and potential manipulation in my conduct towards people I meet in the course of the research. In other words, it raised issues of ethics in the research process. An anthropologist acquaintance proposed a kind of network approach to thinking about the relationships we have with people, seeing a relationship as made up of different dimensions, i.e. collector of data, friend, etc. I had, for example, arranged to meet up for coffee with a community ranger I had met at the course on Forestry for Non-foresters because we had struck up a nice connection. She also invited me to a BBQ where there would have been lots of other rangers which, unfortunately, I was not able to be at. I assume she invited me mainly because we made a good connection (i.e. in my capacity of possible friend), but in the knowledge that it would be interesting for me (in my capacity of researcher) to meet the people at the BBQ. This comes back to the difficulty of making watertight boxes, of making exclusive differentiations, we all have ‘multiple allegiances’ Maalouf (2000). According to Baszanger and Dodier (1997, p. 10):

*By definition, ethnographic study design is a hybrid approach in which the fieldworker is present in two agencies, as a data gatherer and as a person involved in activities towards other objectives.”*

I spent much of August and September attempting to analyse the transcriptions of the six interviews using an approach inspired by grounded theory in combination with ATLAS.ti. Data analysis is discussed as a whole in Chapter 4.

## **2.2.1 Social Forestry Networking Event, Dumfries, September 2002**

I went to Dumfries in the middle of September 2002 for the Social Forestry Networking Event organised by the Policy and Practice Division at Forestry

Commission Head Quarters and Forest Training Services. One of the people who my Forestry Commission supervisor had suggested that I interviewed in December 2001 was going to the Dumfries event too. She was the Tourism and Recreation Advisor for the Forestry Commission England. I arranged to stay in the same B&B as her the night before the event began and we had breakfast together. In general though my approach to meeting people was 'random'. I did try to identify people I wanted to meet before hand, but I found it far less anxiety provoking simply to sit down somewhere and start talking to the person I was sitting next to (like a normal person). This took the stress out of meeting people. I managed to speak with more than a quarter of the eighty or so people who attended the two day event, only five of whom I had met before.

I ran the current state of my research ideas past a few people, especially the part about using social forestry as a case study for investigating the learning processes of the Forestry Commission. I still felt uncomfortable about making social forestry the case study, it implied that there was a thing out there called social forestry which was being learned about, grappled with by the Forestry Commission. It seemed to me that social forestry was being used by the Forestry Commission to ensure its continued existence, as Evans (2002) had suggested. But I also wondered whether this was the only important motivation, and if so, whether that really mattered as long as they were doing what they said they were doing. Social forestry seemed to be a receptacle for existing initiatives as well as the driver behind new initiatives. Someone had started to use the term 'social forestry' at some point and a new concept in British forestry policy had been born. I wondered why and how it was first used. What was its dialogic context? Who was the speaker and who was the audience?

In Dumfries I also wondered to what extent people I was talking with were enjoying telling me 'interesting things'. I was also coming into contact with different representations of the same people and events. Including of myself. One person I happened to sit next to at lunch remarked that '*everyone is assuming that you are studying us*', who were 'they'? And how did they know who I was? I also wondered about the criteria I used to decide whether to talk to people or whether to pursue a conversation when an opportunity presented itself. It was about

‘sampling’ in the context of ethnographic fieldwork: about who gets to be an informant, how, and therefore about what gets to be data and how.

The trip back to London from Scotland turned out to be an epic journey of delays courtesy of Virgin Trains. So I had plenty of time to discuss with one of the foresters who was also returning from the networking event. During this interminable train journey social forestry ‘fell apart’ in my mind and led to my second re-conceptualisation of the research:

*When you look at social forestry for too long it falls apart. I don't think that it is social forestry that the Forestry Commission is trying to grapple with. It is something else. Maybe what the Forestry Commission is trying to grapple with is the new situation it is in. The new situation is made up of a number of constituent parts one of which is the dynamics of devolution and maybe impending regionalisation of England. This new situation may or may not have a name. Experience is nameless until it is grasped. Old forestry is no longer comfortable/has become too uncomfortable for various reasons. A number of things have come together to make the status quo uncomfortable, and the response is being framed as social forestry [why?]. But the learning is in relation to the constituent bits. Social forestry is not something new which has to be grappled with but rather something which has emerged as a symptom of something underlying. Maybe it is an attempt to try to make sense of what the Forestry Commission is having to do in response to the new challenges. It is a container which is being used by some to carry the new forestry.*

*Field notes, 13-14 September 2002*

The Forestry Commission had employed an external consultant to facilitate the Social Forestry Networking Event. He had experience in community and rural development forestry. This seemed to overlap in meaning with social forestry and I wanted to explore this relationship. He had also worked much abroad on this and so here was possibly an opportunity to develop my interest in the international circulation of policy ideas and the way they get translated locally. Perhaps he was a carrier of such ideas? He had also been a trainer on Forest Training Services’ Involving People in Forestry course, a precursor of the course

now under development and so I thought he would be able to give me a perspective on this. He did not have much time to talk at the event so I suggested meeting when next he was in London, which happened to be shortly after the Dumfries event. I had shared my re-conceptualisation of the research with my co-sufferer on the interminable Virgin Trains voyage between Dumfries and London. Now I also shared my ideas with the external consultant.

After the meeting I felt anxious about whether the research was worthwhile. At the Dumfries event, and in the meeting with the consultant, I was again confronted with people for whom forestry and the Forestry Commission were important. The usefulness of the research was something I returned to again and again. The most important thing to me about the research was the social science apprenticeship, at the same time I felt the ‘pull of the group’, and I felt gratitude towards the people who were sharing their thoughts and time with me. I wanted to give something back. I also wanted to do ‘useful’ social science which could make a contribution to society. I shuttled between these different ways of thinking about the research as it developed. Such thoughts finally culminated in the hope that I would be offering a ‘reflection’ from my (situated) point of view that forestry, or the Forestry Commission, might or might not be able to use. And this was the rub: useful to whom? The Forestry Commission ‘family of organisations’ as I had begun to refer to them, was beginning to break apart in my mind as a unitary object, I was beginning to get a feel for different perspectives, if not of actual groups and their membership. I did not feel that I knew enough about forestry, or Forestry Commission, politics to be able to position myself with any one perspective. I did not want to position myself with one perspective only to find myself later on, with more knowledge of the politics, that actually I did not agree with the perspective which I had chosen to align myself to in the research. Moreover, whatever *my* intention with the work, I would not be able to control *how* someone else would use the knowledge I would eventually produce. This is always the case whether one produces forks or bits of knowledge. By doing research in the Forestry Commission I was entering a field where research subjects had pre-existing agendas for which I and my research could be a resource, just as for me, they were (data) resources as far as the production of the thesis was concerned. Both the research subjects and I were

actors as well as resources depending on the context or (narrative) point of view. The field was an ‘active’ field, with its own agendas for which I could be mobilised.

These concerns relate to another issue. In traditional approaches to qualitative research, objects are conceived as passive vessels of answers for experiential questions put to the respondents by interviewers (Holstein and Gubrium 1997, p. 116). The image which lies behind the considerations above entailed a more ‘lively’ idea of the research subject,

*“This activated subject pieces experiences together, before, during, and after assuming the respondent role. As a member of society, he or she mediates and alters the knowledge that is conveyed to the interviewer; he or she is ‘always already’ an active maker of meaning”* (Holstein and Gubrium 1997, p. 116).

This meaning making is situated in the societal. In this case in particular the institutional context of the Forestry Commission as well as in the conversational situation with the researcher. And the responses are shaped by the subject’s ideas about the institutional context as well as about the researcher and the trajectory the knowledge produced by the researcher might have.

## 2.3 Identity crisis: October – November 2002

In spite of ‘social forestry falling apart’ as an area through which to investigate both learning processes and social science, I still wanted to give social science a big part in my research. One of the things coming out of discussion with my academic supervisor was how interpenetrating forestry policy and social science networks were. I felt as if my academic supervisor was also part of my field and this was uncomfortable. During one supervision, it also occurred to me that it was not so much a question of different *interpretations* but of different *uses* of social forestry. To talk about interpretation in this context was possibly to miss the point. Perhaps no-one or only very few people were concerned about the truth of any given interpretation, or how close to the truth their interpretation was, what they were more likely to be concerned about was what ‘social forestry’ as a

label could be used for. This might be more true of policy staff than of practitioners. However, whatever the policy staff, the ‘politicos’ of forestry, were using social forestry for, there were some people who had to try and make sense of this in terms of their practice. What impact did the manoeuvrings of the policy staff have on the practice on the ground? I was reminded of an anecdote I had heard in February 2002 at NRS about a Finnish forester who had worked in Wales in the 1970s and who had come back to visit a couple of years ago and commented that ‘yes, policy has changed but the forests look the same.’

### **2.3.1 Following the social forestry training**

Since I had been to the Forestry for Non-Foresters course, I had been ‘following the training’ through the Forestry commission. This had moved from being a way of identifying emerging meanings of social forestry to being more about training as part of the process of learning to live with a changed context for forestry practice. The Forest Training Services course on social forestry for the whole of GB was being caught up in devolution. Forest Enterprise Wales had asked for a special one-off course aimed at its Local Area Managers in place of the modular course which was being developed by Forest Training Services, in advance of the completion of the modular course. At the request of Forest Enterprise Wales the one-off course was not only shorter than the original course had been intended, but also included additional material which was not especially relevant to social forestry. Forest Enterprise Scotland, on the other hand, was buying a course (through Forest Training Services) by the external consultant who I had met at the Social Forestry Networking Event in September 2002. Through the contacts I had already made in the course of the research I was able to arrange to attend courses in Wales as well as in Scotland and England over the next few months as the courses came on stream.

The Welsh course was held at the end of October 2002. Since they were based close by, I had also got in touch with contacts at Tir Coed and Cydcoed<sup>7</sup> I had made at the ICF conference in London in April and at the Social Forestry

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<sup>7</sup> A grant programme, providing help and funding for community groups to use woodlands for a variety of social objectives Run by Tir Coed and co-funded by the European Union and the Forestry Commission Wales.

Networking Event in Dumfries in September 2002 with a view to getting a better idea of what was going on in social forestry in Wales and in particular the work of Cydcoed and Tir Coed. I also thought I might be able to get out and have a look at social forestry in the forest. I was invited by the director of Tir Coed to join a Tir Coed team trip of the Ystwyth valley, but unfortunately a big storm prevented me from leaving London in time (and resulted in another epic train journey). This was unfortunate since, according to its director at the time, Tir Coed was taking the lead in meeting a Wales Woodland Strategy objective to use the,

*“Ystwyth Valley as an innovative, large scale pilot to seek maximum benefit for local communities, integrating woodland management, tourism and environmental objectives in order to meet some of their aspirations and help to improve the rural economy in a sustainable way”* (Forestry Commission 2001b, p. 21).

But I did manage to attend the training course where, I felt the pull of the group again, but in a different way from the course on Forestry for Non-Foresters. Reflecting on this led to both methodological and substantive insights. The post of Local Area Manager had been established a year earlier. Local Area Managers were supposed to be the first point of contact for the public. In the course there was little opportunity for the Local Area Managers to share what they had learned in the year since the post had been established. It seemed to me that there was an implicit discourse, that the Local Area Managers knew nothing about public engagement. This connected up with another discourse I had come across, that ‘traditional foresters’ knew little about public engagement, preferring trees to people. I found myself ‘on the side of’ traditional foresters, or perhaps more precisely of the Local Area Managers. It seemed from my fieldwork that foresters *had* been relating to ‘the community’ in significant ways, and moreover had used themselves as people (Hochschild 1979; 1990) to do the work of maintaining these relationships. This raised the issue of motivation as well. Policy staff were *reflecting* on practice, this was an important part of their function, of *their* practice. They then tried as best they could to plough their reflections back into the practices of practitioners/implementers. I thought the

motives behind moving towards a more ‘social’ forestry, whatever it turned out to be, probably had to be examined separately in these two groups. Some of the people ‘at the work face’ of forestry clearly believed that social forestry was ‘a good thing.’ They believed that it represented a more valuable form of managing the forests. The policy staff were playing a different role in the institution. As noted above in the context of the discussion of the usefulness or otherwise of the research, there was no easy belonging for me in the Forestry Commission. This is part of the experience of doing ethnographic research according to Law (1994, p. 123):

*“I found that I sympathized with both the machine physicists and the crew. I’d talked quite a lot with the physicists. But I’d spent a lot of time with the crew too. This is one of the horrors of ethnography. To experience the fragmentation or orderings rather than the purity of order. But, to be sure, the horror is also an opportunity.”*

Again access had been easy, and indeed several more avenues for fieldwork opened up. It was however more difficult to get to talk with people because a lot of time was taken up with the course. Meal times and the dormitory which I shared with one and then two other women provided opportunities for conversation, as did the bar in the evening. Outside of the course I was put up in the home of one of the people I was meeting at Tir Coed, and this also provided the opportunity for extended conversation.

Once I recovered from the hard slog of writing up my field notes from Wales I felt very motivated! I decided that I would try and organise a fieldtrip to Scotland to follow up on a number of leads which had emerged in Scotland over the last months: Forest Research’s work with forest districts on techniques for public involvement (one was coming up in Inverness Forest District); the external consultant’s course on public involvement for Forest Enterprise Scotland; Loch Sunart Oakwood Project as an example of social forestry and learning; an old colleague who was working in rural development in upland areas. I was not able to tie all of this together though. In the event I managed to arrange to attend the Forest Research event with Inverness Forest District in the second half of

November 2002. The trip to Inverness led to the following conceptualisation of the research:

*Hypothesis - Forestry in GB has been based on timber production at least since the creation of the Forestry Commission. Over time, forestry for job creation, forestry for recreation, better design of forests have become part of forestry, but the raison d'être remained timber production. It is the core identity in GB forestry. This is what is being challenged. In other countries, timber production has not necessarily been the core identity of forestry. In this way forestry in GB is potentially becoming more like other models of forestry, although in a GB way, dealing with the particularly big impact of industrialisation and post-industrialisation on the British landscape and society.*

*Field notes, 23-25 November 2002*

## **2.4 Re-inventing the Forestry Commission:**

### **December 2002 – February 2003**

In order to be able to concentrate on the theoretical and methodological papers I had to write for my upgrading workshop, I decided that I would put further fieldwork on hold apart from the fieldwork, mentioned above, which I had already set in motion. The fieldwork had taken on a certain momentum of its own. Access had been almost entirely unproblematic. And the people I have met have been very helpful, answering questions, offering views, making suggestions as to who I should speak to, what I should read, etc. As Cook and Crang (1995) note,

*“[w]hat tends to happen is that, as more contacts are established, you will begin to get multiple suggestions for further contacts [...]. Thus, in later stages of your work, the problem may be less of an inability to see people and more one of being overwhelmed by possible contacts” (p. 17).*

In mid January I therefore went to Kielder Forest District, home to what used to be the largest human made forest in Europe, although the French have

subsequently created one which is bigger. The trip confirmed to me the direction the research was taking: in particular, that the Forestry Commission was going through a process of reinvention, the importance of a drop in timber prices in this process and the effects of institutional changes on belonging/identity of people working for the Forestry Commission. In April I was able to attend the external consultant's course in Highlands Conservancy. There I had the opportunity to observe staff engaging in an involvement process in the context of a scooping meeting for a Long Term Forest Plan (see Tabbush 2001). I was also able to meet the Rural Development Advisor to Forest Enterprise Scotland.

Working on the upgrading paper led to further developments in the conceptualisation of the research:

*Very, very short:*

*The research is about the process and consequences of the production of a new identity for forestry: how is forestry going about reinventing itself and with what consequences for people in forestry, for society and the forest?*

*Very short:*

*My observations of forestry so far point to the existence of a process of redefinition of what forestry is about. This process involves the management of a process of change towards goals which are themselves emerging as part of that process. The existence of a process of redefinition in turn suggests that what forestry is about has come to be perceived as problematic in some way by some actors. Who are the main actors promoting a redefinition? In what ways does what forestry is about appear problematic to them? To what extent is there agreement among them about what forestry should now be about? What actions are they taking to facilitate change? What are the consequences of those actions for people who work in forestry, for society and for the forest? What is forestry becoming through this process?*

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A number of mainly empirical themes had thus developed as a result of the recursive engagements with the field and the literature in the first year and a half of the research. Now I wanted to identify the theoretical ideas which would help me think about these themes. Below I set out the empirical themes together with the theoretical ideas which I thought would be useful in developing these themes further.

First of all I needed *a way to think about the collectivity* I was interested in. This was about finding a concept which ‘comprehends’ forestry, drawing a boundary around my (collective) ‘actor’, the character in my story known as ‘forestry’. But on the basis of what criteria? There was probably not one right way of doing this, it depended on what I wanted to do. Wenger’s idea of constellations of communities of practice was a possibility (Wenger 1998). Bourdieu’s idea of practice another (1977; 1990a).

I thought that *the process of reinventing the Forestry Commission* was fundamentally a process of social change and that Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration might give me some tools to think about this.

Goffman’s (1959) interactive idea of self and in particular his ideas about the collaborative construction of identity and the projected definition of the situation had suggested to me that *new roles for the Forestry Commission required new roles beyond the forest gate*.

*The role of social science* was coming out in four ways: as a resource in the process, as a source of actors participating in the process of reinventing the Forestry Commission, as a source of discourses about people on both sides of the metaphorical forest fence and as a meaning giving context for what I was doing. Nevertheless I did not think that it was a priority at this stage, to look for theoretical tools to consider the role of social science in addition from the perspectives that I would get from Giddens (1984) and Foucault (1990; 1991; 1992; 1998) which I needed to engage with anyway for some of the other themes.

Just as Goffman's ideas about the collaborative production of identity also suggested that actors outside the metaphorical forest gate were required to take on new roles in order for the Forestry Commission to be able to change, so *people inside the Forestry Commission were being required to change*. This theme grew out of reading Wenger (1998) and was about the changing criteria for belonging in forestry and the pressure this might put on people to change their work-based identity. This change appeared in part to be about *staff being required to use more personal aspects of themselves at work*. For this I wanted to consider Goffman on performance (outer change) (1959; 1986), as well as Foucault (1990; 1991; 1992; 1998) and possibly Giddens (1984; 1990; 1991), on what I articulated to myself at the time as being to do with 'meaning' (inner change).

In forestry, as practiced by the Forestry Commission, the production and management of symbols appeared to be gaining in importance, especially important perhaps in the context of devolution. I thought that in the context of this nexus, between the increasing importance of the management of symbols and devolution, it would be interesting to find out whether there was an *increase in the use of discourses of place-based national identities and what implications that might have for social inclusion*. Developing this theme was more of a question of empirical data to see if there was an increased use of narratives of place-based national identities and if so, if there were any contradictions with the simultaneous emphasis on social inclusion.

*What influence did the present characteristics of the land (and the trees on it) have on the process of reinventing the Forestry Commission?* What kind of agenda did it set for the Forestry Commission in the context of its attempts at institutional change? This was close to, but not the same as attributing agency to the land, seeing land as an actor in the process. I thought that looking at this empirically could be a way of developing a critical perspective on actor-network theory (ANT). I also thought that the materialism of Marx might be relevant.

*What were the changes to the physical characteristics of the land resulting from the process of institutional change?* I did not think this question needed social scientific theory, and it was not one I subsequently pursued.

As a result of these considerations I came up with a list of five combinations of empirical themes and theory through which I could develop the theoretical aspects of the PhD:

1. The process of reinventing the Forestry Commission seen through the lens of structuration theory.
2. The changes required of staff explored from the perspective of 'performance' and 'meaning.'
3. The changes 'required' of society seen through the perspective of the 'projected definition of the situation.'
4. The impact on the process of the existing physical characteristics of the land explored through ANT.
5. How the collectivity should be conceptualised could for example be considered from the perspective of Wenger, or Bourdieu.

I prioritised the first three themes in order to be able to upgrade from MPhil to PhD in time.

## **2.5 Conclusion – towards a conceptual framework: March - August 2003**

In this chapter I have set out how, through an iterative process of engagements in and out of the field, I gradually gained ownership of the research project which had initially been proposed by the Department of Geography at UCL and the Forestry Commission's Forest Research Agency. This entailed developing an awareness of the situatedness of the research, and of my own positionality. The tenor of this first phase of the research, in keeping with the grounded approach to the research which I had adopted early on, was empirical, based on participant observation as well as interviews. However it also entailed cycles of more focussed attempts at making sense of the data I was collecting. These are

discussed under one heading in Chapter 4, as are the methodological issues surrounding the interviews. My engagements with the literature, other than the methodological literature, has been the other silent partner in this account. Over the next months I worked on my theoretical and methodological upgrading papers and was upgraded towards the end of June 2003. I then began to prepare for Phase II of the fieldwork and as part of that preparation articulated a conceptual framework. The theoretical perspectives on, and conceptual framework of, the research is set out in the following chapter.

# Chapter 3 A grounded conceptual framework

In this chapter I am trying to convey the key ideas which underpin my thesis. In my conceptual framework as well as in the empirical analysis it has been important to me to attempt to strike a balance in my accounts between individual and group, not drowning the individual in the group, not dissolving the group in separate individuals. I have wanted to create a narrative which contains the tension between the two. I have wanted to capture what was going on at the group level, telling a story about a collective actor referred to as the Forestry Commission, but at the same time telling a story about the experience of individuals as the collectivity seeks to grapple with changes around it. In the thesis there are two further tensions which I have been concerned not to break by overemphasising one more than the other in my theoretical and empirical accounts. The tension between structure and agency, and between instrumentalism (or performance) and meaning. The concern to keep these three tensions live have been important in the research process and in the account of my results embodied in the thesis.

## 3.1 Identity

Fundamental to the thesis are some assumptions about the relationship between an individual's self-identity and the relationship of that identity to the environment of the individual.

### 3.1.1 *Symbolic interactionism*

My approach to identity draws substantially on *symbolic interactionism*, a fusion between American pragmatist philosophy and German formalist sociology (du Gay 1996). Important symbolic interactionist are Blumer (e.g. 1969) and Goffman (e.g. 1959; 1984). I draw in particular on Goffman. However, Mead

(e.g. 1934) played an influential role in the development of symbolic interactionism, Blumer was a student of Mead's, and Mead's conceptualisation remains central to contemporary versions of the framework (Stryker 1980). It is therefore worth dedicating a moment to those of Mead's ideas which are particularly relevant to the thesis.

For Mead the mind and the self are formed within the social communicative activity of the group:

*"The individual experiences himself, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the general standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects for him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved"* (Mead 1934, p. 138).

Mead's 'social self' has two elements, the 'I' and the 'me'. Mead's 'I' is contemplated action-in-progress whereas the 'me' is identified with past action (Burkitt 1991). The social self of symbolic interactionism is grounded in an internal dialogue between consciousness as subject and consciousness as object (Rock 1979). The two elements of the social self are interdependent:

*"The 'me' on its own would be totally without unity as it breaks down into many different selves, each one associated with past social acts in different local circumstances. The objective self will have many aspects to it, and possesses many capacities stored from past experiences which can be used in the future. And it is the active 'I' which draws on these resources as it moves into the future, its reflective function planning activity in accordance with the 'me' – or parts of the 'me' – of past acts, while its active function executes these plans in activity..."*

*The self, then, is only created and sustained as a mobile region of self-producing activity* (Burkitt 1991, p. 40).

Mead distinguished between non-symbolic interaction (where individuals respond directly to each other's behaviours) and symbolic interaction:

*“Symbolic interaction involves interpretation, or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person, and definition, or conveying indications to another person as to how he is to act. Human association consists of a process of such interpretations and definitions. Through this process the participants fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of one another and guide others in doing so”*  
(Blumer 1966, 537-8).

According to du Gay (1996), Mead was one of the first modern social theorists to explore the notion that identity develops within discourse. Du Gay (1996) explains that for Mead language had a particularly important role in the development of the social self since he saw language as the medium through which people internalized the attitudes of the social group, on the basis of which the individual would form his or her conception of self.

Paradoxically, given the importance attributed to the *social* construction of identity, the nature of the social remains insufficiently defined according to Du Gay (1996). And he refers to this as the problem of the “unexplicated context” (du Gay 1996, p. 33-34). According to Buraway (1976) this problem was methodologically rooted, arising from insistence of symbolic interactionists on undisclosed participant observation, imposing limitations on the material that could subsequently be used in analysis.

The emphasis on the *group* and on *language* in communication plays down important aspects of the environment with which the individual interacts. It is not only from the social group and through language that the individual gets ‘feedback’ on his or her actions. It is in interaction with the *totality* of his or her environment, including the non-human as well as the human, his or her body as well as materiality outside of the individual’s body. As such even the ‘me’ is a

part of the total environment with which the ‘I’ interacts and from which he or she gets a ‘feedback’ whether communicated in words or not.

### 3.1.2 Practice

In his theory of structuration Giddens tries to find a middle ground between the ‘imperialism of the subject’ which he associates with interpretative sociologies and the ‘imperialism of the social object’ which he associates with functionalism (1984, p. 2). Giddens finds his middle ground in the analysis of *social practices*:<sup>8</sup>

*“The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time”* (1984, p. 2).

For Giddens, social practices predate the actors who participate in them and continue after them. He describes social practices as stretching away from the individual actor in time and space. The individual encounters the practice as it is, for example forestry as practiced in the Forestry Commission. The practice is at once just what it is and not something else, and therefore sets an agenda for the individual who ‘wants’ to be part of it, participate in it, and in this way practice *structures* the options of the individual. As well as constraining the options of actors, participating in a practice also enables the actor to do various things, make a living, make friends, plant the British uplands with Sitka spruce, and so forth. Thus practice, as structure, reflects what Giddens refers to as the *duality of structure*, structure as rules (constraining) and as resources (enabling).<sup>9</sup> The reproduction of social practices depend on the active engagement of actors, and are changed over time and space *through* the active engagement of actors. In other words, for Giddens, innovation is created in the use of existing structures.

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<sup>8</sup> As Wenger (1998) points out, Giddens is by no means alone in the importance which he attributes to social practices as the focus of study of the human sciences (e.g. Bourdieu 1972, 1979, 1980; de Certeau 1984; Fish 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Again Giddens is not alone in this. Referring to Berger and Luckman (1984) as well as Giddens (1979; 1984), Hajer asserts that “[t]he common sense of the sociology of knowledge these days is that (institutional) structures are both constraining and enabling” (Hajer 1995, p. 48).

At a minimum this is because it is not possible to do *exactly* as ‘we are told’,<sup>10</sup> but on Giddens’ argument it is because the individual is a knowledgeable and creative actor.

Giddens’ insistence on the possibility of innovation in practice, on the creativity of agency, is a point which is also picked up by theorists interested in performance and performativity (e.g. Butler 1990; 1993; Thrift 1996; 1997; 1999; 2000). For example in the context of non-representational theory which, according to Thrift and Dewsbury (2000, p. 415), “*is now reaching into the heart of the social sciences and humanities.*” Such an approach emphasises the importance of creativity, “*the flow of practice in everyday life as embodied, as caught up with and committed to the creation of affect, as contextual, and as inevitably technologised through language and objects*” (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000, p. 415).

### **3.1.3 Belonging**

Individuals belong to a group through participating in the practices of that group (Wenger 1998, Furnham and Bochner 1986, Ward *et al* 2001). Such groups are constituted by the practices which bind them together. Membership of a community of practice is a matter of mutual engagement over a negotiated joint ‘enterprise’, and over time members develop a shared repertory of resources for negotiating meaning (Wenger 1998, pp. 72-82). In order to be able to participate in the practices which constitute the group the individual must have certain *passport skills* (or competences) which allow them to participate. Depending on the group such skills are acquired in different ways. For a group such as the Forestry Commission, the skills are acquired at educational establishments and

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<sup>10</sup> This is a point Butler makes in relation to the subversion of discourses: “*precisely because discourse is citational, “constituting the identity it is purported to be”*” (1990, page 25), *precisely because its productivity is iterative, there are possibilities for disruption. There is no guarantee, she insists, that its repetition will be successful; its disciplines may fail*” (Gregson and Rose 2000, p. 437). Although on Gregson and Rose’s reading of Butler it looks as if such subversions/slippages can be more than accidental. In discussing interviews with community arts workers undertaken during 1995, Rose comments on the way community arts workers *position* themselves in relation to the discourse of funders which they have to make use of: “*“Buzzword”, “application speak”, “jargon”, “spiel”, “catchphrase”: all these terms were used to distance the speaker from the discourse of the powerful even as the always also used it. A gap was produced between their discursive practice and that of the funding institutions, a difference asserted between their understanding and those of the funding bodies.”* (Gregson and Rose 2000, p. 439).

through learning on the job. *Belonging* (through participation of some form) is thus at the basis of identity in the sense that different belongings mediated by participation are the source of different aspects of identity. To belong ‘somewhere’ is to identify with ‘somewhere.’ ‘Somewhere’ therefore becomes a source of identity. In other words identity is established through *identification* with ‘somewhere.’ ‘Somewhere’ can be thought of as a ‘category’, containing actions, meanings and bodies. Thus individuals belong to other identities, other ‘social objects’ (Giddens 1984). Belonging to the category ‘forester’, will instantly put an individual in contact with a whole set of ideas about what it means to be working for the Forestry Commission, what he or she should and should not do, how to be a good forester, and possibly the awareness that there are different opinions about the kinds of actions, meanings and bodies which can ‘belong’ to the category ‘forester.’ Thinking about the category ‘forester’, foresters and more generally people who have worked for the Forestry Commission over a long time, are instantly in touch with ideas about what it means to be a forester, what forestry, as a set of practices practiced by the Forestry Commission, does and does not include.<sup>11</sup>

### **3.1.4 Multiple belongings**

Identification with any one source of identity is rarely if ever total. The individual has many different sources of identity, belongs to many categories, has *multiple allegiance* (Maalouf 1998). I use Maalouf’s idea of multiple allegiances to extend Wenger’s concept of belonging to one of *multiple belongings*. As the individual belongs to more than one group at the same time and over time, his identity is composite. Through participation in multiple practices the individual has multiple sources of belonging which together constitute his identity. Some aspects of the individual’s identity are more important than others and the relative importance of different aspects of a person’s identity may change over time and space, or more particularly, in

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<sup>11</sup> Here ‘forester’ stands for people working for the Forestry Commission in general in order not to make the argument too complex.

relation to the kinds of (life) situations which the individual finds him or herself in.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1.4.1 Work as a source of identity

Work can be an important source of identity. The relationship between work and subjectivity has been the subject of substantial interest from different parts of the social sciences (du Gay 1996; Revill 1994). Du Gay (1996) has reviewed Marxist, neo-Weberian and symbolic interactionist approaches to work-based subjectivity and identity at work. He observes that social scientific studies of work identity have tended to gravitate towards one or other pole of the dualism between action and structure, individual and society (du Gay 1996, p. 35).

According to du Gay, Marxist approaches have been dominated by a concern about the alienation of 'Man' from his 'species being' as a creative labourer. For Marx complete, unambiguous, human persons come into being only with the destruction of capitalism/ideology and the building of communism/socialism. Thus subjectivity is represented as having no force or weight under present conditions of alienation. As a result no room is left for individual and/or group experience, meaning and action and structure virtually eradicates agency (du Gay 1996, p. 35). Neo-Weberians, such as Goldthorpe *et al.* (1968; 1969) sought to overcome the structural determinism of Marxist analysis, adopting an 'action frame of reference' to the study of work identity, and focused on the actors' own definitions of the situation in which they were engaged. Nevertheless, because of their understanding of sociological enquiry as the construction of a-historical ideal-types, the neo-Weberian subject was according to du Gay (1996) largely a product of the objective work and community situation which he or she inhabited and different forms of identity were largely read off from structural factors (du Gay 1996, p. 35-36). Thus in the end both Marxist and neo-Weberian accounts of subjectivity gravitate towards the structure/society end of the pole.

The symbolic interactionists by contrast portrayed the social as a fluid and changeable achievement of human communicative interaction. For the symbolic

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<sup>12</sup> As Sayer (2000) has pointed out time and space are not empty, they are constituted by what 'fills' them, and it is the situations which the individual finds himself in which vary with time and space and which influence what aspects of a person's identity are more or less important at any given time or place.

interactionists social formations are an ongoing socially accomplished process in which the self is at the centre (du Gay 1996, p. 36). There is thus no ideal or material logic unfolding and working through individuals. The important thing about symbolic interactionist studies of work identity (e.g. Roy 1969, 1973; Gold 1964; Hughes 1971; Becker 1963, 1971) in this context is that they show how even the most routinized environments can be given purpose and how meaning is generated in the interaction of shop floor life (du Gay 1996 p. 31). They thus draw attention to the pervasiveness of the ‘struggle to make meaning’ (du Gay p. 33) in human action.

### **3.1.4.2 Belonging, place and space**

I have constructed belonging as having to do with competencies in relation to a social group. But clearly place is an important aspect of belonging and an important source of identity. I suggested above that a symbolic interactionist conception of identity should include the totality of the individual’s interactive environment. Belonging to a *place* can also be seen in terms of participating in that place through a set of competencies, for example preparing, planting, and tending trees in a particular site. This clearly involves a relationship with the land through a set of competencies, and may lead to a certain attachment to that place which, as Braun has observed in the context of forests in British Columbia, may be passionate (2002, p. 5). The forester is likely to feel much less ‘at home’ on a fishing vessel as he will have difficulty *participating* in the central activity of the boat. He will not know how the boat works, how to use the nets, etc. This example also illustrates how the non-human is integrated in the interactive construction of the identity. Burton observes in the context of farming that,

*“[i]n representing the symbolic actions of generations of farmers, the farm provides a store of symbolic capital that any new entry to farming coming from that farm environment can draw on to support his/ her identity as a farmer” [...] for farmers, those most responsible for the construction of the rural landscape, this feeling of connectivity with the land is intense. The farm landscape is not simply a workplace, but rather, as Leopold (1939) has observed sixty years ago it is “the owner’s portrait of himself” (Burton 2004, p. 207).*

Wenger adopts a spatial metaphor to distinguish between different trajectories which the identity of individuals may have in relation to the community over time: ‘peripheral trajectories’, ‘inbound trajectories’, ‘insider trajectories’, ‘boundary trajectories’ and ‘outbound trajectories.’ I use Wenger’s idea a bit differently to think about *trajectories of belonging* of individuals over time in the Forestry Commission conceived of as a ‘constellation of practices’ (see below). Practices such as preparing the ground, planting and looking after the young trees (Forest Management - FM), harvesting and marketing (H&M), recreation provision, landscape design, and community forestry, as well as the provision of grants for planting and management and licences for felling to the private sector, can all be thought of as different practices within the Forestry Commission. As the importance of different practices change, the trajectory of individuals develop in terms of whether they are engaging in activities which are seen to be central or peripheral to the main business of the Forestry Commission. A person (or a practice) may be on an incoming trajectory (becoming more central) or on an outgoing trajectory (becoming more peripheral).

### ***3.1.5 Coherence work – narratives of self-identity***

It might be thought from the above account that the identity of the individual is conceived of as in a state of flux, as the individual moves between practices through the competencies which s/he possesses. However, the individual needs to be able to identify her/himself as a social object (bounded by his or her body) to himself or herself and to others.<sup>13</sup> The multiple sources of identity suggests that some sort of ‘coherence work’ is important. Coherence work is tied to remembering. Thus at the moment of remembering “*we consciously reconstruct images of the past in the selective way which suits the needs of our present situation*” (Hutton 1993, p. xxi; in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 62). Drawing on Ong (1982) Tsouvalis observes that,

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<sup>13</sup> The narrative of self can be conceived of as an example of what Giddens has referred to as the ‘specification of the social object’ (Giddens 1984). Foucault’s project was to *get behind* this phenomenon. As Braun has observed, “*[f]or Foucault (1977), genealogy disrupted identity thinking, it approached things – such as the body, sexuality, government – as effects of shifting configurations of discourse and practice, rather than innate properties found in the world.*” (Braun 2002, p. 3).

*“[t]his is a moment when accounts of practice are constructed that ‘eliminate inconsistencies’, when the writers of these accounts are able ‘to choose between words with a reflective selectivity that invests thoughts and words with a new discriminatory power’”* (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 62).

According to Revill (1994, p. 707) many authors, arguing from a range of positions, have “*stressed the place of storytelling in the way individuals account for themselves, give order and meaning to their lives, and participate in the process by which we become situated in society.*”<sup>14</sup> Such discourses, and narratives all contain positionings of self and others: they are castings (to draw on the dramaturgical metaphor of Goffman (1959). Foucault (1992) suggests that they also contain particular ethics about what constitutes a ‘good’ woman, forester, or farmer (e.g. Burton 2004), in other words, conceptions about what is required of the individual to be a good person in a particular context. As one of the people I interviewed observed ‘we (foresters) want to do the right thing’.

The quotation by Tsouvalis suggests, that need for coherence is *also* situated in a particular interaction, and thus the narrative which is produced at a given time is the one which fits the occasion. Hajer (1995) also draws attention to the way in which individuals may use existing discourses in order to say what ‘sounds right’ in a given context.

Giddens’ ideas provide one way of thinking about such coherence work, not only in the context of the individual but also for thinking about the collectivity. Giddens conceives of a *narrative of self* with which the individual can represent his self to himself and others. The narrative of self is “*the story or stories by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood, both by the individual concerned and by others*” (Giddens 1991, 243). Like any other description the narrative of self highlights some things and obscures others. Heidegger (Braun 2002) also draws attention to the important point, that it is never possible to tell all and that therefore choices always have to be made about what is included and what is excluded in a particular account. This will be informed by the extant

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. Giddens (1991), Shotter (1984), Smith (1993), Stivers (1993), Taylor (1989) and Thrift (1986).

(interactional) context, and raises the important question of why some things are highlighted and others obscured. Narratives are interactionally thus situated. The narrative of self has to fulfil criteria of good story telling in this particular domain. This includes for example an aesthetic criteria of coherence which is in tension with the temporal development of the identity of a person since, depending on the stability of the collection of different aspects of the person's identity, may require re-telling with greater or lesser frequency. These norms of what constitutes a good enough story about self change. It may thus be argued that a post-modern sense of self permits a more transient sense of self – a self that dissolves in different situations, an account of self which sets less rigid norms about coherence between the different aspects of self. This may be linked to the greater number of changes in the life of a contemporary person than in the past. For the purpose of the thesis I am however assuming that for most people it is still important to provide a coherent account of self.

In Modernity and Self-Identity Giddens uses reflexivity to develop the idea of the *reflexive project of self* defined as “*the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives*” (Giddens 1991, 244). Giddens argues that the increasing ‘self-consciousness’ implied in the idea of the reflexive project of self is a feature of what he terms ‘high modernity’ (Giddens 1991) *contra* the idea that we live in an era which is somehow ‘post’ modern.

### **3.1.6 Changes in the setting of action**

Furnham and Bochner (1986) and Ward *et al* (2001) draw attention to the psychological effects of unfamiliar environments in the context of a review of the literature on culture shock. They describe this phenomenon as essentially one of deskilling in relation to the *setting of action* of the individual (although they do not use Goffman's terminology). What they refer to as ‘culture shock’ arises because the person no longer has the competencies in relation to his environment of action as a normal person would, and competence is an important part of personhood especially for the adult. Moreover, existing competencies are not necessarily recognised or even noticed in the new setting as they may not *count* in the new setting, they may be invisible. The person may in this way not only

lack central competencies in the new setting, existing competencies may be invisible.

In the discussion of Furnham and Bochner (1986) and Ward *et al* (2001) the individual is in an unfamiliar environment because he has moved either voluntarily through tourism, working abroad or voluntary migration, or involuntarily through forced migration because of war, lack of economic possibilities etc. Their analysis can be fruitfully extended to situations where the relevant 'culture' has moved on around the individual. In other words, social changes mean that the society, the group, around the individual moves on so much that the individual finds himself unable to participate in important ways. This is why elderly people can sometimes feel that they no longer belong to the society around them, whereas children, who for example grow up with a new technology, just take their setting of action for granted, this is the setting of action which they have to learn and they do, mostly. Moreover, the skills which the elderly person has may become invisible for the same reason, they no longer count in important ways in a society which has 'moved on'.

If the kinds of actions and meanings which can be accommodated in forestry are changing, this means that for some people the forestry they had trained to be part of, the forester they had trained to be, is not the forestry they are now asked to be part of, the forester they are now asked to be. The criteria for what it takes to belong in forestry are changing.

*Being*, and *being-seen-to-be*, a competent actor is therefore an important part of belonging. Changes in the setting of action can undermine an actors competence, and sense of being a competent actor, by removing the parts of the setting which permit the individual to exercise the competence and/or by adding new parts to the setting which the actor is not competent in. This would challenge identity in two ways: 1) experience of self as a competent actor and 2) loss of context in which to perform/enact that part of self (with others).

### **3.1.7 Collaborative construction of identity**

I have discussed how the identity of the individual is constructed through interaction with his perceived environment. Implied in the idea of the effects of unfamiliar environments is that, to a certain extent, the individual also needs his environment in order to ‘perform’ his self, in order to ‘put on the show’ of his identity and this is where Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphors are helpful. In bringing a ‘theatrical’ eye to interaction, Goffman provided an extension to symbolic interactionism (Burton 2004, p. 199).

*“In analysing the self, then, we are drawn from its possessor, from the person who will profit or lose most by it, for he and his body merely provide the peg on which something of collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time. And the means for producing and maintaining selves do not reside inside the peg; in fact these means are often bolted down in social establishments. There will be a back region with its tools for shaping the body, and a front region with its fixed props. There will be a team of persons whose activity on stage and in conjunction with available props will constitute the scene from which the performed character’s self will emerge, and another team, the audience, whose interpretative activity will be necessary for this emergence. The self is a product of all these arrangements, and in all of its parts bears the marks of this genesis”* (1959, p. 245).

The networked self (anno 1959) complete with artefacts. Goffman draws attention to the *collaborative construction of identity*, how co-actors can help each other in the performance of their respective identities, or indeed, sabotage each other. The actor who wants to project himself as expert needs the other actors to treat him as such and possibly even take on the role of lay people. Thus the ‘expert forester’ is co-constructed with the ‘lay people’, together they invest the ‘expert forester’ with all the relevant knowledge and empty the lay person of all relevant knowledge. Conversely, the forester who wants genuine dialogue with the community may find it difficult to divest himself of the role of expert which between the lay person and the expert empties all the relevant knowledge out of the lay person and ‘gives it to’ the expert.

Not only other actors are enrolled, but also props such as clothing or knowledges (discourses). If the forester has to put on city clothes and forgets his silvicultural know-how (his lines), it is suddenly less easy to give a convincing performance of a forester both to others and to oneself. And this makes it more difficult to *be* a forester, in the sense of an identity recognised in terms of its various attributes by others and self. Co-actors and props are, in this perspective, *resources* for the individual in the performance of his identity. Goffman's argument also has implications if the individual wants to *change* his identity. He needs co-actors and props to enable him to change his identity.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, in order to act in the world, or in Goffman's terms, to perform the various aspects of his self, the actor needs to mobilise resources in different ways. Such resources can take different forms. They can be knowledge about how to grow trees as fast as possible, green fleeces with the Forestry Commission logo, harvesting machinery, the Treasury, the 'community.' But such resources have, so to speak a life of their own, which may either hinder or facilitate the intentions of the actor. They exist, therefore they necessarily have certain (structural) properties, they are one thing, rather than so many other things they could be.<sup>16</sup> They are for example difficult heath-land soil as opposed to prime soil for growing Sitka spruce. Or conversely, they are the English community forests at a time when the Forestry Commission is looking to be/portray itself as more community oriented. This is one of the contexts where Giddens' concept of the duality of structure is helpful. Discourses (or knowledges) of participation, development, inclusion, change management, the role of nature in place-based national identities and social science, as well as the people inside and outside the forest gate, and the land covered in forestry policy can all be seen as both enabling and constraining for forestry: as resources they enable forestry in the process of defining a new sense of what it is about, but at the same time, being what they are (as opposed to something else, or nothing)

<sup>15</sup> Moreover if one actor changes this means that the setting of action for other actors with which that actor interacts changes, possibly leading those other actors to think about revising what they are doing.

<sup>16</sup> Although the meaning, which may be attributed to them may of course be manifold and this will shape the way in which the 'actor' seeks to interact with such 'resources.'

they set a certain agenda for forestry as it engages with them, this is structure as ‘rule’, i.e. as constraint.

### 3.1.8 Actor or resource?

Whether someone, or something, is told as an actor or as a resource (for other actors) depends on the (narrative) point of view. The point of view of the storyteller depends on the kind of story s/he wants to tell, is s/he for example most interested in *a* as an actor and how *a* uses *b* as a resource, or the other way around, or some other combination. This is the narrative move that Callon (1986) makes in his scallops story: in attributing agency to the scallops he highlights the importance of the scallops in setting an agenda for what the fishermen want to do. Jones and Cloke (2002, p. 1) note that it is now recognised that “*non-human life-forms and materials can be thought of as having ‘agency.’*” Actor-network theory talks up the agency of ‘things’ which we don’t normally think of as having agency:

*“If human beings form a social network it is not because they interact with other human beings. It is because they interact with human beings and endless other materials too. And, just as human beings have their preferences – they prefer to interact in certain ways rather than in others – so too do the other materials that make up the heterogeneous networks of the social”* Law (1992, p. 2).

For ANT ‘things’ can be told either as actor-networks or as resources, indeed the ascription of actor status to what is more comprehensively described as an actor network is to do with the way in which actor-networks can be used as resources by other actors:

*“[N]etwork patterns that are widely performed are often those that can be punctualised. This is because they are network packages – routines – that can, if precariously, be more or less taken for granted in the process of heterogeneous engineering. In other words they can be counted as resources, resources which may come in various forms: agents, devices, texts, relatively standardised sets of organisational relations, social technologies, boundary protocols, organisational forms – any or all of these.”* (Law 1992, p. 4).

The difference between Giddens and ANT is that Giddens does not develop the idea of the agenda that things set for actors by being what they are (as opposed to something else, or nothing) into the idea that those ‘things’ have agency.

## 3.2 Knowledge

### 3.2.1 Reflexivity – knowing the setting of action

If the individual’s identity is constructed in interaction with his perceived environment, or *setting of action* (Goffman 1959), then his *knowledge* about that environment is crucial to his identity. By knowledge, I have in mind the individual’s representation of his or her environment, for which scientific knowledge can be one source among others. The individual actively seeks knowledge about the setting of her action in order to make sense of that setting. This sense making is a creative process and results in representations of the world, the individual, and the individual’s part in that world. In doing so the individual uses existing shared social meanings as resources in his own meaning creation process.

Giddens uses Goffman’s idea of the monitoring of the setting of action to develop the concept of *reflexivity* which refers to the knowledgeability of actors in action:

*“reflexivity is a defining characteristic of all human action. All human beings routinely “keep in touch” with the grounds of what they do as an integral element of doing it. I have called this elsewhere the “reflexive monitoring of action”, using the phrase to draw attention to the chronic character of the processes involved. Human action does not incorporate chains of aggregate interactions and reasons, but a consistent – and, as Erving Goffman above all has shown us, never-to-be-relaxed – monitoring of behaviour and its contexts”* (1990, p. 37-38).

In other words, questions such as ‘why am I doing this’, ‘should I continue doing this?’, ‘if not, what should I do instead?’ form part of the continuity of action and

this creates a desire for information about oneself and the world so that the question can be answered. Such reflexivity does not result in the continuous recreation of social practices where nothing ever changes, and this is especially so in modern social life:

*“In all cultures, social practices are routinely altered in the light of ongoing discoveries which feed into them. But only in the era of modernity is the revision of convention radicalised to apply (in principle) to all aspects of human life”.*

*“The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character”* (1990, p. 38-9).<sup>17</sup>

Reflexivity is close in meaning to *learning*. Psychologists with an interest in learning are interested in how learning takes place, what factors determine what we will learn and how rapidly we will learn it. Hill (1997, p. 21) distinguish between connectionist theories of learning and cognitive theories of learning. Connectionist theories of learning were dominant before the cognitive revolution of the 1950s. Such theories conceptualise learning as responses elicited by stimuli and are interested in stimulus-response bonds or habits and concentrate on the responses that occur, the stimuli that elicits them, and on the ways that these relationships between stimuli and response change with experience. Cognitive theories are concerned with more complex intervening variables, in particular how cognitions (perceptions, attitudes, beliefs which individuals have about their environment) are modified by experience and how they work together to influence behaviour.

Social learning theory is an example of a cognitive theory of learning. It was developed in the early 1960s in response to perceived shortcomings of the existing behaviourist (or in Hill’s terms, connectionist) model of learning. The behaviourist model had been developed on the basis of the study of animal

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<sup>17</sup> It seems that in *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens unites the concepts of knowledgeability, rationalization of action, reflexive monitoring of action and reflexive self-regulation from *The Constitution of Society* (1984, 375-6) into one concept of reflexivity.

response to conditioning and emphasised the importance of external punishments and rewards in the learning process (I. Pavlov; B.F. Skinner). The social theory of learning modified the behaviourist model by emphasising the importance of the *mental processes intervening between stimulus and the decision to respond*. The learner was seen as possessing interpretive skills which enabled him or her to understand the context of a behaviour and to choose between different behaviours in response to a given stimulus (Kagan and Gall 1997).

In addition to emphasising the role of the mental processes intervening between stimulus and response, the social learning theorist Alfred Bandura (e.g. Bandura 1977) argued that we learn to do what we do, not only because of the direct reinforcement of our responses to stimuli, but also by observing the consequences of other people's actions. This is known as observational or imitative learning. He argued that this kind of *social learning* can also be done symbolically through language. Moreover Bandura argued that we are more likely to imitate models who are similar to ourselves, who are rewarded for their actions, who have some kind of prestige, and if rewards are offered for imitation of the model. In addition previous experience was seen to influence the attention paid to different aspects of the model's behaviour. In other words, that what we have already learned influences what we will learn.

An important aspect of social learning in this context is that *reinforcement is both external and self-evaluative*. In other words, it is not just that we might get told of if we do certain things, we might also feel bad about ourselves because it does not correspond to our norms about what a 'person like me' should do if I am 'doing the right thing'. This means that in considering what behaviour to respond with in reaction to any given stimuli, an important consideration is the standards for good behaviour which the individual has. As Kagan and Gall put it,

"[i]n reacting to any given situation, children, and indeed all people, engage in a complex process that not only involve behaviourist principles, but also factors such as ethics, morals, and a person's understanding of his or her role in the world" (1997, p. 1).

Finally social learning theory emphasises the importance of the integration of a personal belief system and behaviour in response to that belief system. This allows the person to develop a sense of self-mastery, a sense of being in charge of one's relations to and understanding of the world. This can be brought about in different ways but the most important source for social learning theorists is, according to Kagan and Gall, *enactive achievement*. Children learn to rely on their skills and on their ability to think through problems by being given the opportunity to do so successfully. This kind of reinforcement, the experience of having achieved something, is the most powerful form of learning in humans.

These two final points can be linked to Foucault's (1992) ideas about the way in which the individual establishes a particular ethics of how he ought to be in particular areas of his life. It is not difficult to see that this can be extended to consider the way in which foresters position themselves in relation to 'the good forester'. However, Giddens concept of reflexivity is useful here too because it draws attention to the continuous aspect of information gathering about the world and ourselves rather than discrete instances of learning particular things. Others have chosen to retain the concept of learning, extending learning to be pervasive in the life of the individual (Wenger 1998).

### **3.2.2 Trust and fateful moments**

Nevertheless, in spite of all this information gathering, we mostly act on the basis of *trust*. The protective cocoon of trust is an emotional facility, argues Giddens (1990), that is formed early on in life in relation to the principal carer. Drawing on Erikson and Winnicott, Giddens argues that trust, ontological security, and a feeling of the continuity of things and persons remain closely bound up with one another in the adult personality:

*"Trust in the reliability of non human objects [...] is based upon a more primitive faith in the reliability and nurturance of human individuals. Trust in others is a psychological need of a persistent and recurrent kind. [...] Ontological security and routine are intimately connected, via the pervasive influence of habit. The infant's early caretaker normally places overriding importance on routines, a matter of intense frustration and reward for the infant. The predictability of the*

*(apparently) minor routines of day-to-day life is deeply involved with a sense of psychological security. When such routines are shattered – for what ever reason – anxieties come flooding in, and even very firmly founded aspects of the personality of the individual may become stripped or altered” (Giddens 1990, p. 98).*

It refers to the ability to assume that ‘it is going to be alright’. If we really focused on all the risks we face in the course of a day, we would never get out of bed, never get on with our lives. We would never act if we focused on all the risks inherent in action. We therefore have to bracket out the possibility (the *risk*) that our knowledge in use may be wrong. Arguably this protective cocoon of trust has to be applied to most of our knowledge in use at any given time (including the knowledge of ignorance) and we can only problematise a relatively limited part of it at any given time. Clark (1997) draws attention to a related point:

*“Perception is itself tangled up with specific possibilities of action – so tangled up, in fact, that the job of central cognition often ceases to exist. The internal representations the mind uses to guide actions may thus be best understood as action and – later – specific control structures rather than as passive representations of external reality” (Clark, 1997, p. 51; in Thrift and Dewsbury 2000, p. 415).*

In other words, the world is ‘full’ and representation (including representations of self) is situated and can never be total. Any given situation can always be represented in many different ways. What we see in a given situation is related to what we are (where we have been) and what we want to do (where we want to go). And by definition we cannot wait to have ‘full’ information before we act:

*“[i]f the brain were unable to fill the gaps and bet on meagre evidence, activity as a whole would come to a halt in the absence of sensory inputs. In fact we may slow down and act with caution in the dark, or in unfamiliar surroundings, but life goes on and we are not powerless to act. Of course, we are more likely to make mistakes...but this is a small price for gaining freedom from immediate*

*stimuli determining behaviour, as in simple animals which are helpless in unfamiliar surroundings. A frog will starve to death surrounded by dead flies, for behaviour ceases when imagination cannot replace absent stimuli”* (Gregory, in Carter 1998, p. 120; in Thrift 2000, p. 416).

This means that parts of self and its setting of action go unexamined in the everyday, until particular incidences bring them into question. What Giddens (1991) refers to as ‘fateful moments’ are moments when the non-trivial aspects of what we assume in acting are called into question:

*“They are points at which, no matter how reflexive an individual may be in the shaping of her self-identity, she has to sit up and take notice of new demands as well as new possibilities. At such moments, when life has to be seen anew, it is not surprising that endeavours at reskilling are likely to be particularly important and intensely pursued. Fateful moments are transition points which have major implications not just for the circumstances of an individual’s future conduct, but for self-identity. For consequential decisions, once taken, will reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which ensue. Hence it is not surprising that at fateful moments individuals are today likely to encounter expert systems which precisely focus on the reconstruction of self-identity: counselling or therapy”* (1991, p. 142-143).

In this context a crisis, or a fateful moment, could be said to refer to a situation when the part of assumed knowledge which has become problematised is particularly uncomfortable either because of its scale or quality. A fateful moment can be thought of as a sort of black hole which sucks in resources in an attempt to repair the damage (to the relation between self and setting of action) caused, changing the information flow associated with ‘normal reflexivity’.

There lies in the idea of the fateful moment that they are moments in which what has been ‘bracketed out’ can be brought back in to consciousness. Another way of putting this would be to say that existing identities, social objects, are destabilised (not all of course). This opens up the possibility that the world may be seen afresh, may be reconceived, with a new or modified set of identities and

relations. Fateful moments can be conceived of as ‘Foucauldian moments’ in that they can ‘denaturalize’ existing identities and the relations between them (Braun 2002, p. 20).

### **3.2.3 The individual as producer of knowledge**

It lies in the idea that the individual seeks knowledge about the world, herself and her place in the world, that the individual is both a *consumer* and a *producer* of knowledge. The individual uses the information which she takes in to *create* representations of the world etc. She uses her existing (inner as well as outer) stories about herself as well as other narrative resources available to her ‘outside’ of herself.

Goffman’s (1959) individual continuously monitors her co-actors in order to present herself in the way best designed to achieve her objectives vis a vis the other. Perhaps it is this presentation of self *for effect* which leads Goffman to take up the theatrical metaphor. Goffman sets up an important distinction between *front stage* and *back stage*. Front stage the show must go on and a *slip* would be embarrassing, destabilising the (narrative) coherence of what is being communicated, back stage the individual can let down her guard. But since this is according to certain rules, one senses an ever receding Chinese doll system of back stages which are front stage in relation to other stages behind it. The presentation of self is thus an *act of communication* designed with a particular audience in mind. Using language, body and action, the individual tries to put across a particular version of herself and of the other through the identification of the situation which she projects. For Goffman, she is thus attempting to cast others as well as herself through the way she presents herself *in relation* to others.

Identity can be conceived of as a collection of meanings, actions and materiality (body). Goffman’s important distinction between the impressions we *give* (voluntary) and the impressions we *give off* (in-voluntary), draws attention to the importance of the non-verbal aspects of behaviour. This provides important conceptual tools for describing how areas which were in the realm of impressions given off can be colonised and brought into the realm of impressions given for

effect. The individual is in other words not just trying to tell a story to others (as well as to her self) using language, but also using her body and actions. An expression of this is the concept of ‘body language’. This implies an attention to the body and the expressions it gives off, and the possibility of modifying it to give off impressions designed for effect. Goffman’s distinction between different kinds of impressions thus draws attention to the body and action as well as language as part of the narrative strategy of the person in telling the world and herself who she is. We might say, drawing on Foucault, that she is producing a discourse. For Foucault discourses are systems of possibility for knowledge, “*it is what allows us to produce statements which will be either true or false – it makes possible a field of knowledge*” (Philp 1985, p. 69). The casting projected in the definition of a situation, communicated through ‘body language’ as well as language, also sets up systems of possibility for knowledge in the sense that having been cast as for example ‘lay person’ it becomes difficult to ‘come back’ as an expert.

### **3.2.3.1 The projected definition of the situation**

Goffman extended the symbolic interactionist perspective on identity to consider the way in which individuals seek to influence the symbol formation of other individuals in face to face interaction. He defined interaction as, “*roughly [...] the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another’s actions while in other another’s immediate physical presence*” (1959, p. 26). As already shown, Goffman looked at such interaction in terms of a dramaturgical metaphor, as *performance*, which he defined as, “*all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants*” (Goffman 1959, p. 26). Any interaction is made up of individuals projecting a definition of the situation.

“*Ordinarily the definitions of the situation projected by the several different participants are sufficiently attuned to one another, so that open contradiction will not occur. [...] each participant is expected to suppress his immediate heartfelt feelings, conveying a view of the situation which he feels the others will be able to find at least temporarily acceptable*” (1959, p. 20-1).

So one can imagine a sort of band encompassing possible definitions of the situations which could exist without the interaction breaking down and the actual definitions of the situation of participants, whether in the audience, observers, or co-participants. Individuals try to control their own role and the role of others through the definition of the situation which they project. The *projected definition of the situation* (Goffman 1959) is in effect a casting which is negotiated with the other actors. Different individuals have more or less power to make their projected definition of the situation count in negotiation with others.

### 3.2.3.2 Power and the projected definition of the situation

Goffman neglected the difference between people in terms of the extent to which they are obliged to care about other people's definition of the situation. This also relates to differences in people's ability to define the situation, or accept the given definition of the situation, which is where power comes in. Goffman (1959; 1986) does not pay much attention to power, although it is important to the concept of the projected definition of the situation. In this context Giddens' concept of power as the ability to affect the other and the importance of resources in this is useful. For Giddens, power is the capacity to act, to make a difference. It does not exist outside of resources, so access to resources means access to power. Thus for Giddens, power is not in itself a resource (1984, p. 16).<sup>18</sup> Foucault's insight that power is *creative* also serves to illuminate the negotiation of the definition of the situation, and therefore the mutual casting, between actors.

*"We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production"* (Foucault 1991, p. 194).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Giddens uses the idea of the *dialectic of control* to convey the idea that in a relationship of dependence the subordinate actor always has some resources to affect the dominant actor, however limited.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault's description of power is similar to Giddens' description of structure as rules and resources, i.e. as constraining and enabling. For Foucault power is also creative power, power as the ability to make 'things', thereby making a difference in the world. In Discipline and Punish (Foucault 1991) the emphasis is on power/structure as *rules*, whereas in The History of Sexuality

In the present context, it is the power to create the rules of engagement of social interaction through the capacity to cast oneself and others.

### 3.3 Performance versus meaning

The emphasis on performance gives Goffman's account of the orientation of interactants towards each other an instrumental and manipulative feel. Goffman's account highlights the strategic orientation of interactants towards each other as they seek to influence each other's symbol formation. As an individual enters into the presence of others, those others will seek information about her/him because,

*"Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him" (1959, p. 13).*

Goffman's account of the self runs the risk of neglecting the importance of meaning in action for individual themselves. Goffman was not much interested in that (from his perspective) residual part of the individual. One might say that the performances which Goffman is concerned with in the Presentation of Self and Frame Analysis (Goffman 1959; 1986), are mainly for an external audience. Such performances can of course be considered as 'meaning', in as much as they are, as mentioned above, attempts to affect the symbol formation of other, to convey a narrative, an attempt to control the interpretation of 'me' and what I am doing now. However Goffman neglects the inner audience, and the importance of *the meaning of action to the inner audience*. This means that Goffman's self becomes a somewhat hollow affair, leaving very little room for authenticity in action, thus providing an insufficient account of motivation. This is problematic in the context of an analysis of the Forestry Commission since an unbalanced version of Goffman's performing self would highlight only the instrumental

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(Foucault 1990;1992;1998) the emphasis is on power structure as both rules and *resources*. Foucault also gives greater agency to the actor in the History of Sexuality than he does in Discipline and Punish.

aspects of behaviour, and render invisible the personal investment of individuals. It would also make it difficult to account for why people suffer in change processes.

Burton (2004) has paid attention to the meaning of productivist agriculture to farmers in an attempt to understand why voluntary schemes of diversification have failed. Burton's argument turns on farmer resistance to change from a productivist agriculture to a post-productivist agriculture.<sup>20</sup> Since the early 1990s there have been a number of voluntary schemes "*aimed at moving farmers away from traditional agriculture and towards becoming shopkeepers, leisure providers, foresters, nature conservers and public custodians of the countryside*" (Burton 2004, p. 195). Resistance he argues is often to do with questions of identity and meaning. Thus attempts to convert farmers into foresters in the context of the community forest schemes met with negative responses because farmers saw themselves as "*farmers not foresters*" (Williams *et al.* 1994, p. 27; in Burton 2004 p. 196) and "*farmers want to farm. It gives them their identity and their sense of achievement*" (Allison 1996, p. 142; in Burton 2004, p. 196). Such resistance has also been observed with respect to nature conservation schemes "*it was clear ... that the strength of individual' identity as farmers enabled some resistance to enrolment ... First and foremost, farmers saw themselves as food producers*" (Burgess *et al.* 2000, p. 125).

Through interaction with the group the symbolic significance of behaviour is internalised. The individual adopts the 'self-referent label' or 'positional label' (Stryker 1980) of the group. 'I am a farmer' along with an understanding of what behaviours are appropriate 'farmers do....'. In this way the individual develops self-identity (Burton 2004, p. 198) in respect of *that* particular group.

Burton extends his conceptual framework with Goffman's ideas of front and back stage. As a result, while Burton is concerned with the symbolic meaning of farming to farmers, the emphasis appears to be on the 'performative' aspects of those symbols vis-á-vis the group, as opposed to the meaning for the individuals.

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<sup>20</sup> See also Mather (2001) for an examination of post-productivism in relation to forestry.

This has the effect of reducing the behaviour of individuals to being entirely instrumental, about producing an effect or an affect in others, or rather avoiding producing the effect (or affect) of social disapproval. There is no space between the norms of the group, and the norms of the individual. Such space can be provided for example by the recognition that individuals have multiple belongings which can give them *purchase* or perspective on different parts of their identity and the ethics that dominate different practices, provide them with an alternative stand point from which to tolerate social disapproval. Moreover Giddens structuration theory also provides some space between agency and structure, showing how the enactment of structure depends on the active engagement of actors. Burton thus reproduces a weakness in Goffman's own work (1959; 1986). Paradoxically, the empirical aspects and conclusions of Burton's work shows a great deal of sensitivity to the meanings and importance of the productivist landscape for farmers and the need to take this into account in the context of agricultural re-structuring.

It is thus important to be sensitive to the meanings of forestry practices to foresters. As noted above, identity is bound up with practices which are meaningful and often important to actors. Changing practice(s) will therefore challenge identity, in this case work-based identity. There is of course a very utilitarian dimension to work in that 'we all have to make a living'. But I think that this a) does not sufficiently capture the meaning of work in general, and that b) in some work environments the investment of self in work is greater than in others and forestry appears to be one such. This means that the part of identity which derives from work is likely to be important in the overall self-identity of foresters.

The process of reinvention of forestry tampers with the content of the category 'forestry'. This means that it tampers with an object of belonging/identification for 'foresters'. To the extent that the change in content is a big one, and to the extent that work is an important source of identity, this is likely to be a significant challenge to the individual. The 'driver' is belonging. At the basic level, if someone finds him/herself at the wrong side of the boundary of the new forestry, then that person's prospects within the institution could be affected. The

need/desire to belong (irrespective of the reason) creates a pressure to change oneself in line with the (changing) criteria of what it takes to belong to forestry. ‘Re-skilling’ in the context of unequal power relations between the collectivity and the individual is not problematised by Wenger (1998) or Goffman (1959; 1986). Again it is to Giddens’ and Foucault’s conceptions of power that we have to turn.

In order to get at more satisfactory sense of the internal meaning of forestry for foresters I draw on Foucault’s idea about the how we make sense of the world through the social construction of meaning. And how this meaning is historically contingent, i.e. dependent on where the individual finds him or herself in time (and space).<sup>21</sup>

For Foucault, being is the fundamental category. Being has to be thought. Problematization leads to different discursive offerings with which to grasp being. In this way problematization links being with thought and being becomes intelligible as experience. Being is situated in particular practices, and problematization therefore grow out of being in those practices:

*“It was a matter of analyzing, not behaviours or ideas, not societies and their “ideologies,” but the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought – and the practices on the basis of which these problematizations are formed”* (Foucault 1992, p. 11).

The discursive offerings which develop in response to problematizations structure the way we experience being. For Foucault the way being is experienced is historically (and presumably also spatially) contingent. This is the main point he makes in The Will to Knowledge, The Use of Pleasure and The Care of Self, where he shows that the experience of ‘a sexuality’ is a relatively recent phenomena and that sexual conduct was experienced in different terms in the Greek culture of the fourth century BC and in the Greco-Roman culture of

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<sup>21</sup> As noted above, Foucault is of course not the only theorist to concern himself with the social construction of meaning. However he has been important in informing the perspective of a great deal of contemporary theorists.

the first two centuries AD (Foucault 1990; 1992; 1998). This contingency of experience also includes the experience of self. An aesthetic approach to existence and associated techniques of the self is an important aspect of the experience of self in what Foucault refers to as 'our societies.' This predates the human sciences, but the human sciences have become resources in this action of self on self:

*"those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria [...] the long history of these aesthetics of existence and these technologies of the self remained to be done, or resumed [...] it seemed to me that the study of the problematization of sexual behaviour in antiquity could be regarded as a chapter - one of the first chapters - of that general history of the "techniques of the self" (Foucault 1992, p. 10-11).*

The idea of self as an *oeuvre*, techniques of the self, and the role of the human sciences in this are key ideas which Giddens picks up in his concepts of the reflexive project of self, the rise of therapy, and the intrusion of expert systems into people's lives, and in his ideas about social science.

Moralities include codes of conduct and ideas about the ethical subject which relate to the code of conduct in the course of acting. We partition ourselves says Foucault.

*"In short, for an action to be "moral," it must not be reducible to an act or a series of acts conforming to a rule, a law, or a value. Of course all moral action involves a relationship with the reality in which it is carried out, and a relationship with the self. The latter is not simply "self-awareness" but self-formation as an "ethical subject," a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precepts he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself. There is no specific moral action*

*that does not refer to a unified moral conduct; no moral conduct that does not call for the forming of oneself as an ethical subject; and no forming of the ethical subject without “modes of subjectivation” and an “ascetics” or “practices of the self” that support them. Moral action is indissociable from these forms of self-activity, and they do not differ any less from one morality to another than do systems of values, rules, and interdictions” (Foucault, 1992, p. 28).*

We operate with different ideas about the ethical subject in different areas of life, in different practices.<sup>22</sup> Thus we position ourselves in relation to work, ideas about the ‘good’ worker, and in this case, ideas about the ‘good’ forester.

### **3.4 From individual to group processes - anthropomorphising the Forestry Commission**

This thesis is about how institutions respond to changes in their setting of action and how individuals in those institutions, in turn, respond to the changes in *their* setting of action. It is about what they become in the process, the kinds of institutional and individual identities which are produced in the process. And it is about the links between institutional and individual response, the links between institutional change processes and individual change processes.

So far I have mainly been talking about individuals, outlining a conceptual framework for thinking about individual identity, how it is established, its relationship with its setting of action, the importance of knowledge about self and the setting of action and some of the psychological effects of when the match between self and setting of action gets destabilised. In this context the implicit, and sometimes explicit setting of action for the individual has been the Forestry Commission. However, at another resolution the Forestry Commission can be conceived of as the individual actor, and the wider social context in which the Forestry Commission conducts its business as the setting of action.

A concern with ‘the group’ as opposed to the individual was in fact the empirical starting point for the thesis. However as mentioned earlier I was also concerned

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<sup>22</sup> A point also made by Hajer (1995).

to tell a story about the people working in the Forestry Commission as well as the Forestry Commission itself. I needed a way to conceptualise the collectivity, to ‘grasp’ it.

A number of concepts had come up along the way, forestry as a policy network (Howlett and Ramesh 1995; John 1998; Marsh and Smith 2000; Hay and Richards 2000; Bevir and Rhodes 1999), organization (Morgan 1986; Bateson 1972; Argyris and Schön; 1978; Argyris 1982; and Schön 1983), or as a profession (Karpowicz 1987). Each of them with an entourage of literatures and research interests none of which I felt ready to commit to. However, perhaps it is not really possible to think about something without giving it at least an implicit identity. I realised that I already had an implicit working metaphor of forestry as a person ( and later as a person with an identity crisis). I had anthropomorphised forestry. This metaphor had become deeply implicated in my thinking about ‘what is going on’ in forestry. It took a while before I realised this. However, as the research progressed, I felt increasingly that it was a *productive* metaphor.

Nevertheless, using the metaphor of the Forestry Commission as a person is an example of the organic metaphor which Giddens criticizes in The Constitution of Society (1984) for leading to an exaggeration of the boundedness of ‘social systems’. The structural principles of a social system is what holds those things together which we can attribute to that social system.

*“The ‘problem of order’ in the theory of structuration is the problem of how it comes about that social systems ‘bind’ time and space, incorporating and integrating presence and absence. This in turn is closely bound up with the problematic of space-time distanciation: the ‘stretching’ of social systems across time-space. Structural principles can thus be understood as the principles of organization which allow recognizably consistent forms of time-space distanciation on the basis of definite mechanisms of societal integration”*  
(Giddens 1984, p. 181).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Giddens addresses both the problem of order and the problem of ordering. The problem of ordering is the problem of how to specify social objects. Law (1994) is also interested in both of these, and has a reflexive attitude to his own process of ordering in Organising Modernity.

According to Giddens, things may be part of different social systems at the same time presumably because they can be the object of more than one structural principle: “[a]ll societies both are social systems and at the same time are constituted by the intersection of multiple social systems” (1984, p. 164). The organic metaphor leads us to exaggerate the mutual exclusivity of social systems, to think in terms of boundaries around objects rather than ‘structural principles’ which hold objects together. The organic metaphor, through its emphasis on boundary and exclusive difference, tends to blind us to the possibility that things can be the objects of several structural principles at the same time. In criticising the organic metaphor, Giddens raises the network metaphor. Giddens’ criticism is not insurmountable providing identity is conceived of as the product of multiple allegiances. I now want to consider the conceptual framework I have just outlined above for the individual to throws light on the response of the group to social change around it.

### **3.4.1 Identity**

An organisation like the Forestry Commission can fruitfully be conceived of as an individual whose identity has developed over time through *interaction* (including symbolic interaction) with its environment. It was created at a particular time and place and its identity has developed over time in dialogue with its setting of action. This identity can moreover be conceived of as a the collection of actions, bodies and meanings which are seen to belong to forestry by those who work for the Forestry Commission. Here ‘bodies’ refer to e.g. the bodies of the people who work for the Forestry Commission, the trees, the land, the clothing, the machinery, etc.

Through employing its skills the Forestry Commission has participated in groups of actors concerned with a number of different areas including recreation, unemployment, rural depopulation, urban forestry, community forestry, biodiversity etc. In this way the Forestry Commission may be said to *belong* to a number of different *communities of practice*. Over time this has resulted in a composite identity of *multiple belongings*. The idea of multiple belongings is meant to be suggestive of the participation of the Forestry Commission in a

number of different communities of practice which do not necessarily stop at the boundary of the Forestry Commission. Some social configurations are too far removed from the scope of engagement by participants, too broad, too diverse, too diffuse to be usefully treated as a single community of practice (Wenger 1998 p. 126-127),

*“[w]hereas treating such configurations as single communities of practice would gloss over the discontinuities that are integral to their very structure, they can profitably be viewed as constellations of interconnected practices”* (Wenger 1998, p. 127).

I use Wenger's concept of a *constellation of practices* to refer to a set of practices which are bound together in an organisational body like the Forestry Commission as a result of the multiple belongings of the organisation. The relative importance of different practices may change over time and place. Wenger idea of *trajectories of belonging* can also be used to highlight the way practices may shift in relative importance over time. So that a practice (or a person) may be on incoming trajectory (becoming more central) or on an outgoing trajectory (becoming more peripheral). Or it may be considered 'marginal.' This can be extended to apply to differences in relative importance over space thus providing an analytical perspective for the articulation of the constellation of practices which make up the Forestry Commission over time and space/place, which is becoming more important in the aftermath of devolution. Importantly, it makes sense of the fact that some practices which make up the ensemble of practices which is referred to as *social forestry* can be told as part of a new identity by some actors and part of the existing identity by other actors.

The trajectories of belonging of different practices are mediated by the relationship to the setting of action. Ward *et al.*'s ideas about *the psychological effects of unfamiliar environments* (Ward *et al.* 2001) and Wenger's ideas about participating in practices through passport skills, can also be applied to the Forestry Commission. The match between the competencies of the Forestry Commission and its setting of action has been destabilised. This is leading to shifts in the relative importance of different practices within the Forestry

Commission. For example urban forestry and the Forestry Commission's engagement in community forestry can be described as having travelled to an increasingly central place at least in terms of the symbolic aspects of Forestry Commission practice in recent years and it is leading to the taking up of new skills. *Change management* in organisations is about managing such processes. The institutional actor is 'moving on'. This is likely to mean a change in the kinds of competencies which are valued in the organisation. As the organisation takes on new roles, new skills, new competencies are required, the organisation faces a 'skills challenge'. The ideas of Wenger, Furnham and Bochner (1986), and Ward *et al.* (2001) can thus be used to illuminate the predicament of the individual *inside* the Forestry Commission as the Forestry Commission seeks to define new roles for itself.

But what of *coherence work* and a *narrative of self* at the collective level? Revill (1994, p. 707) observes, in the context of linking individual narratives of work based identity to the narratives of 19<sup>th</sup> century railway corporations, that the role of narratives in modernity is not limited to individuals. This touches on a second reservation about using the metaphor of a person with an identity crisis to think about the Forestry Commission. To what extent is it possible to use a concept normally used to think about individuals to think about a collectivity? In other words, to what extent do collectivities have identities? Ward *et al.* (2001) talk about externally and internally attributed identity in the context of individuals. Externally attributed identities are simply the normal operation of what Giddens, talking about social science, refers to as the specification of social objects. In which case, there seems to be no problem in saying that collectivities 'have' identities, in the sense that they are endowed with externally attributed identities by the people who think about them (both those inside and outside the collectivity). An *internal* sense of identity for collectivities is more tricky, but fundamental to the thesis. An internal sense of identity of collectivities has been conceived of by Anderson (1983) as 'imagined communities.' People inside the collectivity carry identities of the collectivity in their minds. In this way the internal sense of identity is in some way the sum of the externally attributed identities by those who are on the inside. There will be some interaction with the externally attributed identities by those who are on the outside. Resulting in the

kind of negotiation around the *projected definitions of the situation* of the actors interacting (inside the forest gate, and across the forest gate) which Goffman (1959) describes. It is also likely that there will be differences in the attributed identities held in different parts of the collectivity, and indeed among different groups outside of the collectivity which think about it. So patterns can be expected in identities attributed to the collectivity among groups somewhere between the level of the whole and the level of the individual. Changes in identity can be viewed as at least to some extent an adjustment of the relative importance of the different conceptions of identity, in other words as changes at the level of meaning. Notwithstanding the argument about a current identity crisis, there are already differences in how forestry is identified. There probably always has been. Hajer's 'argumentative approach to discourse analysis', which draws on Foucault as well as Harré and Billig, is useful here, in particular his concept of *story-lines* (Hajer 1995).

An organisation like the Forestry Commission also needs co-actors and props if it is to 'perform' its identity. Such co-actors can be conceived of as either external or internal. An example of an important external co-actor is the Treasury. The example of the Treasury also shows the importance of power and the usefulness of Giddens' idea of power as based on access to resources and the capacity to influence the choices of others. The Treasury has enormous power to influence the choices of the Forestry Commission. It is therefore very important to the Forestry Commission that the Treasury understands and accepts the direction the Forestry Commission wants to move in. If the Treasury does not accept this, the Forestry Commission will find it very difficult to adopt new roles. A change in Treasury understanding is a *change in the Treasury*. While this point may seem pedantic, it highlights an important implication of the collaborative construction of identity. A change in one actor is likely to require a change in actors to which that actor is *related* through a relationship of some kind. As far as internal co-actors are concerned, Tsouvalis (2000) has for example described how deer and workers are enrolled in the Forestry Commission's performance of self.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> As noted above, in my view Tsouvalis, attributes rather too passive a role to the individual in relation to the organisation. Both Tsouvalis and I draw on Foucault, but I use the account of the

The predicament of individuals in the context of change in the group around them is substantially the subject of the first part of this chapter. This is one of the places where the individual and the collective processes connect up. As far as the institution is concerned the people who work for the Forestry Commission may be considered as resources in the wider organisational change process, hence the idea of *human resources*. On the other hand the Forestry Commission itself may quickly become a resource in a wider game of Cabinet internal negotiations over posts. Thus the Forestry Commission itself can be told as a resource or an actor depending on the narrative point of view, depending on the kind of story one wants to tell.

### **3.4.2 Knowledge**

#### **3.4.2.1 Institutional reflexivity**

The conceptual framework outlined for the individual is also illuminating for the group when it comes to the role of knowledge. A symbolic interactionist conceptualisation of the organisation also draws attention to the importance of knowledge for organisational identity. That institutions of different characters are themselves aware of this and reflexively plough it in to their practice is reflected in the frequent reference to the ‘learning organisation’ and the ‘knowledge society.’

Paraphrasing Giddens, the practices of forestry are being reformed in the light of incoming information<sup>25</sup> about those very practices, thus constitutively altering the character of forestry. This may be considered using Giddens’ concept of ‘institutional reflexivity’, “*the regularized use of knowledge about circumstances of social life [is] a constitutive element in its organization and transformation*” (Giddens 1991, p. 20). In this way organisations reflexively influence the shaping

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individual in relation to structure given in the *History of Sexuality* (1990, 1992, 1998) rather than that given in *Discipline and Punish* (1991).

<sup>25</sup> ‘Incoming information’ sounds a bit technocratic and automatic. The relationship between knowledge and action is complex. How the information flows and what information it is and where it comes from and the way it is received (or not) is mediated by the highly individual filter between stimulus and response that psychologists such as Bandura have identified and which can be extended to illuminate organisational processes as well. In other words, incoming knowledge is filtered through existing meanings.

of social life, for example the reflexive monitoring by the state of its constituents through the census, law enforcement etc, and the creation of policies to enforce social control (Tucker 1998, p. 110).

*“The administrative control and widespread surveillance of modern nation-states requires this new type of institutional reflexivity, which is an investigative and calculative attitude to system reproduction. The coding of information and the rise of new social scientific knowledge contributes to this institutional reflexivity, as the reproduction of societies becomes more subject to conscious control”* (Tucker 1998, p. 178).

Such institutional reflexivity is for example reflected in the early visitor surveys of the Forestry Commission and also in more contemporary engagements with social science such as the study of Bishop *et al.* (2001) which was motivated by the difficulty the Forestry Commission was having in ‘engaging with the community.’ The community was reluctant to ‘engage’ with the Forestry Commission and through this study the Forestry Commission sought to find out why. But it is not just social science which is part of this monitoring exercise. Natural science has a longer history in the Forestry Commission, and it is essentially about the same thing as the example above, it is about gaining knowledge about the environment to be better able to act in that environment. The same could be said about the move to open decision making about forest management up to actors which were not previously included. This can also be seen as an attempt at information gathering, but it is not the only way of seeing this action, and it may not be the only motivation.

Giddens thus draws attention to the intrusion of expert systems into our lives. So far I have talked about thinking about forestry as a (networked) person with an identity crisis, as a collection of meanings and actions, and as a constellation of practices.<sup>26</sup> A fourth possibility would be to think of forestry as an example of Giddens’ concept of expert systems: “*systems of technical accomplishment or*

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<sup>26</sup> Perhaps multiple metaphors simply reflect the multifarious nature of the Forestry Commission and can perhaps be conceived of as conceptual analogues of the different positionings from which Braun (2002) examine forestry in British Columbia.

*professional expertise that organise large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today*” (Giddens 1990, p. 27). There are some similarities between the characteristics which Giddens attributes to expert systems and those which also characterise forestry. Forestry could be seen as an expert system in (defensive) expansion. The defensive acquisition of new knowledges, penetrating into areas of social knowledge where it has not gone before with a view to enrolling people inside and outside the forest gate in the survival project of the Forestry Commission.<sup>27</sup>

The notion of trust and the disabling perception of risk which it inoculates against can also be productively extended to consider the collectivity. Perhaps this is best explained through a consideration of the importance of ‘resolution’ and ‘heterogeneity’ in the networks of relationships which we might wish to study. In order to go about its business the Forestry Commission cannot as a collective maintain a consciousness of risk and verify that all actions are going to be alright. In order to make progress, the Forestry Commission has to engage in what might be called institutional trust.

It is possible to look at the history of the Forestry Commission in terms of Giddens’ idea of fateful moments which call into question the established certainties of the Forestry Commission, those things which it has bracketed out through (institutional) trust that ‘it is going to be alright’ (if we behave like this), because it was alright yesterday, and the day before.

### **3.4.2.2 The institution as producer of knowledge**

The Forestry Commission is not only a consumer, but also a producer of knowledge, as the paragraph above on the Forestry Commission as an expert system also implies. It is important to pay attention to the Forestry Commission as a producer of knowledge. It is a collective actor which has a certain amount of resources at its disposal to *amplify* the dissemination of the knowledge which it produces. There is, for example, a difference in power between the self-understanding, the narrative of self, of the individual and the discourses produced

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<sup>27</sup> Giddens concept of expert systems in this sense is similar to Foucault’s ideas about knowledge and power.

by a state actor like the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission is a relatively small state actor compared to some Departments, and it has a much more limited financial resources than commercial organisations such as BP or Coca Cola. But the point is that the knowledge which the Forestry Commission produces has a certain amount of potential power in relation to *some* actors who have rather less resources to amplify the dissemination of their knowledge, and not necessarily the resources to critically assess the claims made by collective actors on an ongoing basis. Such actors may be internal or they may be external. Moreover, the discursive products of the Forestry Commission become part of the public sphere, a contribution to the social conversation, and the organisation therefore has a responsibility to keep a critical eye on what kind of contribution is being made.

As a producer of knowledge the Forestry Commission defines the social situation and situates itself and others, and other things through such knowledges. We might say that the Forestry Commission discursively produces identities and relationships between them. This relates to both the Forestry Commission in relation to its own employees and in relation to actors outside such as community groups. Management discourse (e.g the developing social forestry course) was positioning foresters in particular ways. The use of the discourse of participation was constructing 'a community' and a more democratic Forestry Commission. I felt uncertain about whether there was really such a thing as the kind of community which this discourse suggested that the Forestry Commission was engaging. Organisational 'visions' and culture change programmes seek to reposition identities in relation to each other. Moreover they are attempts at articulating an identity for the collectivity which the individual can feel that they belong to.

One of the objects situated is the forest. In this way we might say that the Forestry Commission produces the forest and other identities discursively. This argument also relates to the kinds of things that can be found in the forest. This is part of what forestry is about. Thus the concern with the 'non-timber' benefits of forests suggests both a direction for change but also positions the most important benefit: timber. In this way the (discursive) map of (the kinds of materialities

which are seen to be part of) the forest is being redrawn. At an institutional level this can be used to reposition the forest and the Forestry Commission. However this should not lead us to necessarily conclude that those individuals who are directly concerned with producing this knowledge are motivated purely by the use value of that knowledge for the Forestry Commission. The motivations of the individual knowledge producer should be analytically separated from the use that knowledge may be put to.<sup>28</sup>

In The Politics of Environmental Discourse (Hajer 1995), Hajer develops an ‘argumentative discourse analysis.’ Hajer introduces the concept of story-lines and discourse coalition as middle range concepts that can show how discursive orders are maintained or transformed (Hajer 1995, p. 61). This latter he advances as an alternative to Sabatier’s influential ‘advocacy coalition framework’ of which Hajer provides a convincing critique (Hajer 1995, p. 68-72). He draws the idea of the storyline from Davies and Harré (1990). Story-lines are political devises which allow the overcoming of fragmentation, and the achievement of discursive closure.

*“First of all story-lines have the functional role of facilitating the reduction of the discursive complexity of a problem and creating possibilities for problem closure. Secondly, as they are accepted and more and more actors start to use the story-line, they get a ritual character and give a certain permanence to the debate. They become ‘tropes’ or figures of speech that rationalize a specific approach to what seems to be a coherent problem. Thirdly, story-lines allow different actors to expand their own understanding and discursive competence of the phenomenon beyond their own discourse of expertise or experience. [...] Argumentative discourse analysis holds that the power of story-lines is essentially based on the idea that it sounds right”* (Hajer 1995, p. 63).

Hajer defines discourse-coalitions as:

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<sup>28</sup> What is also going on here is that non-timber benefits are being brought into the language of the market, as Braun (2002, p. 18) observes “*nature is everywhere remade in the image of the commodity, from genetics to nature reserves.*” This approach has a long history in the Forestry Commission.

*“the ensemble of (1) a set of story-lines; (2) the actors who utter these story-lines; and (3) the practices in which this discursive activity is based. Story-lines are here seen as the discursive cement that keeps a discourse coalition together. The reproduction of a discursive order is then found in the routinization of the cognitive commitments that are implicit in these story-lines. Discourse-coalitions are formed if previously independent practices are being actively related to one another, if a common discourse is created in which several practices get a meaning in a common political project”* (Hajer 1995, p. 65).<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes discourses travel across, this is what Hajer refers to as ‘discourse contamination.’ Depending on the practices which individuals participate in they have different problems. This influences the way in which they talk and what they talk about, it influences their discourses, the way in which they position themselves and others. Story-lines unite a number of practices and discourses. They are ‘things’ around which a number of discourses can group themselves, or actors carrying their discourses can group themselves. There are different practices within the Forestry Commission. So much is clear. Within those different practices there are some key problems, issues, and enterprises which characterise them. But there are also some key problems, issues, and enterprises which unite these practices in different ways. They are mobilised to do particular things together, like producing as much timber as possible as fast as possible. The people participating in the different practices see the common issues in different ways. We might distinguish between self-conscious and un-self-conscious production of discourses. Of course there are collective stories about who we are. But increasingly organisations are making such un-self-conscious narratives the object of work on self. Bringing what were impressions given off into the ambit of impressions given. It is clear that for organisations the equivalent of the individual *narrative of self* and the *reflexive project of self* also exist. The concern to articulating ‘our’ vision, ‘our’ values, and organisational re-invention reflect this. These are discourses of who ‘we’ are among other things aimed at facilitating a sense of belonging in staff. There is both an internal and an external audience for such narratives, as the institution seeks to influence the

<sup>29</sup> There are some striking similarities with Wenger’s communities of practices/constellation of practices.

symbol formation of internal and external actors in analogue ways to the *performances* of individuals.

Again as part of the interaction with co-actors the Forestry Commission is also trying to *project a particular definition of the situation* (positionings), to cast itself and the actors which it interacts with. Thus the Forestry Commission's culture change programme can, for example, be seen as an attempt to recast the organisation in relation to its internal co-actors, the people who work in the Forestry Commission as well as to those on the outside.

### **3.4.3 Performance versus meaning**

The tension between performance and meaning also plays out at the collective level. In order to make sense of instrumental, 'performative', narratives of change as well as the experience of commitment by practitioners it is necessary to make an observation about division of labour, the allocation of roles in an organisation such as the Forestry Commission. Some parts take up roles which are concerned with monitoring and disseminating information to the rest of the organisation, some parts are more concerned with reflecting on current practice in relation to that information and other parts of the organisation are principally concerned with *expressing* the identity of the group such as it is currently. Forest Research, Forest Training Services and policy staff, are all in their ways principally concerned with monitoring the setting of action, disseminating that information and reflecting on it in relation to current practice. Practitioners are more concerned with expressing the existing identity of the Forestry Commission such as it is. There are thus *roles* within the Forestry Commission which are more concerned with monitoring, reflecting, disseminating, and other roles which are more concerned with doing. This does not mean that the individuals *occupying* each role do not concern themselves with both activities. This may seem like a pedantic point, but it is important. It allows me to incorporate narratives of instrumentalism as well as narratives of meaning. Policy staff are more likely to be concerned with monitoring the setting of action of the organisation. It is a constitutive part of their job, indeed of their practice. They are thus more likely to exhibit behaviours and engage in narratives which reflect a strategic/instrumental orientation towards the setting of action of the

organisation. Their accounts and actions can therefore sometimes have a more instrumental, performance oriented, feel to them. Practitioners are more concerned with doing, and action requires meaning, and they may actually sometimes approve of the direction which the Forestry Commission is changing in.

### 3.5 Conclusion – linking the individual and the group

Figure 3. 1 shows the conceptual framework which grew out of the theoretical and empirical engagements explained respectively in this and the previous chapter. The empirical starting point for the model was the observation based on the first year of ethnographic fieldwork that *what forestry was about had become problematised*. This suggested that the existing *institutional identity of forestry was being challenged*. An interactionist perspective on identity (Goffman 1959) suggested that the existing identity of forestry was being challenged by *changes to its setting of action*. Moreover it was clear that there was a certain amount of *work on the institutional self* of the Forestry Commission going on. New training in social forestry was being developed, there was a ‘new’ social research programme, and there was a culture change programme underway. All of this work on self suggested that some actors within the Forestry Commission, thought that some of the existing aspects of the Forestry Commission’s identity were problematic and that the Forestry Commission ought to change. Again an interactionist perspective on identity suggested that not only did change in the setting of action call into question one or more facets of the institutional actor’s identity, but if that actor wanted to change it would need to *work on the self of institutional and individual others* as well as on its own self in order to be able to take on new roles.

The institutional work on self, and the changes in the institutional self, lead to changes in the setting of action for the individuals who work for the Forestry Commission. The work-based part of the individual’s identity is problematised, that is, it is brought out of that which can be un-problematically assumed to be alright, and it is subjected to reflection and doubt.

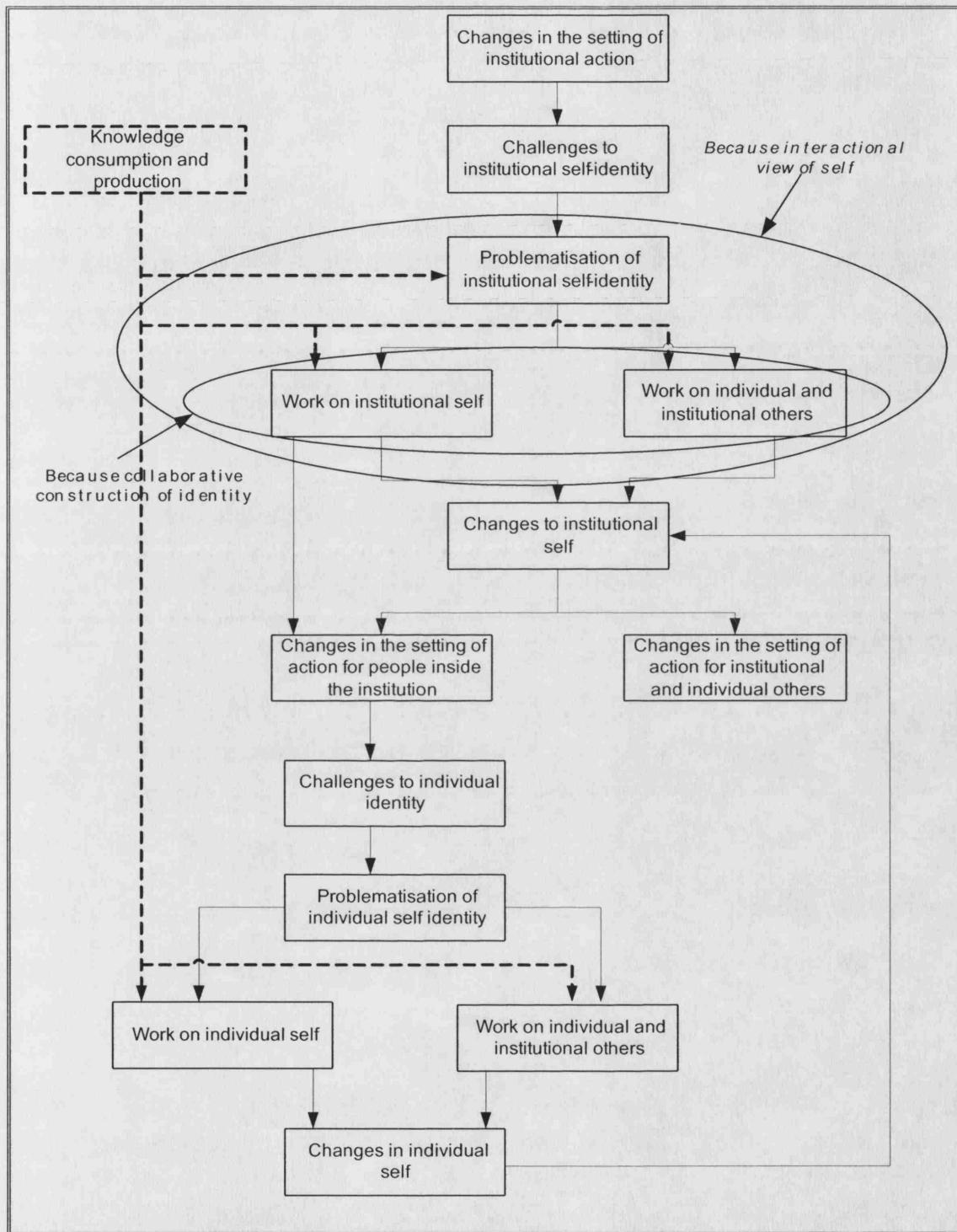


Figure 3. 1 A model of the relationship between institutional change and individual change

The individual can of course choose to leave the Forestry Commission, but there are a number of reasons why they might choose not to. The individual may or may not agree with the changes he is being required to make. He will have to *position himself* in relation to those changes. Finally changes to individual selves is what *makes* changes to the institutional self, changing the people who work in

the Forestry Commission is what enables the Forestry Commission as an actor to change. The direction of change can move in both directions. But the predominant direction in the present study is from changes in the wider context of the Forestry Commission, through an institutional response, to changes in the setting of action for the individuals working for the Forestry Commission.

However it is important not to be blinded by the organic metaphor which exaggerates the boundedness of the social object it specifies, in this case, the Forestry Commission as a person with an identity crisis. Individuals who work for the Forestry Commission have multiple belongings: this means that although working for the Forestry Commission is an important part of their identity, they have other sources of identity which may permit them to gain critical purchase on what is going on in the Forestry Commission well before the institutional actor begins to act. Moreover, as practitioners, dealing with the day to day it is also possible that some gain critical purchase on the core identity before this becomes problematised in a general way. Finally, since the Forestry Commission, and British forestry more generally is made up of a constellation of practices, with different relative importance, it is also possible that people who have journeyed to more marginal practices in this way gain a critical purchase on the core identity before the institutional actor begins to move.

# **Chapter 4 Testing the conceptual framework: phase II fieldwork**

## **4.1 Phase II fieldwork design**

For the upgrading workshop in June 2003, I proposed a final piece of more focussed fieldwork. In essence I wanted to ground this in a particular conservancy and/or forest district and investigate the district or conservancy in terms of the process of institutional re-invention which I had identified, the resources which were being mobilised in this and the consequences of this change process. I thought of the districts and conservancies as being on the receiving end of wider change processes within the Forestry Commission. The idea was to explore the translation of those processes in a particular locality 'inside the forest gate' and in relationships 'across the forest gate.' I wanted to do this in a way which explored 'normal' practice as opposed to situations which I knew to be particularly innovative. The method would be case based ethnographic fieldwork, and I envisaged shadowing a transection of staff in their work, conducting semi-structured interviews and observing staff meetings.

An important issue for me during the workshop was anonymisation. The Forestry Commission is a relatively small institution with a strong social network built up through a combination of shared educational experience, shared training while working for the Forestry Commission, length of service, and the practice of moving staff around the country. This makes many interviewees easily identifiable, at least by other people in the Forestry Commission. Interviewees with distinctive views and/or higher up the institutional hierarchy are even more identifiable. At the same time, views are often interesting in part because of who

holds them. This *problematique* can have the effect of marginalising distinctive as well as critical voices in the account of results for fear of inadvertently including something which might be harmful to the interviewee. On the other hand giving a certain amount of detail about an interviewee is a way of demonstrating how the analysis is grounded and thus generally helping the reader to better understand the research narrative as well as enhancing its 'credibility' (Baxter and Eyles 1997). This discussion links to the kinds of data which is available through different research methods and what can be done with this data subsequently in terms of the level of abstraction at which it is presented. A high level of abstraction reveals little or nothing about the context in which the story which is presented emerged, a low level of abstraction, staying closer to the data, can reveal more about the interviewee than s/he might wish to have disclosed. It is about the responsibility of the researcher towards those who contribute to her research. I was concerned that basing myself in one district and /or conservancy would mean that the individuals who participated would end up being very visible in the research account. I was advised that one way of dealing with this would be to scale up the research design, for example to England. As a consequence I began to think about a modified research design during July 2003.

To overcome the anonymisation problem I scaled up the case study area from one or two individual case study areas (either district or conservancy) to England. I thought this would give me greater flexibility in terms of the level of abstraction at which I reported my results, in particular that I would be more likely to be able to include interviewees' job titles without it being clear who I was talking about. This strategy was not likely to be fool proof though. Some functionalities there were only one of (e.g. Head of Social Research Unit or Director General). Moreover I was well aware that in such a close network as the Forestry Commission, for anyone who really wanted to know it would be easy to find out where I had conducted my fieldwork.

I was a bit concerned by the fact that of the three GB countries England was likely to be least characterised by 'forestry as timber production', so the identity crisis at both the individual and the collective level was likely to be smaller than elsewhere. I decided to turn this into an advantage by using England as a 'deviant

case' (Silverman 2000, p. 180) thus potentially enabling me to extrapolate (generalise) beyond the borders of England and into Wales and Scotland. In other words, if what I was saying about identity crisis at the collective and individual level was confirmed in England, this would in principle be even more likely to be the case in Wales and Scotland. Moreover forestry policy had not long been differentiated by country in the way that had happened from the end of the 1990s early 2000s. Arguably therefore the institutional and individual identity structures which had been shaped during the first 80s years or so of the Forestry Commission's life prior to devolution were still likely to be found in England. Scaling up to England also meant that shadowing people in their jobs and sitting in on meetings fell away, leaving long semi-structured interviews.

In essence my work was about how institutions respond to changes in *their* setting of action and how individuals in those institutions in turn respond to the resulting changes in *their* setting of action (Goffman 1959). It was about what institutions and individual became through this process and the links between institutional change processes and individual changes processes, or to put it another way, between institutional response and individual response. Such responses resulted in changes to the identity of institutions and individuals. I saw identity as a collection of meanings and actions (and materiality). What forestry and people in forestry were becoming as a result of those changes could therefore be analysed in terms of changes to the meanings and actions which were seen to belong to forestry. It was also about how existing structures (including existing identities) facilitated (resources) and hindered (rules) change (Giddens 1984).

More concretely my work could now be summarised as a set of propositions:

Proposition 1:

Crisis in forestry → productivist forestry

Brought on by a number of factors (e.g. drop in timber prices, changes in land management etc.) → structural.

Proposition 2:

In response to this crisis (+ other reasons) → new discourses of "new forestry" + new practices being created (e.g. multi-purpose, social forestry).

New elements of discourse include (e.g. sustainability, social, partnership, participation, development, inclusion etc.) → calling into being new practices.

Proposition 3:

The new discourses and practices are placing additional "pressures" on the actors/people who do/are forestry.

Status quo is not an option in the light of the changes. In what ways/how/why/to what extent are actors affected by these pressures?

Proposition 4:

Actors can be categorised in terms of their power to influence the changing structures and practices of forestry by virtue of their power to influence the actions of other actors.

**Figure 4. 1 Research summarised as a set of propositions, July 2003**

### **4.1.1 Recruitment**

On the basis of the considerations above I defined a set of research questions to help me develop a sampling frame for recruiting interviewees:

1. Who are the main actors promoting a redefinition of what forestry is about?
2. What are the main processes set in motion by these actors to facilitate change?

3. Who are the main actors on the receiving end of these change process?
4. In what ways does forestry appear problematic to both groups of actors?
5. How do both groups of actors experience changes in the meanings and actions of forestry and the processes set in motion to facilitate change?
6. How do both groups of actors think existing structures (identities) facilitate and hinder change?
7. What do both groups of actors think forestry is becoming in the process?

I was aiming for about 35 interviews. This was based on what I thought I could realistically handle in terms of the data collection and subsequent analysis.

Having already done six interviews in Phase I this would bring the total number of interviews to about 40. Following on from the research questions outlined above there were broadly speaking two groups of people which I should interview, the main *actors promoting a redefinition of what forestry is about*, and those *actors who were on the receiving end of the processes which the former set in motion to facilitate change*. Getting a spread of different *functionalities* was key. My image was of interviewing people from a ‘transection’ of the forestry hierarchy, from policy staff, to the implementers. I therefore needed to identify what the key functionalities were. Initially I thought it would be good to get a spread in terms of *length of service*, from ‘new recruits’ to ‘old hands’ and possibly even people who had retired (or even left in connection with the changes if anyone has done that). However I began to think that perhaps I mainly wanted to speak to people who had built up sufficient experience of forestry to experience current changes as changes to established ways of doing things.

Three quarters of England’s woodlands are owned by the private sector. This suggested including the private sector in the interviews. Moreover, it seemed to me that the kinds of issues I was interested in cut across the Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise and private sector divide. If the Forestry Commission was the main institutional actor when it comes to formulating policy ideas, then the implementation of those policy ideas took place in the practice of public sector forestry as well as private sector forestry. Including all three would make for some interesting comparisons between public and private sector

forestry, and shed light on relationships between them. On balance I decided that given that the focus of my research had so far been the Forestry Commission, it was beyond the scope of the research to include the private sector at this stage.

These four categories gave me a sampling frame for purposive (as opposed to random) sampling as defined by Silverman (2000, p. 104):

*“Purposive sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested. However, this does not prove a simple approval to any case we happen to choose. Rather purposive sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample case carefully on this basis.”*

In the middle of July 2003 I went to discuss the emerging research design with my Forestry Commission supervisor and to enlist him to help me identify individuals which would fit my sampling frame. Together we considered a number of individuals in the Forestry Commission GB, Forestry Commission England National Office, Forest Enterprise National Office (the policy staff), as well as the appropriateness of different conservancies and districts (the implementers/practitioners). My supervisor pointed out the importance of seeing policy staff as interpreters of outside influences as well as influencers of practitioners. I also discussed my sampling frame with a member of the policy staff at Forest Enterprise national office for England. I chose overlapping conservancies and districts so that they would be referring to the same spatial reality. Together they contained the biggest areas of industrial forest in England.

E-mails to Forestry Commission England and Forest Enterprise England policy staff, district managers and conservators were sent out in July 2003. Most replied quickly and affirmatively. In my e-mail to forest district managers and conservators I had suggested that I might interview themselves and about four staff. I was not familiar enough with the different functionalities within the districts and conservancies to be able to decide who to interview. Instead I asked district managers and conservators to help me identify appropriate members of their teams. This was done on the basis of telephone conversations where we

discussed my sampling frame. This time no-one refused an interview, although two people never replied, one interview was cancelled, and a third person I was interested in interviewing proved difficult to get hold of. The interviews were held between the end of August and the beginning of November 2003. Nine interviews were with 'policy staff', 23 with 'implementers' and two with 'knowledge staff.'

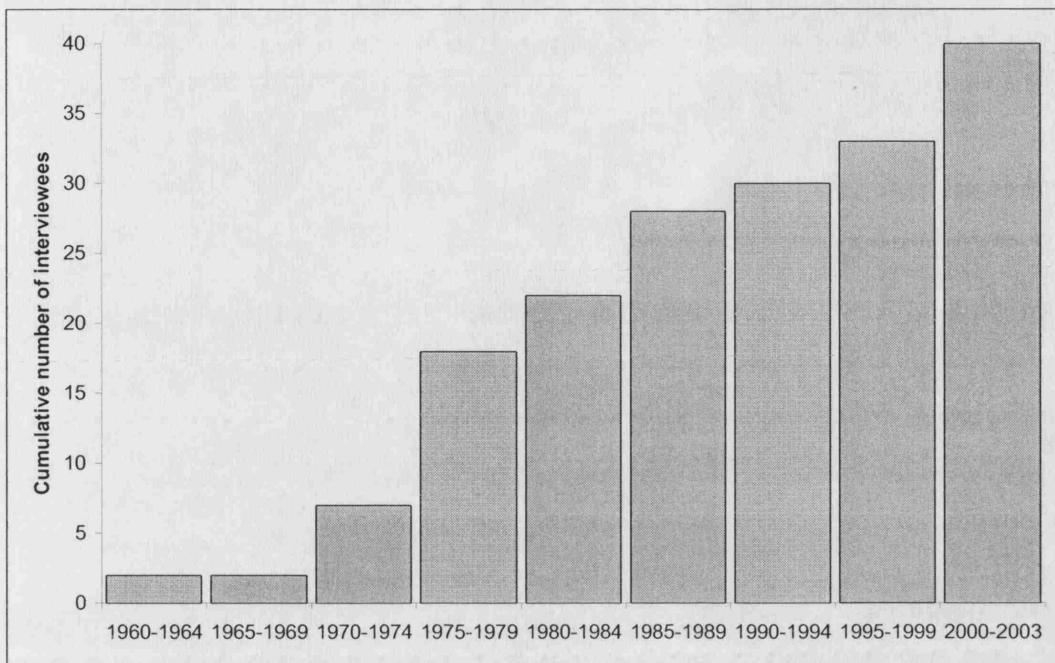
In the course both phases of fieldwork I conducted a total of 40 formal interviews. Table 4. 1 shows the distribution of these interviews in terms of which phase of the research they took place, and the part of the Forestry Commission the interviewees were working in at the time of the interview. Overall twelve of the interviews were with policy staff, while 23 were with implementers, and a further five with knowledge staff, although in practice some implementers, particularly in the conservancies, were also involved in policy work. Appendix 2.2 and 2.3 detail of the functionalities of interviewees from Phase I and Phase II fieldwork.

**Table 4. 1 Summary of Phase I and Phase II interviews**

	Institutional part	Phase I	Phase II	Total	Total
<b>Policy staff</b>	FC GB	2	2	4	12
	FE GB	1	0	1	
	FC England	0	4	4	
	FE England	0	3	3	
<b>Implementers</b>	Conservancies	0	8	8	23
	Forest districts	0	15	15	
<b>Knowledge staff</b>	Forest Research	1	2	3	5
	Forest Training Services	2	0	2	
	Total	6	34	40	

People do not fall into such neat camps. All of the policy staff and most of the knowledge staff had a practitioner background, and some of the implementers had a policy involvement. This is because of the organisation of a career in the Forestry Commission. People generally tend to stay with the Forestry Commission for a long time and it is regarded as a good employer. While the Forestry Commission sends staff 'down very narrow channels', in the words of one interviewee, in as much as the work tends to be highly specified and

circumscribed by guidelines and regulations, a career in the Forestry Commission, at least as a forester, involves moving between a variety of jobs and gaining experience of a range of the practices which make up forestry as practiced by the Forestry Commission. People tend to move between different jobs every few years, and this is especially so early in their careers. In this way a career in the Forestry Commission can actually be very varied, as another interviewee observed. Within that there was often a 'tour of specialisation' where the person would go and work for a number of years either in Forest Research, Forest Training Services or Work Study. This meant that the individuals I interviewed, and in particular those who had worked in the Forestry Commission for a number of years, had had a wide range of experiences in the Commission, coming in sometimes at the forest craftsman level and then training subsequently to become foresters, or others joining as foresters from the beginning. In the course of a career, an individual could hold posts across Forest Enterprise, dealing with the public estate, and the Forest Authority, dealing with grants and licences to the private sector, finding promotion up the hierarchy along the way. Such posts were moreover likely to be located at very different parts of the country, giving an individual experience of England, Wales and Scotland. This should be borne in mind when considering the quotations which appear in the empirical chapters. An interviewee will hold a particular post, but the longer he or she will have spent in the Forestry Commission the wider his or her range of experience is likely to be. Figure 4. 2 shows the cumulative number of interviewees from both Phase I and Phase II interviews who had joined the Forestry Commission by intervals of five years.



**Figure 4. 2 Number of interviewees who joined the Forestry Commission by five year intervals, Phase I and Phase II.**

#### **4.1.2 Interview Schedule**

During July 2003 I began to prepare the interview frame for the Phase II interviews. In the course of this work I began to develop a conceptual model of what I thought was going on in the Forestry Commission. This eventually became the conceptual model which appeared at the end of Chapter 3. The model articulated the relationship between how institutions respond to changes in their setting of action and how individuals experience the changes to their setting of action which arise from this institutional response. From the model I then developed a set of abstract questions which expressed my research interests but which were too abstract to use in the research situation (shown in Figure 4. 3).

Work on institutional self

- What kinds of work on institutional self?
- What dimensions of self is work on institutional self aimed at (i.e. meanings, actions, 'body')?
- Why is it necessary to work on institutional self?
- Who decides what work on institutional self should be done and how?
- What in existing self (structures) helps and hinders change?
- Is work on self bigger than normal, if so how does it compare to other such episodes?
- Are changes in the setting of action bigger than normal, if so how does it compare to other such episodes?
- What is the relationship between changes in the setting of action and work on institutional self?

Changes in institutional self

- What kinds of changes in the dimensions of institutional self (i.e. meanings, actions, 'body') is work on institutional self resulting in?
- How big are these changes compared to previous changes?

Changes in the setting of action of people inside the organisation

- How do actors on the receiving end of change processes experience these?
- Do changes in the setting of action challenges the sense of competence of actors?
- Do changes to the kinds of actions and meanings which can belong to forestry challenge work as a source of belonging/identification and identity?
- Does engagement with lay knowledges in the context of public involvement and other expert knowledges through social science challenge to existing knowledge culture and professional identity?
- Do changes conform to the aspirations of individuals?

**Figure 4.3 Abstract questions in preparation for Phase II interviews, August 2003**

In order to make the link between my own more abstract concerns and the concerns of the interviewees (Stroh 2000a) I developed a set of ‘bridging questions.’ I had requested interviews of no more than 90 minutes to which all interviewees had consented. I therefore organised my bridging questions around six themes, based on the abstract questions, planned to last 10-15 minutes each. In developing the bridging questions I tried to incorporate what I knew about the situation of the interviewee in order to “*activate the respondent’s stock of knowledge (Schütz, 1967) and bring it to bear on the discussion at hand in ways that [were] appropriate to the research agenda*” (Holstein and Gubrium (1997, p. 123). My intention was therefore that the interview frame would be adapted to fit particular interviewees. I also thought that I was likely to want to adapt the interview frame along the way in light of what I learned from the interviewees.

Appendix 4.1 shows the indicative interview schedule for the first of the Phase II interviews which was with the then Director General of the Forestry Commission.

## 4.2 Reflections on Phase I and II data collection

Through the combination of mainly multi-sited ethnography based on participant observation in Phase I and semi-structured interviews in Phase II, I was combining interview based and ethnographic methods. I was thus making use of ‘multiple methods’, one of the most common strategies for ensuring ‘rigour’ in qualitative social geography (Baxter and Eyles, p. 506). It can be discussed to what extent these methods were really separate. Crang (2002, p. 650) has for example pointed out, that ethnography and interview based methods need not be entirely distinct as ethnography can combine both long-term observation *and* repeated interviews.

Goodwin (1998) chose to refer to his interviews as ‘conversations’ to emphasize a conception of the research interview as a contingent social situation (p. 496). Both in the course of the participant observation and in the more formal interviews the data which I collected was almost entirely conversationally based, as is most research using qualitative methods in geography (Crang 2003). And

the conversations which I had in the course of the participant observation were certainly also contingent. The other possibility would be to refer to both types of conversations as interviews since, finding myself in the situation of interacting with my interlocutor, *because of* my role as researcher, the data collection potential of such conversations was usually, but not always, clear at the time. Moreover, while the main purpose of such conversations were in nearly all cases data collection, this was not universally the case. However for my interlocutor in such conversations, there was a lack of the markers of data collection associated with a normal interview (e.g. that the conversation was pre-arranged and/or taped), although it generally quickly became clear to the person I was talking to that I was doing research about the Forestry Commission, or they would already be aware of this, as the anecdote from the Social Forestry Networking Event demonstrates. This touches again on the issue of *consent*. By referring to the conversations I had in the course of the participation events as ‘interviews’ I would be giving the impression of a more explicit informed consent that was in reality the case. At the same time I want to include a list of such conversations in order to enhance the ‘credibility’ and hence my claim to the ‘rigour’ of my account (Baxter and Eyles 1997, p. 512). I have therefore chosen to separate the two types of conversations, and refer to those conversations which took place in an interview setting as ‘interviews’ (Appendix 2.3) and those which took place in the context of participant observation events as ‘conversations’ (Appendix 2.2). However, in order to keep sentence structures simple I refer to the people I spoke to in the context of both interviews and conversations during participant observation as interviewees or research subjects interchangeably.

I made extensive field notes of participation events. All formal interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim.

#### **4.2.1 Adventures with interview schedules**

At the February 2002 interviews with senior policy staff at what was then still the Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise HQ in Edinburgh, and a researcher at Forest Research, I noticed that interviewees had a lot to say, even with relatively little prompting from me based on the interview frame which I had developed (Appendix 2.5). I wanted the interview frame so that I was clear about the themes

I was prioritising for the interviews and to rescue me if I could not think of questions quickly. This is standard practice to provide structure and guidance to the interviewer in the interview situation (Stroh 2000a). After the interviews I thought that I perhaps need not have gone into as much detail. But I was glad to have specific questions to hand especially since I was a bit nervous at the outset, when it felt like there was less rapport with the interviewee, or when I was getting tired, or when a particular line of enquiry petered out. It was also useful to *have gone through* the process of identifying questions since that meant that it was easier to think of what I was interested in ‘off the top of my head’.

In July 2002, I carried out two interviews with staff from Forest Training Services whom I had already had already met before in the context of the May 2002 course on Forestry for Non-Foresters. But this time I felt uncomfortable with the interview situation. I had identified some themes, prepared the interview frames (Appendix 2.6), and then I felt weighed down by them. This was almost the opposite experience of the interviews in February 2002 where I had felt that my preparation had in some ways made it easier to improvise from the structures I had created in my mind through developing the interview frames. Here I felt weighed down by the structures I had created. In retrospect I wondered if I was not simply feeling *relatively* bogged down, i.e. relative to the conversations which I had already had with the two interviewees in the context of participant observation where I felt that a good rapport had been established with both.

There were several markers of a more formal interview that had been absent from the conversations we had had in the context of the course on Forestry for Non-foresters. I had contacted them in advance to ask if I could interview them. I had an interview frame in front of me. We were in a meeting room by ourselves. I had placed the tape recorder in between us. I thought that this more formal setting made at least one of the interviewees more guarded in his responses, perhaps in part in response to the presence of the tape recorder. This experience highlighted that the transition from conversation in the context of participant observation to a more formal interview setting was not necessarily straightforward, the comparative artificiality of the new setting could impose a

strain on the interaction through affecting not only the person interviewed but also the person interviewing.

This related to the situated nature of the interview, collaboratively produced by the interviewee and the interviewer. Both conversations which I had in the course of the participant observation as well as the more formal semi-structured interview, were situated in different ways, including in the face to face interaction of the researcher and the person being interviewed. This also had consequences for their interpretation. As Pool observed in the 1950s,

*“[T]he social milieu in which communication takes place [during interviews] modifies not only what a person dares to say but even what he thinks he chooses to say. And these variations in expression cannot be viewed as mere deviations from some underlying ‘true’ opinion, for there is no neutral, non-social, uninfluenced situation to provide that baseline”* (1957, p. 192; in Holstein and Gubrium 1997, p. 120).

By the time the Phase II interviews took place between the end of August and the beginning of November 2003, I had developed more of a perspective on the interview process on the basis of the six interviews I had done during Phase I. I decided that I wanted to experiment a bit with the form in order to extract some additional methodological learning. To begin with I took a variety of notes about what *additional material I received from interviewees* before, during and after interviews, *substance notes* on the content of the interviews while re-listening to the interview, *process notes* to help me improve my technique and interpret the interviews, *new or revised questions* to be rolled over into the next interview to take account of new information, actions for me and for the interviewee, *snowballing* to verify that I was ‘talking to the right people’ and in case I had resources to do more interviews. In practice, I did not have enough resources to sustain such a dense auditing trail of the research process as the interviews were spaced close together and as the work progressed I got increasingly exhausted. All except three of the 34 interviews were carried out in the 46 days between the 26<sup>th</sup> of August and the 10<sup>th</sup> of October and involved substantial amounts of travel as well as some overnight stays in youth hostels. It strikes me now that given

such an intense period of fieldwork one needs to decide what the essential notes are. It may be that during this intense period of work my linguistic resources were coming under pressure, English being my second language.

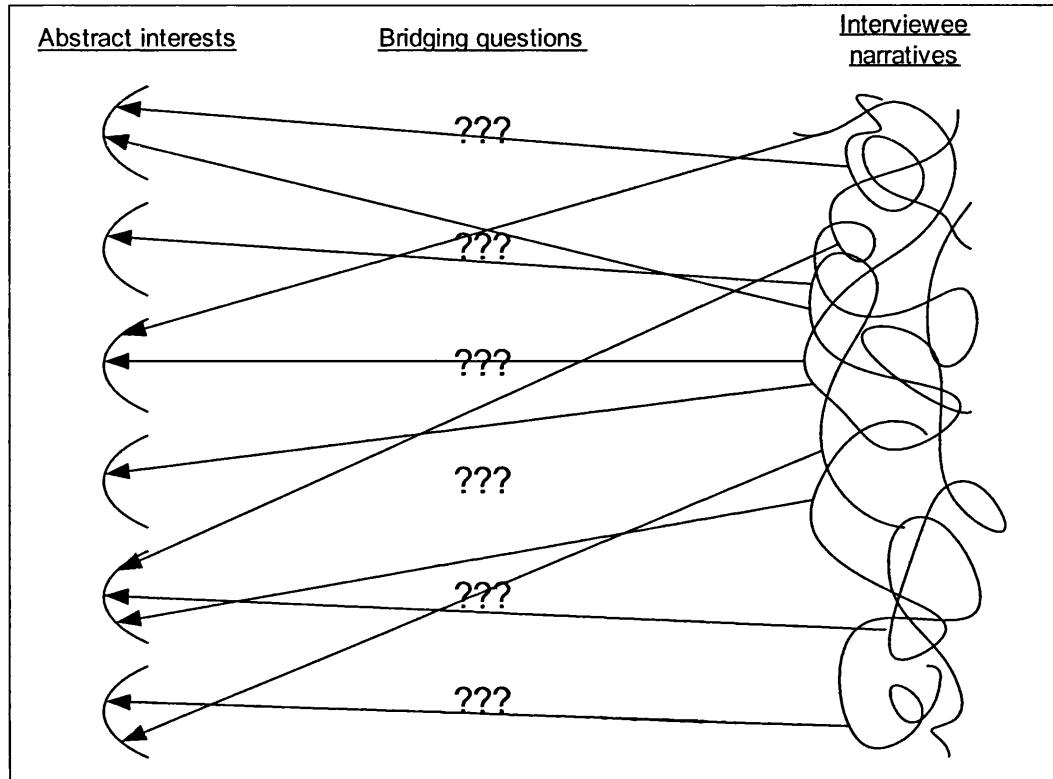
In the first interview, with the Director General of the Forestry Commission, I tried to stick to the structure of the interview frame, so if an interesting lead would come up, I would try and make a note of it to return to it later. This did not work so well. I was constraining myself too much with the structure. Often when it was time to return to the point I did not feel I had the mental capacity to remember well enough what it was to be able to represent it to the interviewee so that he would be able to reconnect with what had been *in his mind at the time*. I felt that as a result I missed opportunities for exploring themes I did want to explore because, being conscious of having to ‘come out’ to pick up the sequence of the interview frame again, I pulled back from going ‘too deeply’ in to such themes.

I decided to go for the ‘bad interview’ in the second interview, with a Forestry Commissioner, going for the opposite extreme, picking up interesting threads as and when they emerged, trusting that by now, I was familiar enough with what I was interested in to end up with relevant material. In any case I still had the interview frame as a safety net. This time I felt much more at ease and I found that the narratives of the interviewee trailed all over ‘the boxes’ which I was interested in, like a kind of conversational snail, tracing patterns across the ‘the boxes’ which articulated my interests. Figure 4. 4 illustrates the relationship between my more abstract research interests as expressed by the conceptual model and the abstract questions, the bridging questions contained in the interview schedule and the answers of the interviewees.

In the third interview, with the Economic Regeneration Advisor to the Forestry Commission England, I specifically tried to work with a more concrete, particularistic, ‘closer to the interviewee and his or her experience’ approach. It seemed that staying close to concrete, particular, the interviewees experience would, in any case, lead to answers which would make tracks across my ‘boxes.’ This interview also confirmed that in relation to following threads there was no

time like the present and threads would lead to other areas of relevance anyway.

By the third interview I therefore felt more confident that I would remember the important strands.



**Figure 4. 4 Relationship between abstract research interests, bridging questions and interviewee narratives.**

I also needed the interview schedule less because the mental structures of the conceptual framework were by now firmly lodged in my mind and I could therefore trust myself to pick up on relevant material without giving it my full reflexive awareness. This also enabled me to concentrate more on the interviewee. To be more present in the interaction at hand. This was a result of the learning process through which I had become 'expert' in relation to my material. This also allowed me to focus less on the structures themselves and use them creatively to improvise. By the phase II interviews, I had therefore come to see the interviews as an improvisation on a structure. Drawing on Pool (1957), Holstein and Gubrium also remark on the dramaturgical and in particular the improvisational aspect of the interview:

*This active interview is a kind of limited ‘improvisational’ performance. The production is spontaneous, yet structured – focused within loose parameters provided by the interviewer, who is an active participant” (Holstein and Gubrium 1997, p. 123).*

I noticed after a few interviews that interviewees began telling stories that were directly relevant to my abstract questions from the warm up questions about their background. From these narratives about the past they would make connection to their present setting of action, moving between ‘narratives of us’ and ‘narratives of me’, and referring to events at different spatial scales. In the course of the early interviews I therefore soon developed a set of stock ‘warm up’ questions shown in Figure 4. 5. From this opening stage of the interview I would then ask questions rooted in my abstract interests opportunistically in a way which made use of the way in which the interviewee’s narratives were developing.

- Tell me a bit about your background prior to joining the FC
- What posts have you held?
- What are the responsibilities of your current post?
- What attracted you to forestry in the first place?
- What was it like when you first joined the Forestry Commission?
- Has forestry changed a lot since you joined?
- How has that affected you?

**Figure 4. 5 ‘Warm up’ questions, Phase II interviews, September 2003.**

In general it was easy to strike up a rapport with interviewees. And I felt that they were very open with me, in spite of the fact that the interview was preceded by a conversation about how I would like to use the interviews, and for this reason, one could assume that they would still have in mind, at least in the early stages of the interview, the fact that I was likely to put functionality as well as location next to any quotations. I wondered subsequently what to make of the openness with which I had been met throughout the fieldwork. Was it because I was good at making a connection with interviewees through the way I framed my questions? Or because I appeared trustworthy in their eyes, and possibly had a part ‘insider’ status due to my association with my Forestry Commission supervisor who most, possibly all, would have heard of, and a number of them

also met? Was it because the questions I asked them connected up with their experience in a way which gave them a welcome opportunity to reflect? Or was it because staff working for the Forestry Commission were, contrary to the stereotype of the forester who prefers trees to people, a very personable group of people, who liked to help aspiring social scientists? Certainly, apart from the *general* challenges of being in an unfamiliar environment, the research had been socially surprisingly easy, as well as enjoyable. I *liked* the people I met. Their openness also made me feel particularly responsible for what I would subsequently do with the data as well as grateful.

The 34 interviewees took in the full range of the Forestry Commission hierarchy. From forest craftsmen to the Director General, through senior staff at the national offices of both Forestry Commission England and Forest Enterprise England. The range on interviews, thus included what Beamer (2002) refers to as 'elite interviews'. However, the interviews where I felt most challenged in terms of making a connection with the interviewee through some understanding of their 'form of life' (Wittgenstein cited in Fielding and Fielding 1986, p. 40) was in the context of two interviews with forest craftsmen who had both worked for the Forestry Commission as craftsmen for more than 30 years. I found it difficult to find the kinds of questions which would make the interviewees want to be expansive with me. In other words I found it difficult to connect my world with their world through symbolic interaction. I think if I had understood more about the issues which were important for forest craftsmen in their day to day jobs before going into those interviews, I would have been able to ask more effective questions. And this may also have been an instance where, since their work was more based on manual work than the other interviewees, it would have been useful to spend a day shadowing them on their job. This would have provided more cues for me to use as a point of departure for symbolic interaction around the work of the forest craftsmen. I felt at the time that I failed to 'activate, stimulate and cultivate the subject's interpretative capabilities' to paraphrase Holstein and Gubrium (1997, p. 122). Nevertheless the transcripts made interesting reading subsequently so perhaps I was just having to work relatively harder to make the connection.

Looking over the entirety of the research, my research interests had almost exclusively been met with sympathetic interest and/or recognition from the many people I interacted with. But there were also a couple of moments where interviewees explicitly commented on the lack of usefulness of the research from the point of view of their practice oriented concerns. That was not easy to hear at the time, and in retrospect raises the issue of how much more difficult the research process *could* have been had the setting of action not been so sympathetic. One example was in the course of the Social Forestry Networking Event in September 2003, when a policy advisor told me that my research was not likely to be much use to her concerns in that it was not sufficiently applied. Another was in the course of a Phase II interview when one interviewee, a senior person within one of the districts, suggested that PhDs in social forestry were not really useful. This was also an example of an interview where I had to work harder than in some interviews to 'warm up' the interviewee, and work with that part of the interview in a more focussed and self-conscious way. I felt in this interview that I somehow had to 'prove' myself.

So I would like to see research getting more involved at the sharp end in helping to deliver. That would mean working with the community forest - actually within the community forest - getting into the community forest and actually getting hands on experience. As well as learning from France and Germany and Denmark and Holland – i.e. at the minute it seems like an academic game - people go away and get PhDs or whatever in social forestry. Wonderful, but what's then coming from it; what's being delivered from it? I'm being facetious.

Forest District Manager, a forest district in England, September 2003.

In both of these instances my research was getting rolled up in a debate about the relationship between the kind of research Forest Research was geared up to deliver which was rooted in the dominant practices of the Forestry Commission over the last 80 years, and what some practitioners were having to negotiate in their practice.

In the end I did manage to strike up a rapport with this interviewee, and as the end of the quotation suggests, he was to an extent pulling my leg. This interview

also points up the issue that interviewees had different stances towards different aspects of *my* identity. Here, although I was being rolled up with Forest Research, I was perhaps, at least as long as the ‘joke’ lasted, being allocated *outsider* status, at least outside in relation to the *inside* of his *practice* as opposed to research, and possibly also outsider status in relation to the inside of the Forestry Commission as opposed to the academic Department.

On a couple of occasions I felt somewhat steamrollered by the energy with which interviewees were developing their narratives. This was probably a combination of getting towards the end of the interviews and becoming tired, and the passion with which those interviewees were investing their work.

The fact that I found that interviewees would ‘trail all over my boxes’ and that it was easy to strike up a rapport in the context of the interviews suggested to me that the conceptual model was being confirmed in the interviews. This was also supported by confirmation of interpretations of mine (or to put it another way, hypotheses), rooted in the conceptual framework, which I would sometimes offer in the context of the interviews.

There were however aspects of the conceptual model which I continued to find it hard to ask questions about, and which I have also found difficult to write up with as much depth as I would have liked to. I was very interested and sympathetic to the position which the institutional change process put individuals. And the first phase of the fieldwork in combination with more theoretical considerations about belonging, identity formation and social change (in other words changes to the setting of action) in the context of a power relation between institution and individual had made me think that there was an important dimension of the change process of the Forestry Commission to explore here. This material did come up in the interviews. Often it came up in the context of references to *other* people’s experiences than the interviewee him or herself. Or it came up in ways which were *outside* of the interview context, either because it was after the interview, or because it was ‘not for citation.’ There were however opportunities to pursue this material, both in the 34 interviews, as well as in potential additional interviews. This was in a way a repeat of a feeling I had had

during the Forestry for Non-Foresters course, where I had struggled with a sense of being intrusive. It was about people's emotions, and emotions had been put on my research map as early as the first interviews at the Forestry Commission Head Quarters in February 2002.

Part of the difficulty of writing this part of the research up in a focussed way, also had to do with a contradiction between different levels of abstraction in the use of the data. The account of the fieldwork in the first phase of the research made certain individuals quite visible for people working for the Forestry Commission. At the same time I wanted to give the functionality and the location of people when I was using the transcripts. This made it difficult to go into the more personal material, or perhaps rather to bind it into narratives of mine which were more intimate, or psychological, since interviewees would in general be quite visible from someone working for the Forestry Commission. Maybe this was not a problem for interviewees and the people I had spoken with in the course of the participant observation. But I did not feel comfortable about it. In retrospect, I feel that this material is something which could be explored more effectively in a separate paper, given the right level of abstraction, and taking account of both the challenges and opportunities the changes in the Forestry Commission provide at the individual level, i.e. the joy and the pain of transition.

For the Phase II interviews I explained to interviewees, before switching on the tape recorder, that I would like to be able to put both functionality and location next to any quotations I might use from their interviews without mentioning their name, and asked whether this would be acceptable for them. I was careful to phrase this as a real question. No-one refused. A few requested that I showed them the context of the quotation first.

When I had carried out the six interviews in the first phase of the research, I had not yet thought about how I wanted present quotations from the interviews in the thesis. I could therefore not ask interviewees for their 'informed consent' (Kent 2000) to give their functionality and location next to quotations from their interviews. As a result I was working with four categories of people in the writing up phase, those who I had spoken with in the course of participant

observation, those whom I had interviewed in the first phase of the research, those whom I had interviewed in the second phase of the research and who had consented for their functionality and location to accompany any citation, and those who had requested to see citations in context. This situation grew out of the grounded approach to methodology and because I was learning by doing in the course of the PhD. However, it complicated writing up. Finally I decided that for the purposes of examination I would have to state functionality of all interviewees and some of the people I had spoken with in the course of the participant observation and to discuss with examiners what modifications might have to be made between examination and the thesis becoming publicly available. I preferred to give as much anonymity to interviewees as possible and as writing up proceeded, details of the location, information about the characteristics of the particular forest districts and conservancies in which I carried out the research became less important to my argument.

There are still relatively few women working for the Forestry Commission, out of a total number of 40 formal interviews in the course of the research, nine were with women, 3 of whom were in administrative positions. Referring to such interviewees using the feminine pronoun would therefore be a significant identifier. It is therefore with regret that I have therefore decided to use 'he' throughout the text in the empirical chapters. This was a difficult choice because it effectively writes women out of the empirical narrative and thus arguably contribute to the marginal position of women in forestry.

### **4.3 Reflections on Phase I and II data interpretation**

I wanted to draw a line under data analysis after the final Phase II interviews at the beginning of November 2003. I felt that in the two years the research had lasted I had collected a lot of material, and that it was likely to be time consuming to make sense of it all. Just as well, since making sense of it all did turn out to be time consuming as well as intellectually and emotionally demanding. Wax puts it well:

*“Every time I have been in the field and become truly involved I have had to struggle with an impulse to stay longer than I should have stayed. By this I mean that I felt an almost irresistible urge to gather more data rather than face the grim task of organising and reporting on the data I had. But in every case, the longer I stayed, the less time I had to write, and the poorer became my final report. Indeed most of the data gathered at the expense of the time I had allowed for writing is still languishing in my files. It’s a horrible but inescapable fact that it takes more time to organise, write and present material well than it does to gather it. ... The sensible researcher will allow as much free time to write his [sic] report as he spent in the field. If he is really astute and can get away with it, he will allow more time” (Wax 1983, p. 193-4; in Cook and Crang 1995, p. 75-76. My underlining).*

#### **4.3.1 Early adventures in making sense, August 2002 –**

##### **October 2002**

During May 2002 I had agreed with my academic supervisor that I would use the analysis of the interviews to familiarize myself with different analytical approaches and learn to use a CAQDAS (Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis) package. The choice seemed to be between ATLAS.ti and NVivo and I trialled both of them, drawing on Strauss' (1987) account of grounded theory, and in particular the idea of open coding. Since at that time I had little experience of and therefore little perspective on the process of qualitative data analysis to bring to the trialling the two packages, it was difficult to know what to look for. As Welsh (2002) has commented,

*“[m]any social science researchers selecting software do not have the expertise to make informed assessments of the different software choices, thus decisions can be based on colleagues’ recommendations or on the basis of trying out one package and finding it appropriately user friendly. In addition the time required to become familiar with the package can be an important part of this decision making process” (2002, p. 2).*

Nevertheless, while trialling NVivo I had felt that coding became associated with an attempt at ‘closure’, that the structure took on a life of its own, sucking in resources in the shape of time and energy without an accompanying sense that I was actually making progress with the analysis. I was afraid of ending up in a ‘categorisation trap’, obsessing about where bits of text belonged in a hierarchical structure. It seemed to me that ATLAS.ti allowed for more flexibility in linking different categories of things, that it was less hierarchical than NVivo, and thought this would suit my mind better. I ordered ATLAS.ti in May 2002 and it arrived with much delay in the middle of July 2002 just before my holidays. It was therefore not until August that I began using ATLAS.ti in earnest.

I was initially very enthusiastic, hoping that ATLAS.ti would help me manage the material physically and therefore enhance my ability to think creatively about it. As Pidgeon and Henwood (in press, p. 29) note, while such programs are,

*“clearly an invaluable aid where a grounded theory project involves large and complex data sets, which the analyst needs to organise, and in the later stage of analysis efficiently sift and sort for comparisons and emergent relationships [...] what they will not do is conduct the hard creative intellectual work of analysis for the researcher.” “Even when using CAQDAS programs, it is the researcher who must provide the difficult interpretative work which generates the label.”*

During initial open coding (free association starting from the transcripts) I produced nearly 200 codes. A colleague in the graduate room who was further in her research said that she was working with 40 and I reduced my codes to 30-40.<sup>30</sup> This required a lot of thought and took about two weeks. What kind of mental work was involved in this? Looking at the content of codes, thinking

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<sup>30</sup> The 35 codes as of 2 September 2002: analytic ideas; biography; community forests; culture; devolution; EU; FC change and learning; FC culture; FC external stakeholders; FC funding; FC Policy and Practice Division; flows; foresters; FTS social forestry course; gender; good quotes!; identity; language; open question; participation; people; policy network; recreation; relationship between agriculture and forestry; social forestry; social research programme; social science; sustainable forestry; three nations; two most important changes in forestry; two most important issues in forestry today; UK a special case; UN; what is forestry for?; what people are concerned about?

about the relationship between different codes (name and content). It was one big exercise in differentiating experience, one big ‘ordering’ exercise (Law 1994). The value of this, at once, creative and ordering work lay in the somewhat concrete idea of ‘boxes’ or concepts as containers for my experience in forestry becoming firmly established in my mind. It was also clear that while such ‘boxes’ were themselves discrete but not mutually exclusive, experience is continuous.

Having reduced the number of codes I decided to make a first stab at ‘writing through’ the ones that seemed most important: ‘Social forestry’, ‘What is forestry for’, ‘Participation’, ‘FC change and learning’ and ‘Good stories’. I opted for a ‘stories about’ approach. The alternative would have been to present what my interviewees said as a direct reflection of reality. This required that I had a perspective of my own with which to assess the truth value of their statements. I did not feel I had that, in part because I was new to forestry. And so there was really nowhere to go for me other than to adopt the ‘stories about’ approach. Interpreting and representing the meanings of research subjects is standard practice in qualitative social science. And in this sense my analytical perspective also developed in a grounded way, and it was coherent with the growing importance of issues of meaning as the research developed. I had already written a lot in various forms (thematic papers based on reading around specific themes; field notes; research diary notes; writing through the interviews) which I also coded. I thought I could collect my notes, arrange them thematically and use additional thoughts sparked by the existing ones on paper to weave together a document in a format which my academic supervisor could respond to. This was even more difficult than analysing the interviews!

The research diary speaks of much mental anguish during this period. I tended to get bogged down by my own text, my brain did not creatively engage with these bits of text, but treated them as indigestible bits of matter. I was torn between a thematic and a chronological way of fracturing the data. I think this was because in trying to justify why the themes which were emerging in the research would be interesting to pursue, I kept getting drawn into a narrative of what had led me to do what I did and what had led me to think what I thought. The answer to this

(the meaning giving context) always seemed to be chronological. In the end the chronological way of fracturing the data (into time bits, events arranged in a chronological order) felt less undoable than the thematic approach. My academic supervisor subsequently suggested that this was to do with the stage I was at in the research, that there are three stages to the research process: a chronological account, a fractured account starting to generate low level theory, and some kind of final write up where the data is organised according to some higher level of abstraction. In Strauss' (1987) terminology I was not yet ready to fracture the data thematically into more conceptual (theoretical) boxes. In retrospect it seems that I had in fact *already* fractured the data in different ways as the fact that I was able to code the data in a meaningful way suggested. But something was clearly missing. It is indicative of the difficulty of the process that the paper which I gave to my academic supervisor at the beginning of October 2002, was filed on the computer under the filename 'Trying again !!!'. Nevertheless, it was in this work and in particular in the context of writing through the code 'social forestry' and 'what is forestry for?' that I came to an important moment of interpretation in the research. My experience of data analysis would probably have been different, although I do not think entirely so, if I had opted for a more theory driven approach, rather than a grounded approach:

*"Theoretical sensitivities are qualitative researchers' way of approaching the analysis of data: and rather than being held as 'true' until found to be false, they are viewed as tools that can be vision-creating or blinkering depending upon a complex mix of individual, structural and cultural conditions. Paradoxically, they tell us where to look at the same time as, potentially, keeping us from seeing" (Vaughan, 1992, p. 195 in Henwood and Pidgeon, in press, p. 7).*

Theoretical sensitivities provides a means of steering the analytical process, adrift on the data seas without a rudder was not a comfortable place to be.

#### **4.3.2 Further adventures in making sense, November**

##### **2003- May 2005**

The journey from November 2003 (after the Phase II fieldwork) to gaining closure between the covers of the bounded thesis was long and arduous. Dragons had to be slain. More than 1000 pages of transcriptions and field notes had to be digested and used to create some kind of narrative structure which was mine, and yet had a relationship with the narratives of the people I had met in the course of the research which justified the label ‘social science’ for my narrative.

I coded on the basis of the conceptual framework (Figure 3. 1) which I had developed during July and August 2003. Coding took about twice as long as the interviews themselves. In other words about three hours per interview. I could not do much more than six hours of coding a day if I also wanted to be writing memos at the same time. When the coding got too much I tried to read some of the other material which I have collected during the fieldwork. In the course of the coding I drew a large number of diagrams which helped me to articulate different conceptual ideas.

By the middle of January 2004 the codes from the coding frame were getting very full. There were for example already 80 quotations in the ‘Changes to institutional self’ code. In retrospect this was not so surprising since the interview frame was designed around them. I shifted towards creating new codes and the number of codes went up to 240. I began to think that I should not be afraid of generating lots of codes.

I began to get worried about the analysis, coding felt mindless and meaningless. I began to wonder whether it was actually useful. At the same time I did not dare to start writing because I was afraid of not getting through all of the interviews and other primary documents. I decided not to code the transcripts of the two meetings which I sat in on with the Forest Training Services trainer. They were very long. I coded everything else. By the second half of January 2004 I had 445 codes.

As mentioned already, a colleague of mine had recommended working with 40-50 codes. This did not seem practical for me. Each individual code would be too big. Going over the content of each of these mega codes would take too much time. This would involve first coding more than 1000 pages and then re-reading codes with a minimum of 25 pages in them assuming that coding would be exclusive, i.e. that each bit of text would only be coded with one code. This was not the case, most of the text was coded with several different codes.

Finally I decided that it was not necessary that everything should be tidily put in the boxes one has decided they actually belong to as a result of the analysis. I now saw the point as being more to identify the emerging conceptual framework (what kind of boxes there are, and how they relate to each other) on the basis of the results of the coding. This is an iterative process, the structure is *emergent*. Codes will emerge while coding ‘document 5’ which perhaps (in retrospect) fit ‘document 1’. This does not necessarily mean that I now have to go back to ‘document 1’ and recode it. The coding process is creative. It is about *creating order*, or to put it another way, it is about creating structure. But it is not necessarily necessary to *concretise* this order by ordering all of the actual text in the coding structure as it appears at the end of the coding process. The codes and the conceptual framework which emerges as a result of considering them reflects the order created in and by the mind. This should help in the act of communication which is writing up. The point is to communicate an order which one has created in the course of the research process which may include coding with ATLAS.ti. The ordering however does not begin with putting bits of text into boxes called codes, nor does it end there. The ordering begins in the first experience of the research and it continues until the final punctuation mark is put down in the thesis. The point is to communicate this order, i.e. write the thesis, not to tidy up primary documents in the ATLAS.ti codes. I could now ‘stop making sense’ and begin to focus on writing up.

With hindsight, I can see that the fact that my analytical codes which I had drawn from the conceptual model (and on which the abstract questions which structured my interview frame were based) were getting so full was an indication that my

conceptual model *held*, my ‘categories’ were, to put it in Strauss and Corbyn’s (1998, p. 136) words, getting ‘saturated’:

*“A category is considered saturated when no new information seems to emerge during coding, that is, when no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data. However, this statement is a matter of degree. In reality, if one looked long and hard enough, one always would find additional properties or dimensions. There always is that potential for the “new” to emerge. Saturation is more a matter of reaching the point in the research where collecting additional data seems counterproductive; the “new” that is uncovered does not add that much more to the explanation at this time. Or, as is sometimes the situation, the researcher runs out of time, money, or both.”*

What I had been doing since starting the coding in November 2003 was to add ‘properties’ and ‘dimensions’ to my categories. And as the large number of codes demonstrated, this was a potentially endless, as well as thankless task. Could I not have drawn the conclusion that the conceptual framework held without coding up all 40 interviews? I think so. This was taking ‘rigour’ too far. What was needed in November 2003 was a choice about how I was going to write up the conceptual framework in the thesis (i.e. in terms of the logical structure, or in terms of a chronological account, or a mixture of both), what aspects to focus on and what aspects to treat more superficially in the context of an overall narrative structure. I did develop a narrative structure for the thesis in terms of what would be in the different chapters. But it did not sufficiently explicitly take as its point of departure that the conceptual model had been confirmed and that this should be the starting point for the structure. I needed a way to tell the story of the conceptual framework using the data *illustratively*, complimented by selected more focussed bits of analysis of the interview data, not continue to work inductively on the whole conceptual model. I did not see that I had shifted from the inductive to the theoretically driven, diagnostic stage of the research process and that my hypothesis had been confirmed *again*, and thus held across different methodological contexts. I simply did not see that I had already done the work and that I could begin writing. So in a way, I *did* end up getting seduced by the

technology of CAQDAS in as much as the muscular effort of coding came to overshadow a reflected (and difficult) choice about what how to turn the conceptual model into a thesis. As Welsh (2002, p. 4) notes on the basis of experience with NVivo:

*“Because the electronic coding process is quick (compared to cutting and pasting pieces of text manually) it is possible that more coding will take place in a study which makes use of software than one that uses only manual methods, and it is not necessarily the case that this additional coding contributes much to an understanding of the data”* (my underlining).

### **4.3.3 Learning by doing**

In spite of reading some of the literature on data analysis (e.g. Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corby 1998; Silverman 2000), I found data analysis a bit of a black box. It appeared to be something which happens, somehow, by mixing analytical approach (e.g. grounded theory) with data (e.g. field notes, transcripts) and technology (e.g. ATLAS.Ti). This was in part because data analysis has a relatively low profile in qualitative research, as is widely commented on. For example in a review of a recent conference on ethnographic organisational studies, Bergman noted:

*“none of the presenters, to the best of my knowledge, explained in any detail how they analysed their data. They certainly gave wonderful examples on what information was collected and what conclusions were drawn from these, but a discussion on how to select that which is used from all other possible observations, how to sort and categorise these observations, and how to interpret and report them – all that was practically absent. While I would not expect such details at a conference that deals with a substantive issue, e.g. classroom education, health and risk behaviour, etc., I would certainly expect more methodological small print at a conference dedicated to a method.”* (Bergman 2003, p. 6).

According to Pickles (1992), both the collection of qualitative data and especially their interpretation have long been based on methodological principles that are

largely implicit, often derived from years of apprenticeship and practice and informed by the keen eye and intuitive judgement of the expert (p. 222, in Demeritt and Dyer 2002, p. 232). And Stroh has commented that while, “[i]here are various approaches to collecting qualitative data [...] there is still a relative paucity of literature on how to analyse the data generated.” (Stroh 2000b).

Tesch has considered the consequences for novice researchers,

“[f]or the most part, concrete ways of handling data have been passed on from one researcher generation to the next by word of mouth. [...] Many novice researchers simply, and sometimes to the point of exhaustion, experiment until they have invented their own scheme.” (Tesch 1990, 128-129; in Stroh 2000b, p. 227).

Cook and Crang (1995) also comment on how, in the geographic literature on qualitative methods, ‘data coding’ or ‘transcript analysis’ has tended to be conspicuous by its absence (p. 76). However, to a certain extent, the sense of qualitative data analysis as a black box was also related to the need to go through a process of experiential learning by doing in order to be able to understand it. The various sources on data analysis therefore make much more sense post-hoc than they did ex-ante. In retrospect it seems that a key point for me was to know when to *stop*, in the sense of recognising that the conceptual model held. And in consequence begin to turn that into a research narrative where the broader frame was illustrated by examples possibly based on more analysis of *parts* of the data relating to *parts* of the conceptual framework.

Inevitably some interviews produced narratives which more strikingly captivated my interpretation of what was going on. This means that some interviewees are used more frequently. In some cases the use of several quotes from the same interviewee was also due to that actor being particularly close to the events.

#### **4.3.4 The researcher as research instrument**

‘Data analysis’ was a phrase I found it difficult to get comfortable with. ‘Sense making’ seemed to me to be a more satisfactory way of talking about the process of creating sense out of the research experience. And this had begun *with* the

beginning of the research, and of course the resources I drew on in this interpretative work had a much longer history. Making sense of the data did not begin with self-conscious attempts at ‘data-analysis’, with or without using ATLAS.Ti.

‘Data’ is generated in the continuous flow of experience of the researcher. The calls for paying more attention to the body as a research instrument (Crang 2003) are about mining other parts of the researcher’s experience than those which are based on e.g. words. Narratives of experience are situated, what we experience, what and how we understand and communicate it to ourselves and others is also situated in particular settings, and therefore so is the researcher’s *research* narrative both the inner research narrative, the knowledge which she has produced, *and* the outer research narrative, the story about how she produced it. Moreover these different kinds of situatedness produce their own challenges. This is not just a question of what one wants to say, but also about *how* what one says can be used. The quote by Pool (1957) referred to above applies as much to the utterance embodied in the thesis as it does to the collaboratively construction of the narrative produced in the interview situation. The difference, if there is a difference, is that entailed in the narrative role of the researcher is a reflexive attention to the effects of this situatedness which is part of what social scientists label as method.

A subset of the researcher’s experience during the time of the research gets defined as ‘data’ (or relevant for a methods chapter) with reference to what the research is or has come to be about. The definition of what counts as data shifts as the research process develops, as was for example the case with the early supervisions with my Forestry Commission supervisor which came to be classified as ‘data’ as well as ‘supervisions’. Cook and Crang (1995, p. 76) also comment on the relationship between the research process, data collection and data analysis, that:

*“[s]ome (parts of) research projects may have tightly defined research encounters [...], while others may be more loosely defined as researchers follow up leads and adapts to the multiple contingencies of their/our ongoing research*

*projects. In the latter more flexible case, researchers may end up constructing materials from a wide range of encounters, may only later be able to gauge their (ir)relevance and may therefore have to leave a proportion of their material untouched given [...] time pressures. ”*

In a grounded theory approach (Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corby 1998) the horizon of what can count as data is more open than a more theory driven approach, at least until a more focused conception of what the research is about starts to narrow the definition.

However it is selected there are still many stories which can be told on the basis of the data so selected. This raises the issue of what counts as an acceptable story, what are the criteria for acceptable stories? This depends on the social context in which the story is told. Some examples of social practices with different criteria for good story telling might be social science, forestry and drama-improvisation. Coherence, and a storyline which is not too complex are probably common to most storytelling contexts. There are differences of opinion within social science about the essential criteria for an acceptable story, some say that truth is no longer one of them, others would disagree. Perhaps a successful social scientific account was one which provides a story which captures what a critical mass of people have experienced but perhaps not yet articulated. In other words, one which gives a sufficient number of people the ‘aha!’ experience. Baxter and Eyles (1997) found ‘appeals to the interpretive community’ one of eleven strategies used to ensure ‘rigour’ in qualitative research within social geography.

The researcher as an instrument of knowledge production/data collection comes before any of the more easily identifiable methods skills which usually come under the heading qualitative and quantitative methods. Whatever they are they are still rooted in the bigger instrument of the researcher.

If the ‘results’ can be seen as the internal research narrative, then that is embedded in an ‘outer’ research narrative about the production of that inner research narrative. This involves explaining what the researcher did to account

for why the inner research narrative turned out the way that it did. This tends to become a kind of causal (and therefore to some extent chronological) account of its own. But since causality is very complicated this is potentially a big task of its own, in which my process becomes the research object.

Ultimately ‘why did you think this is striking...?’, is in some way the same question as how did you become the kind of person who ended up seeing this as striking? But then the research becomes about the seer rather than what is seen, about the research instrument rather than what the research instrument has seen. As Crang has pointed out there is a danger that constructivist ontologies of the world lead to a self-reflexivity producing an infinite regress (Crang 2003, p. 498). The situated production of knowledge is a condition which researchers share with research subjects. As Law (1994, p. 17) puts it,

*“I’m clear that ethnography is a product, an interactive outcome, and nothing to do with observation by neutral or disembodied intellects. [...] [T]he same is the case for any other project, empirical or theoretical. So the way I treat the problem (I don’t solve it, it cannot be solved) in this version of a modest sociology is to expose some of the contingencies and uncertainties – ethnographic, theoretical, personal and political – with which I have wrestled along the way. So unlike the reflexive sociologists, I am not attempting a systematic deconstruction of my writing. Instead I’m saying, defeasibly to be sure, that given my concerns I think that the Laboratory was this rather than some other way.”*

One approach would be to adopt a narrative style which writes out the researcher as research instrument, the ‘God trick’ (Haraway 1988; in Cook 2005). But given the assumptions about the social construction of knowledge expressed above it would not be appropriate to adopt the rhetorics of natural science. Moreover, perhaps it is appropriate for the products of a social science apprenticeship, which a PhD thesis can be considered to be (Philips and Pugh 2000), to be highly reflexive in this way since, one might argue, part of the apprenticeship is to get to know oneself *as a research instrument*. This is perhaps something which the more experienced researcher can allow to drop into the background. It is of

course important not to get overwhelmed by the task of reflexivity which also requires resources, Holstein and Gubrium (1997) have cautioned that,

*“[a] narrow focus on how tends to displace the significant whats – the meanings – that serve as the relevant grounds for asking and answering questions” (p. 115).*

Nevertheless, according to Baxter and Eyles,

*“[m]uch attention has been focussed recently on the interview process and the need for reflexive consideration of how knowledge is produced through the social relations of the interview: a key element in the postmodern and new cultural turns” (1997, p. 510).*

There are, however, limits to the reflexive knowing of the research situation. Thus in recent work the potential of reflexivity for underwriting good research has come under renewed scrutiny, and reflexivity has been critiqued for implying the eventual goal of a fully known social situation, when claiming to know even ones own motives is difficult enough (Rose 1997, in Crang 2002, p. 651).

Nevertheless, much of the qualitative research in geography and in the social sciences more generally adopt the same naturalist stance to the self-evident truth of its empirical findings as positivism (Demeritt and Dyer 2002, p. 232).

Demeritt and Dyer have identified two rhetorics of rigour within qualitative social science. One which relies essentially on appeals to the craftsmanship of the researcher and the other which relies on appeals to method (2002, p. 232), advocating that the mystique of craft is replaced by the transparency of method.

Demeritt and Dyer argue that behind both of these rhetorics lie a naturalism which relies on a correspondence theory of truth. While both rhetorics may be appealed to in the context of understanding the meanings of research subjects, they displace the essential interpretative element in rearticulating such meanings in the context of the knowledge production process of qualitative research. On the basis of work by Peck (1999), Martin (2001), Dorling and Shaw (2002), Demeritt and Dyer (2002) argue that much of the recent anxiety about the policy

irrelevance of contemporary human geography has been driven by the concern that the kind of self-consciously partial knowledge delivered through qualitative methods does not provide a robust enough foundation for action, particularly in the realm of policy (p. 238). Such authors, claim Demeritt and Dyer, are afraid that without a scientific methodology geography will be plagued by relativism and unable to guide action. Demeritt and Dyer argue that,

*“political expediency does not strike us as a sound basis for accepting the naturalist’s belief in mimetic truth as the only alternative to relativism. The problem with naturalism is that it imagines the criteria for warranting knowledge as self-evident – true knowledge simply is”* (p. 238).

Such debates are also taking place within the policy studies literature and is passionately debated, in their article from 1999, “*Studying the British government: reconstructing the research agenda*”, Bevir and Rhodes conclude,

*“there are no scientific laws to legitimate advice to policy-makers. The key lesson of an anti-foundational approach is that there is no single tool kit they can use to steer networks. [...] But an awareness of our limits does not render the human sciences useless. If we cannot offer solutions, we can define and redefine problems in novel ways. We can tell the policy-makers and administrators distinctive stories about their world and how it is governed”* (Bevir and Rhodes, p. 233).

#### **4.3.5 (Re-)presenting meanings**

Bulmer (1979) has commented that, rather than theory being ‘discovered’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967) or emerging as a purely inductive process, grounded theory involves a constant two-way dialectical process or ‘flip-flop’ between data and the researcher’s conceptualisations (Pidgeon and Henwood in press, p. 9). In writing up I was often caught between the fear of loosing the stories of the interviewees and the fear of loosing my own story, the narrative structure I was attempting to create in the empirical parts of the thesis. The essential problem was to have enough empathy/sympathy to understand the narratives of the research subjects, but not so much that I would get lost in their perspectives. This

was a challenge even when I *had established* my narrative thread. In telling a research narrative (whether it is based on the chronology of the research process or the logical connections between the concepts in the conceptual framework, or a mixture of both) I still had to dip into the narratives (or perspectives) of the research subjects. And this is when it could be difficult to get out again. It was easy to get lost and lose my own narrative in the process of trying to understand ‘the other’. Some research methodologies lend themselves to this more so than others. Describing people ‘from the outside’ carries less of this risk, although still the danger of loosing oneself in the detail of the data. The difference is between describing people in terms of external categories which make up these externally attributed identities, and trying to understand, empathise with, what the world looks like from the point of view of the research subjects, understand their experiences of the world. This is the really difficult move to make: between trying to understand from the inside and describing from the outside in terms of the categories which the researcher has ‘discovered’ or as Pidgeon and Henwood put it more appropriately, ‘generated’ (in press, p. 9). In this context referring to individuals as ‘interviewees’ or ‘research subjects’ or informants may actually be a useful distancing techniques even though it reduces of the humanity of individuals by objectifying them. Such difficulties are inherent in interpretative social science concerned with the meanings of research subjects.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out the phase II fieldwork designed to test the conceptual framework developed during the first two years of the thesis, and shown that the overarching result of this fieldwork, although I did not recognise it at the time, was that the conceptual model *held*. I have also reflected on data collection and data analytical issues which were common to Phase I and Phase II of the research. I have thus concluded the ‘outer’ research narrative of how the story about the reinvention of the Forestry Commission, the ‘inner’ research narrative’, came to be produced through a situated and collaborative process.

# **Chapter 5**

## **Indications of a problematised identity**

In this chapter I want to show that there was a debate about what forestry is for going on in the Forestry Commission in the early 2000s, and that the Forestry Commission was engaging in different types of work on its institutional self and its significant others. I want to argue that the presence of a passionate debate about what forestry is for as far as the practices of the Forestry Commission was concerned, together with work in its institutional self and on its significant others, indicated that the Forestry Commission had come to problematise its existing self-identity. There will be some indications of what changes to the setting of action had challenged the existing identity of the Forestry Commission and led it to problematise its self-identity, but the main purpose here is to establish that the self-identity of the Forestry Commission had come to be problematic for the people who worked there and to show the kinds of work on self and others which was going on in 2002 and 2003, while I was doing fieldwork. I will thus mainly be referring to the parts of the conceptual model which concerns the ‘problematisation of institutional self-identity’, ‘work on institutional self’ and ‘work on institutional others.’

### **5.1 What is forestry for?**

#### **5.1.1 The ambiguity of social forestry**

The initial focus of my research was to investigate social learning by the forestry policy network in Great Britain as it grappled with social forestry. In the early stages of my research I therefore set out to investigate the meaning attributed to social forestry. It soon became clear that social forestry was being talked about in different ways by different actors. There were differences in the language used,

differences in the way social forestry was positioned in time, differences in the kinds of activities which were attributed to social forestry, and differences in the way the motivations of the Forestry Commission for doing social forestry were portrayed. It was not obvious what social forestry was nor what the boundaries were in relation to older policy initiatives. Social forestry seemed to encompass much that went before the use of the concept. There was a literature about social forestry, but it was mainly relating to a developing world context. People were using the adjective 'social' in a number of different combinations, including social forestry, social agenda, social issues, social aspect, social policy, social inclusion and social research. One the one hand social forestry was being positioned as something which had been part of the Forestry Commission from the outset, had gone into decline under the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s, and had recently re-emerged again as a result of a combination of interest from communities and NGOs, the Rio Summit in 1992, and the Labour victory in the 1997 general election. Another version of this narrative was that social forestry had been part of Forestry Commission practice from the beginning but had not been recognised as such because the language was different. On the other hand social forestry was being positioned as something which had emerged more recently out of ideas about forestry in urban areas from the early 1980s onwards, principally from *outside* the Forestry Commission.

The way in which social forestry was positioned in time was related to the kinds of activities which were seen to belong to social forestry. When social forestry, or the social in forestry, was given a longer history in the Forestry Commission, interviewees also talked about the role of the Forestry Commission as an employer, in particular in terms of the creation of jobs in remote rural areas and the provision of facilities for staff in the early years of the Forestry Commission. They would also draw attention to growth of access and recreation from the late 1940s. This was portrayed as a reactive move also in response to pressure from outside of the Forestry Commission.

When social forestry was given a rather shorter history, interviewees would emphasise the development of urban forestry from the early 1980s and community forestry from the early 1990s. The Forestry Commission was

portrayed as a reluctant participant in urban forestry initiatives from the Countryside Commission such as the National Forest and the Community Forests in England.

However, closer to the present, the picture of the kinds of activities (and meanings, in addition to those already mentioned, which were talked of as being part of social forestry became more confusing. ‘Social inclusion’ was often mentioned, although the meaning of social inclusion itself was not very stable. Social inclusion seemed, at different times, to be used to refer to the idea of bringing *more* people into the forest, more *different* people (the previously excluded) into the forest, and to *including* people in (some parts of) the decision making process about the forest in order to find out what they wanted from the forest, and even to include people in the *work* in the forest. Overlapping in meaning with social inclusion was another, more stable part of social forestry, ‘participation’, although this was sometimes referred to as ‘engagement’ or ‘involvement.’ Such terms were usually combined with either ‘community’ or ‘public.’ Finally there was ‘rural development’ and ‘job creation’ which substantially overlapped in meaning. Social forestry, as discussed by research subjects, thus included ideas about both the substance (the ends) and the process (the means) of forestry. The complexity of the picture reflected the openness of the term at the time; an openness which was reflected in the development of Forest Training Services’ work in this area during 2002 and 2003. When I first heard about Forest Training Services’ course on social forestry in May 2002, it was about ‘social inclusion’, then it became about ‘social forestry’ which eventually in the context of the course became substantially identified with ‘public involvement’ (and to a certain extent, ‘partnership working’), which later became identified, to a surprising extent, with conflict management.

The picture can perhaps be unpacked a little by referring to the motivations which were being given for social forestry. These broke down broadly as either instrumental or ethical, although these were not mutually exclusive. There was a widespread perception that social forestry was something which the Forestry Commission had to do in order to ensure organisational survival. The threat here was conceived of as either privatisation or the possible absorption of the Forestry

Commission into a rural affairs ministry. At times, social forestry also appeared to get bundled up with gaining access to new funding for example through partnership working. On the other hand, it was also clear that this instrumental motivation was not exhaustive, there were some people who cared a great deal about social forestry. Thus in some accounts of social forestry there was an almost therapeutic sense of forestry as a means to repairing damaged post-industrial landscapes and communities through the improvement that the presence of trees could make to their landscape, their economy, their bodies (through improving health) and the personal and social capital which could be developed through participation. One person suggested that forestry could be ‘used to meet people’s needs across Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.’ Nevertheless it was not everybody who saw social forestry as meaningful:

I mean if you say social forestry to me I don’t know what it means. That’s always been one of the problems and I think it’s one of the problems that faces the forest industry. Like sustainability it can mean whatever you wish it to mean. When I talk to practitioners, whether they be involved with communities or not, it’s one of the hardest problems perhaps that we face, is the terminology.

Trainer, Forest Training Services, July 2002

### **5.1.2 A debate about what forestry is for**

During the first phase of the research I was also becoming aware of a debate about ‘*what* forestry is for’ which also included a concern with *who* forestry was for and *where* the forest was located.<sup>31</sup> Garforth and Dudley (2003, p. 9) have characterised the debate as ‘passionate’:

*“However demands for even more public benefits from state forests have continued to grow at a time when timber prices and hence revenues have fallen by 50 per cent. This has opened a passionate debate about future directions for the management of the public forest estate.”*

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<sup>31</sup> It was not clear to me at the time but this referred substantially to the work of the Forestry Commission. Forestry, should be read as ‘the work of the Forestry Commission’.

The debate manifested itself in different ways. Most obvious were direct references to a debate by interviewees and individuals I met in the course of participant observation. For example, references to 'being in the process of rediscovering what forestry means', or references to current 'angst and debate about what forestry is for.'

Less obvious indications of a debate were statements which portrayed forestry as *having already changed*. In this context, forestry was being discursively divided up in two related ways. Firstly there was talk about a 'new' forestry. The invocation of a 'new' forestry at once created an 'old' forestry:

*"So what is this new forestry? – I could spend hours describing contemporary thinking on SFM<sup>32</sup> but rather I would just say that compared to the old thinking based on maintaining site productivity and cutting only so much as will grow, the modern approach gives more weight to sustaining biological systems but most important to this group here – involving people, so they can get best value in social, economic and environmental terms from the forest"* (Bills, D. 2002, p. 2).

Secondly I came across the assertion several times that 'forestry is about people', for example in the form of a screen saver. But everything is about people, and the statement could therefore be considered to be meaningless. The statement gains meaning in its dialogic context (Hajer 1995) where it runs as a *counter story*. It was thus an input into the debate about what forestry is about or for. 'About people' referred to the 'social', in other words to social forestry. A version of this narrative named the 'old' forestry which 'new forestry' evoked, a forestry which was about forestry/trees/timber for forestry/trees/timber's sake :

I think it's a completely new departure really. I think it is coming on board quite quickly, in recent years. But we've been going since 1919, so you know that's over eighty years. I think a lot of it has been traditional old school forestry where it's been growing timber for timbers sake. And other areas like recreation, conservation and tourism haven't really come into it until recent years. And now the timber market's been doing so bad I think people are realising there are other benefits of forestry that we need to concentrate on to be able to appeal to people that aren't into forestry.

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<sup>32</sup> Sustainable Forest Management.

Operations Forester, a forest district in England, October 2003.

Between such (temporal) locations of change in what forestry in the Forestry Commission was for, as either the subject of debate or as change already achieved, was another kind of narrative which drew attention to the way in which change was challenging foresters' ideas about what forestry is about, and thus to how change was being negotiated in the context of practice.

In a lot of forests, because of this new remit that's developing, areas where we had lots of Sitka spruce trees or pine trees growing on heath land and bogs, we're removing trees. We're actually reducing our forest area because we think that other things have priority. I know there is lots of foresters who are scratching their heads and can't understand why we're doing this. We invested all this money and effort in creating these trees, and now we're removing them. Surely it's not the Forestry Commission's job to be removing trees, and managing heath land and bogs and what have you.

Researcher, Forest Research Agency, February 2002.

The changes to the things that foresters do (action) challenge their ideas of what forestry is about (the identity of forestry<sup>33</sup>). This includes ideas about what forestry *is* and what forestry is *not*, the kinds of actions which are conceived of as belonging to the category forestry, and the kinds of actions which are conceived of as *not* being part of forestry: i.e. planting, *not* removing trees, *not* managing heath land, bogs, and old land fill sites.

The 'new' forestry is about these kinds of actions because actors which the Forestry Commission consults with may want trees to be removed from heath lands and bogs where the Forestry Commission, applying a different (economic) logic (of value), have put them in the past. The value which people put on the heath lands and the bogs may be greater than the value which they attributed to the same landscape with trees on it. In this, there are two elements. It is those people, who in this case, are given the possibility of deciding about the landscape, a landscape which only the Forestry Commission made decisions in

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<sup>33</sup> Understood as the collection of meanings, actions, bodies which are seen as part of/to belong to forestry.

the past (possibly including some stakeholders). The other element which may be particularly provoking to the forester is that those people attach a *negative* value to the trees which the Forestry Commission has planted. Not a different value, a negative value: the landscape is *better* without the trees. The other reason why the new forestry includes such actions is because there is an opportunity for the Forestry Commission in restoring old land-fill sites, it is difficult to get more 'social' than restoring old landfill sites close to urban areas:

Because we're not overwhelmed in this country by organisations who are desperately keen to take on board ground-filled land close to disadvantaged communities, and hold that land and provide public services in the long term, there doesn't seem to be anybody else who wants to do these things.

Director, Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

The debate was thus on about the kinds of actions, meanings and bodies which could belong to forestry to the point of leading some to question the appropriateness of the term 'forestry.' There are two possible moves: redefinition of the collection of actions, meanings and bodies which can belong to forestry (i.e. redraw the boundaries around what is seen to belong to this social object) or call it something else. Social forestry is in the middle of these two, 'social' denotes that the boundaries around the social object are being redrawn, 'forestry' suggests that this is not so much as to render the word 'forestry' irrelevant as a label. Actors will position themselves differently in relation to 'social forestry', and 'forestry.' Some, as we have just seen, problematised the label 'social forestry', others referred to it as 'new' forestry. Yet others argued that it was just forestry anyway, because social forestry encapsulated what they thought forestry *should* be about, i.e. they thought that the kinds of meanings and actions and bodies which make up the social in social forestry should in any case be part of forestry.

A key point on which the debate turned was to do with the *value* of forestry, meaning the work of the Forestry Commission. This was articulated in different ways such as 'legitimacy' or 'relevance.' The important dimensions of the debate were to do with what kind of value, for whom, how to create it, and how to

demonstrate it (or measure it/account for it/make it visible). The main narrative, the storyline (Hajer 1995), in this context, was that it was *social* value which had to be created. But this was interpreted in different ways which can be described in terms of a range of levels of ambition. At the least ambitious end of the spectrum, creating social value was portrayed as essentially being more recreation, getting more people in the forest. At the other end of the spectrum I come back to the therapeutic aspirations which I referred to above.

The concern with value was linked with the weakening of existing claims to value (or legitimacy or relevance). A central part of existing claims to value of the Forestry Commission has been economic value. The basis of this claim has been hollowed out by dropping timber prices. Economic value was being portrayed as the predominant source of legitimacy for forestry. Another way of putting this is to say that it established the existing meaning of forestry as economic, which is the same as saying that 'forestry is about' (creating) economic value. Using forestry to *create* new kinds of value was motivated on the basis of a central claim to value almost literally being rendered invisible (by the very measurement methods which had served to establish its value) as timber prices drop and timber value approach negative.

Legitimacy was positioned as something which has to be 'sustained.' Legitimacy is similar in meaning to 'relevance' and 'value' which were the words used by other people. They referred to the same concern.

Legitimacy (or value) is interactional (socially attributed), it has to be sustained *vis à vis* a certain setting of action, *vis à vis* certain actors. It is dialogic and one can ask the questions, 'legitimate for whom?', or 'who has the power to confer legitimacy?' Since the most important existing source of legitimacy had dried up, the Forestry Commission was faced with a problem: to find new sources of legitimacy. The Forestry Commission was obliged to re-conceptualise what forestry is for. It also needed to convince the actors in its setting of action, those who had the power to *confer* legitimacy, of the appropriateness of such a re-conceptualisation. And it needed to bring its internal co-actors along. In other

words, it had to engage in work on institutional and individual ‘others’ as well as work on its institutional self.

The setting of action is a moving target. There may be a change of government, or the ‘whole decision fabric of the countryside’ may be changing. In other words, in responding to the dislocation between its self and its setting of action, the Forestry Commission had to address its change process to a complex and dynamic setting of action. Of course, such changes may be constraining but they may also offer opportunities. I will return to the challenges and opportunities of the Forestry Commission’s mobile setting of action during 2002 and 2003 in Chapter 7.

As with social forestry, the different narratives also evoke different motivations. People were concerned with *using forests to create value*. But this concern was articulated in different ways. While some research subjects referred to the ‘legitimacy’ or ‘relevance’ of forestry, others spoke of the ‘public goods’, or ‘goods and services’ that forestry could provide, and yet others about the importance of ‘capitalising on the health etc. benefits’ of forestry. In these different ways individuals were articulating their concern with using forestry to produce value. As with social forestry, some narratives constructed the creation of value in instrumental terms others in ethical terms. These ways of talking could be summarised as ‘we must create value, and we must be seen to create value.’ Perhaps it was not always clear which one they were talking about: creating value or being seen to create value, working on the symbol formation of others.

Early fieldwork had established that the meaning of social forestry was ambiguous. At the same time it was clear that there was also a debate going on about what forestry is for within the Forestry Commission. It was therefore not only the meaning of social forestry which was ambiguous, the meaning of forestry itself appeared to have become destabilised, at least as far as the practices of the Forestry Commission were concerned. As discussed in Chapter 2, it occurred to me in the late summer of 2002, during a first round of coding transcripts from the first six interviews, field notes from participant observation

and research diary notes, that social forestry was in fact part of the bigger debate about what forestry is for in the Forestry Commission, and that this debate should be seen as part of a bigger process of adjusting to a changed setting of action.

## 5.2 Work on institutional self and others

The presence of ideas about a ‘new’ forestry and ‘social’ forestry in the context of a debate about what forestry is for indicated that, in the early 2000s, the Forestry Commission was problematising its self. Work by Tsouvalis (2000) suggests that the Forestry Commission had first begun to problematise its self in the late 1980s. An interactionist perspective on the institutional self of the Forestry Commission suggested that such problematisation related to the relationship between the Forestry Commission’s existing identity and its setting of action. This is discussed in Chapter 7. While the historical context is discussed in Chapter 6. Here I am interested in the kinds of work on institutional self which was in evidence in the early 2000s as I was doing fieldwork. The work on self and on the Forestry Commission’s others can be conceived of as an attempt to repair the relationship between the institutional actor and its setting of action. While I have separated these two kinds of work for analytical purposes, in practice, as will be evident from the account below, work on institutional self and on the ‘others’ of the Forestry Commission were in practice deeply implicated in each other. Given an interactionist perspective on self, where self is conceived as produced through social interaction, this is perhaps not surprising either. The process repairing the relationship between institutional self and setting of action should be conceived of as essentially *experimental* as the Forestry Commission *improvises* making use of structures (understood as rules and resources (Giddens 1984)) ‘at hand’ both inside and outside of itself, much like Burkitt’s (1991) description of the social self moving forward, colonising the present, drawing on structures established through past experience. The use and production of knowledge played a key role in this process.

## 5.2.1 Work on the Forestry Commission's others

### 5.2.1.1 Engaging with new co-actors, and with existing co-actors in new ways

The key issue for the Forestry Commission was to identify (new sources of) social values, based on forestry, and get paid for delivering them.

How can we redevelop our forests in a way that's meaningful for people but at the same time find ways of paying the bills? So there's a tension there.

Head of Environment and Communication, Forest Enterprise GB, February 2002.

The Forestry Commission sought to engage actors on the basis of its perceptions about who might be able to attribute new value to/(re-)confer legitimacy on its work. This was a process which in part was about the Forestry Commission asking 'what can you use us for?' ('what do we have that is of value to you?'), and in part proposing 'we think we can offer you x' ('we think this might be of value to you').

Wenger (1998, p. 105) defines a boundary object as "*artefacts, documents, terms, concepts, and other forms of reification around which communities of practice can organize their interconnections.*" The England Forestry Strategy and the Regional Forest Frameworks could be conceived of as active 'boundary objects' which the Forestry Commission was able to use to identify potential new sources of value for their work and at the same time to develop their national and regional networks. Through participation in the practices of such actors, new values could be attributed to their own work.

The England Forestry Strategy was published in 1998. Here the Forestry Commission sought to put forestry on the agenda of other government department at the (English) national level:

So trying to make links to wider areas of government policy and join up was the whole thrust to the Strategy. Now that was very difficult because we started to look outwards and trying to join, say how can forestry contribute say to the health agenda or social

inclusion, or to wider policies for access to the countryside. So we wanted to look out and join up but nobody else wanted to join up with us. They weren't quite ready for that change. But we published the Strategy 3 ½ years ago and what's happened in the meantime is that some of those connections are now starting to be made. So it has required a bit of a culture change within the Forestry Commission, but also a culture change by those bits of government, well both public and private sector agencies that we deal with.

Head of Policy and Practice Division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

The Forestry Commission England employed programme officers to take the different programme areas of the England Forestry Strategy forward and these individuals were important internal actors in maintaining and building relationships in the programme areas of the England Forestry Strategy, as well as linking back to practitioners inside the Forestry Commission.<sup>34</sup>

The English Regional Forest Frameworks were another example. These documents were intended to represent the aspirations of the region for forestry, and to identify what forestry can do for the region, based on consultation. While I was doing fieldwork, the English conservancies were in the process of recruiting Regional Forest Framework Facilitators to take this process forward in each of the conservancies. Although the frameworks were portrayed as 'objects' which were not owned by the Forestry Commission, their production was nevertheless led by the Forestry Commission. In this way the Forestry Commission is able to build relationships with a number of regional actors, creating a denser regional network for itself. A stronger regional network was important for the Forestry Commission as regionalisation in England got underway and funding streams started to move down to the regional level.

We're starting to get our folk at the regional level to start to work on the regional agendas. There are Government Offices in each region, there are rural, Regional Development Agencies in each region of England and our staff are having to get

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<sup>34</sup> The Forestry Commission Wales and the Forestry Commission Scotland followed England and published their country based strategies in 2001 and 2000, articulating the social orientation of forestry in their particular contexts.

involved with those people. So how can we interact with you and develop forestry programmes [inaudible] and get funding for it. And that's a big challenge, because our regional network isn't very strong.

Head of Policy and Practice Division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

An important challenge for the Forestry Commission was to find new co-actors who would be interested in the forests and in what the Forestry Commission might be able to do for them. This concern was reflected in the remark on the initially cool reception of other government departments to the England Forestry Strategy (in the quotation above), in commentaries on the lack of importance of the forest and forestry in the every day lives of a mainly urban population, and the relative lack of importance of forestry as an area of public policy *vis à vis* other areas such as health and education. It was also reflected in narratives about *how* to engage other actors and the Forestry Commission's capacity to do so. In this context, the Forestry Commission was sometimes positioned as having been, for a long time, turned in on itself.

In a related narrative, foresters were described as individuals who preferred trees to people. But it was also clear from the fieldwork that forestry practice did, and had also in the past, involved contact with individuals and institutions outside the Forestry Commission and the forestry sector. What was being set up was another distinction between the 'old' forestry when the Forestry Commission and the individuals who worked for it did not talk to 'the community' or 'stakeholders', and a 'new' forestry which was much more outwardly oriented. While there was some truth in this, it not only had the effect of marginalising what the Forestry Commission already knew institutionally, but also, more importantly, marginalised what individuals already knew and did as part of their practice. That understanding *how* to 'engage the community' was an important part of the new forestry, was indicated by the fact that the Forest Training Services course in social forestry, came to be largely about public engagement, and that both Forest Research, external consultants as well as Forest Training Services were involved in the area during 2002 and 2003.

There was also a tension in research subjects' narratives between on the one hand a desire to convince other actors that forestry could contribute to their objectives, a concern to educate the public about the forest and what the forestry commission does, persuading them of the importance of the forest to *them* and their lives, or in terms of *their* policy objectives, and on the other hand, a concern to understand what such actors might need or want on their own terms.

Interviewees would shift between being interested in the meaningfulness of the forests for other actors than those who were in the timber markets, to concerns about how those new values might somehow be translated into new sources of funding for the Forestry Commission. Sometimes the emphasis would be on finding new ways of funding the Forestry Commission, other times the main emphasis would be on finding out what would be meaningful to society.

However, even those who were most ambitious about the new forestry saw future funding as a key issue.

People at a district forest level are looking at how they can work in partnership with other people and thereby use their resources to achieve mutual goals. And I think that will have to continue. But there is a question at a much higher level. If the Forestry Commission is meeting other agencies' objectives, how do we get reimbursed for the delivery of another departments objectives?

Researcher, Forest Research Agency, February 2002.

Clearly the Treasury and DEFRA, the parent department of the Forestry Commission, are co-actors of longstanding importance to the Forestry Commission. These relationships illustrate the point that in order to be able to take up new roles, to change its self, the Forestry Commission not only has to mobilise new co-actors, it also has to ensure that *existing* co-actors will allow it to change, and perhaps even help it. Thus, if the Forestry Commission wants to get funded on a different basis it has to convince the Treasury and DEFRA. One interviewee, for example, argued that the Forestry Commission was in a very difficult financial situation and that much depended on the way in which it

communicated with DEFRA over the coming twelve months from September 2003.

### **5.2.1.2 Understanding the forest and forestry in new ways**

The engagement with new co-actors involves the Forestry Commission in seeking to understand the forest in *different* ways from those which dominates its practices, so that it may be able to *interest* co-actors which are perceived to have the power to attribute (social) value to the work of the Forestry Commission.<sup>35</sup> In this way, the Forestry Commission may be considered to be taking the first steps in (socially) producing the forest anew (Braun 2002), taking cognisance of the possibly meanings which the forest and forestry may have when rooted in other kinds of practices than their own. This is indicated by a concern with *understanding* what people need (or want) and how the forest might be used to meet those needs (or wants). One of the ways this is articulated is (drawing on the language of the market as a source of value) as a concern with understanding what social 'goods and services' forestry can deliver *beyond* recreation, access and the people who work in forestry.

[senior managers] were having to make decisions about things like the social aspects of forestry without having enough information. And also politicians were asking things of us. Rural development was coming onto the agenda. Rural development is as much about understanding what local communities want and that sort of thing. How do you go about that? How do you develop techniques for doing that? How do you understand it? So I think that there was a feeling of insecurity amongst our senior managers, they wanted more information.

Principal Advisor on Social Benefits, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

An important part of the context of the development of the England Forestry Strategy was the change from a Conservative to Labour government in 1997. There were many references to the strong social agenda of the New Labour government during the fieldwork. A very important way in which the Forestry Commission has tried to rethink the forest and forestry has been in terms of

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<sup>35</sup> "By involving stakeholders, FE has developed a wider understanding and appreciation of forestry" Garforth and Dudley (2003).

‘social inclusion’, an important part of the Labour government’s social agenda. The unstable meaning of ‘social inclusion’ was an indication of a struggle to relate social inclusion to its practices and how social inclusion might be turned into a source of legitimacy through meeting government objectives in this area. Individuals sought to understand the meaning of social inclusion from the point of view of their own practices, or the practices which they most identified with. Some saw social inclusion as a better way of introducing the social than social forestry because social inclusion would be perceived as less of an extra thing to deal with for foresters who already had a lot on their plate.

I actually think that the term ‘social forestry’ is perhaps creating a problem in understanding on the ground for hands-on type practitioners. If you say ‘social agenda’, or ‘social inclusion’, foresters are far more able to understand perhaps what’s required. Social forestry...forestry is about growing trees, and so growing trees in communities, what does it mean? There is a general confusion as to what the term actually means.

Trainer, Forest Training Services

At times social inclusion was used to refer to the idea of bringing *more* people into the forest. This was, for example, the view of a forest ranger responsible for volunteer rangers in one forest district. Including people in the forest could also mean including people in the *work* of the forest. For others, and this was quite a widespread interpretation, social inclusion was about bring more *different* people into the forest, in particular the ‘socially excluded’. This raised questions about the way in which the Forestry Commission might currently be excluding certain groups of society and the way in which this might be addressed. In this context, the Forestry Commission was portrayed as having, so far, had a very poor understanding of the social inclusion agenda. They had provided access to those who came knocking at their door but these tended to be the white middle class already engaged in countryside recreation activities. These were, by definition, people who could afford to travel to the remote forests that the Forestry Commission had mostly created. The problem now was, how could the number of visitors defined as ‘socially excluded’ be increased? Either the socially excluded had to come to the forests, or the forests had to come to the socially

excluded. In this context the location of most of the Forestry Commission's forests was a challenge.

The whole thrust of forestry policy for the last 100 years was to put the forests in pretty remote areas. Well, that immediately means you're distancing yourself from a number of socially disadvantaged groups, and it also means you have to travel to get to the forests. That means that you are restricting who can go there. And so there's an issue about putting forests closer to the towns. There's these big community forestry agendas going on ... and as I said the economic regeneration, converting derelict land closer to towns and cities into woodlands and making them accessible, trying to meet the needs of local people. So those have been quite important shifts, but it's still the case that most of the forests aren't close to us.

Head of Policy and Practice division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

Another meaning of social inclusion was the inclusion of the 'public', the 'community' or the 'stakeholders' in forestry, not through working in the forest, but through participating in decisions about the forest through 'engagement' or 'participation'. On the one hand, the concern with participation was positioned as being part of a concern with finding out what society wanted from the Forestry Commission at different scales. In this sense it could be conceived as very much part of the attempt to find new sources of value for the work of the Forestry Commission. On the other hand, more participation, in a more democratic Forestry Commission was also being positioned as a source of value *in itself*. This related to the importance of citizen participation in the Rio process and Agenda 21. But it also related to the kinds of social goals which could be achieved through public and stakeholder participation whether in forestry or beyond, the building of social and human capital. Here the idea was that the Forestry Commission should seek to enhance social and human capital in the way it went about its business, not only inside the institution itself, but in the social context in which it practiced. The importance of public/community engagement in democratic decision making for the Forestry Commission was given extra impetus, by Scottish and Welsh devolution and English regionalisation.

### **5.2.1.3 Drawing attention to different areas of the institutional self**

In trying to engage new co-actors, the Forestry Commission had to engage in an iterative process of trial and error to find out what actors could be interested in the forest and on the basis of what values. A symbolic interactionist approach to identity suggests narratives of self are situated in particular interactional contexts. It is, therefore, not surprising that this process has involved the Forestry Commission in drawing attention to aspects of itself which used to be considered as less important because the interactive context was different. Irrespective of whether self changes, the telling of self does, if it is possible to make the distinction. Here I am interested in changes to the way in which the Forestry Commission was ‘telling itself’ in response to the changed setting of action. I put it like this in order not to adopt the distinction ‘new’ forestry/‘old’ forestry. One way of putting this, again drawing on the language of the market, would be to say that the Forestry Commission had to market itself in a different way. And this indeed was the perspective of some research subjects. But while this would be an accurate description of the motivation of some actors, presenting the modifications to the narratives of self of the Forestry Commission as reducible to ‘repackaging’ would have the effect of marginalising the normative concerns of quite a few other actors. Another way of putting this would be to say that the Forestry Commission has had to translate itself into a language which the actors who it wants to influence were able to understand.

I have already showed more generally how the Forestry Commission sought to build its networks in new areas, and to understand the way it might use forests to meet some of the objectives of those other actors. To give additional weight to its arguments, the Forestry Commission needed to be able to demonstrate to such actors that it could make a contribution in ways in which those actors could integrate in their own practices of verifying progress against objectives. Thus as part of the process of drawing attention to different parts of itself, the Forestry Commission began to engage in a number of pilot projects in areas of work which could be a source of value. The point I want to make here is how aspects of the forest, or forestry, which were in a sense already there as part of the

Forestry Commission's identity, however marginally, were being colonised as potential new sources of social value as the Forestry Commission sought to build the argument that it should be funded in order to provide such social (and environmental) benefits. Drawing on interviewees' comments, three policy areas are notable.

One example is public health. It has for a long time been the case that people could go for a walk in the forest and get health benefits from it. But if the Forestry Commission was going to get funding from the NHS budget, then the health related value of trips to the forest had to be identified in a way which would be sufficiently convincing to the Department of Health and/or local Primary Care Trusts. As part of this process, the Forestry Commission commissioned a report on the linkages between environment and health from the University of East Anglia's School of Health Policy and Practice (Henwood 2001). During 2002, Forest Research organised a one day, 'expert consultation on health and well-being' which sought to bring together researchers, policy makers and practitioners interested in trees, woodlands and their impacts on public health. The purposes of the expert consultation were to discuss and examine the relationship between the environment, health, culture and society; develop communication networks of environmental and health professionals, officials and researchers; build mutual understanding among the target groups; and to establish medium to long-term partnerships to develop joint research and pilot projects (Forest Research, 2002). Moreover, by early 2004, six demonstration projects were either completed or running to show how the Forestry Commission can 'work with the health sector and deliver health benefits for individuals and communities through woodlands and forests', as one research subject put it.

The education area is another example. It has again for a long time been the case that the forest *could* be used as a learning resource. But now the Forestry Commission is trying to make this aspect of the forest much more visible and reflect on what they can do in order to increase the use of the forest in this way. In late 2002, the Forestry Commission sought to arrange a similar event to the one held in health, in the area of education. This was to be a seminar for all those

with an interest in 'education and learning initiatives in woodlands.' This was intended to result in a mapping exercise to identify what was going on in the area, where the gaps were, and how the Forestry Commission was and could contribute to government policy in this area.<sup>36</sup>

So things like the government policy for young people with the Connexions campaign, how forestry can contribute towards Connexions, which is career development for 13-16 year olds in terms of rewarding them for good behaviour, offering them the opportunity to develop themselves. So we've got quite a lot we could do with Connexions for instance. And then some of the life-long learning: again we can offer forests as a resource to learn virtually anything.

Recreation, Access and Tourism Advisor, Forestry Commission England, September 2003.

The Forestry Commission has a longstanding involvement with the Forest Education Initiative, in partnership with the Timber Trade Federation. This used to be oriented towards educating children about how forests work in terms of wood production and what those products were. This is, however, shifting towards using the forest as a resource in reaching a wider range of pedagogical objectives which is also reflected in Forestry Commission interest in the idea of Forest Schools, where children are based in the forest during the day and the forest is used as a learning resource.

A third example is the Forestry Commission's involvement in forestry in urban areas. As mentioned already in the context of the English Community Forests, the Forestry Commission's involvement in this area has, until relatively recently, been modest. Now however, the forests of the Forestry Commission were so to speak being relocated discursively. In this context, it was important that the Forestry Commission won £9.3m from the Government's Capital Modernisation Fund in 2000. This enabled it to purchase land in three existing Community Forests, Thames Chase, Red Rose and Mersey. An important part of these projects was the restoration of derelict or despoiled land. On the back of the

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<sup>36</sup> This event had in the first instance to be cancelled due to lack of participants.

Capital Modernisation Fund money, the Forestry Commission was able to access a further £25m worth of funding from the North West Regional Development Agency where the Red Rose Community Forest is located. The new woodlands are also allowing the Forestry Commission to position itself as open to public participation, as the projects involved consultation with the community in the surrounding area to establish what they wanted from the new woodlands. In this way the Forestry Commission was able to establish new woodlands from scratch close to urban areas, aimed at improving peri-urban environments on the basis of consultation with the community. This was a rather different situation than trying to integrate 'the social' in forests which have been established in different political and economic contexts in the past, far from centres of population. Pilot projects such as those in Thames Chase and Newlands in the Red Rose Community Forest are the subject of a great deal of interest within the rest of the Commission and are being used to retell the Forestry Commission as able to meet other government objectives such as the regeneration of derelict land, and as a more participative and inclusive organisation, relevant to an *urban* society.

The pilot projects in health and community forestry are about communication, *producing* knowledge which can be used to establish the legitimacy of the Forestry Commission in new areas of public policy, both externally and internally.

I often say we spend 90% of our time talking about 10% of our activities. The vast majority of our resources in England is spent managing plantations of spruce and pine. The vast majority of our time in talking is spent talking about land fill sites in east London and the like.

Director, Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

Finally, a fourth area is the value individuals themselves attribute to their visit to the forest or that the forest is there. It used to be that it was enough to count the number of visitors, and the Treasury eventually agreed to attribute the economic value of £1 per visit. The Forestry Commission has now become more and more interested in this more 'intimate' value of the forest and the way in which such

value might be captured. This brings the Forestry Commission into contact with not only new substantive knowledges but also with new methodologies for gaining knowledge about the world. Thus the engagement of the Forestry Commission with interpretative social sciences has been growing.

The way in which the Forestry Commission has been seeking to draw attention to different parts of its institutional self can therefore perhaps be conceived of as in part, a continuation of the struggle with the Treasury to attribute value to the ‘non-timber’ benefits of forestry and, in this context, recreation has played a particularly significant ‘rhetorical’ role:

And so we had for a lot of years, and still do, a desire try and put money values onto those visitors. How much is it worth to have someone come and visit a forest - a cost benefit analysis, in order to justify ourselves, justify the existence of a state forestry sector. [...] And we did actually persuade the Treasury to allow us £1 per visitor, so if we're doing an appraisal and we can estimate how many visitors are coming, we can put a monetary figure on it.

Principal Advisor on Social Benefits, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

#### **5.2.1.4 Demonstrating social value – new narrative techniques**

The Forestry Commission not only has had to draw attention to aspects of its self which were so far considered less important, but it has also had to use what might, drawing on Revill’s idea of the narrative potential of the 19<sup>th</sup> century railway corporation (Revill 1994, p. 707), be referred to as new ‘narrative techniques’ of self. Some of the values the Forestry Commission now wanted to draw attention to, were not necessarily illuminated by the same techniques as those used to establish the economic value of the forests. The attempt to talk into being new values also had methodological and epistemological implications.

The lack of visibility in terms of existing frames of references was reflected in references to the intangibility of the outputs associated with the ‘new’ forestry, and concerns with how to measure it.

Even now it's still I would say generally the least tangible, the most difficult area to define and like most things in life where that's the case, it is the one that tends to be avoided. It's very easy to measure timber, and to analyse the efficiency of activities related to timber, and to a degree it's also the same with bio-diversity. You can count the number of black grouse, and night jars and the number of hectares of ancient woodland. You can measure the condition that's in and there are established sciences and methodologies. So we've kind of comfortably moved into that area from this tradition of measuring things and being able to quantify and analyse in an objective way our traditional activities. So when the social area comes along, the type of people we have in the Forestry Commission, the practitioners, pragmatic deliverers, we tend to struggle a little bit. I guess it is probably in the last 5 or 6 years that we've really started to take on, to take seriously the social dimension of sustainability, the community dimension. But we haven't so far come up with very many useful measures of that activity.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

‘Measuring it’ meant trying to measuring *different* things from the past, putting benefits which were until now ‘unaccountable’, on the map. This is an important point because targets and guidelines are an important part of forestry culture, as is the sense of capacity to deliver. Uncertainty about deliverables thus has the potential to undermine the sense of competence expressed by the often repeated phrase ‘we deliver.’

The Forestry Commission has a longstanding involvement with what might be called quantitative sociology through the conduct of regular visitor surveys. The engagement with environmental economics was a refinement of the visitor survey approach to establishing value from forests by attempting to place non-timber monitoring values on visits to the forests (e.g. Willis 1991; Benson and Willis 1992). The Forestry Commission got interested in landscape perception (e.g. Lee *et al.* 1991) and commissioned research on the value of landscapes from an environmental economics point of view (Entec and Hanley 1997; Garrod and Macmillan 2003). More recently the Forestry Commission has begun to commission and to carry out more sociological research, and more qualitative social science (e.g. O’Brien (2003a; 2003b), O’Brien and Claridge (2002), Bishop *et al* (2001), Macnaghten *et al.* (1998), Henwood and Pidgeon (1998)).

This research is more concerned with relationships (of the Forestry Commission to the community) and with meaning (of the forest). It is thus a more internal, a more psychologically interested, social science than has so far been the case.

Nowadays we're much more interested in the intimate connection between people and the forest rather than what they see from opposite sides of the valley. [...] I don't think we've got near to scratching the surface of that particular issue from an aesthetic point of view. In the same way that there was this discourse of landscape architecture as viewed from the opposite side of the valley, the discourse of landscape architecture from the internal intimate view [...] just hasn't been done yet.

Head of Silviculture and Seed, Forest Research, September 2003.

The engagement with the meaning of forests for people (who either visit or do not visit the forest) involves the Forestry Commission in quite a different field of social scientific knowledge than visitor surveys. And it raises similar kinds of ethical issues as my own research has done. From the outside looking in, my research is part of this trend towards more 'intimate' knowledges, although I am turning the focus on the people who work for the Forestry Commission and the Forestry Commission itself as opposed to people who used to find themselves outside the forest gate.

As a result of the kinds of modifications to the narratives of self of the Forestry Commission which I have set out in this and the previous section, the relative importance of different practices is changing in the way the Forestry Commission talks about itself:

Whereas in the past, as one interviewee reflected, the 'spiritual heart' was probably in the Sitka spruce forest of Kielder,

I like to say now that we would look probably in a land fill site in east London, and say that's spiritually where we are now, that's our core relevance to this government's wider objectives, and one of our core niches.

Director, Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

This is a big change because there was a time, not long ago in the early 1990s, when, in the words of another interviewee, 'no self respecting forester would have been seen dead on a slag heap in Newcastle.' To get to the new values which as one senior interviewees said, 'intellectually we all subscribe to' quite a lot of work on institutional self is required to change the Forestry Commission in the new image of the 'good forester.'

### **5.2.2 Work on the Forestry Commission's institutional self**

The Forestry Commission was seeking to understand who had the resources to (re)confer legitimacy on it, what those actors were interested in, and how the Forestry Commission might 'deliver' this. It was modifying its narratives of self in the context of an engagement with external actors. But institutional narratives of self also have an important *internal* audience, as work-based self-identities of individuals are bound up with *their* representations of the Forestry Commission. These representations are based on, but not reducible to, existing institutional narratives of self. New institutional narratives of self therefore affect the work-based self-identities of individuals, and changes to the kinds of *actions* which the Forestry Commission as a collectivity participates in will challenge competencies. The Forestry Commission was thus using different 'techniques of (institutional) self' aimed at changing the organisation internally both at the level of meaning and the level of action. While at present the Forestry Commission England, on the estimate of one senior member of staff, spends 90% of the time talking about 10% of the work, discursively putting the 'new' forestry on the map:

What we've got to do is take the policy rationale and follow it right the way through our programmes and everything we do. We've got quite a long way to go I think in terms of modernising our culture, and all our delivery mechanisms to get fully up to speed with the values which I think intellectually we all subscribe to. With forestry there is, like everything, there is a lag time between the policy agenda and the practical manifestation. And in such a long term land use as forestry it is a particularly long lag time and I think we have still go further to go.

Director, Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

### 5.2.2.1 More posts in the 'new' areas and changes to existing posts

One of the ways in which the Forestry Commission has been increasing its competencies in the 'new' areas as a collectivity has been to increase the number of posts in the 'new' areas. Moreover, existing posts have also changed to have more to do with the 'new' areas than in the past.

An awful lot is happening without people realising how far we've moved. We've now got twelve districts [in England]. If you said OK we'll separate out the staffing on what you might call the 'new initiatives.' We would actually have the [forest] management staff equivalent to a medium sized to large district in addition to the twelve we've got. So in the last five years, we've acquired extra staff on new initiatives that would be equivalent to a thirteenth district.

Head of Sustainable Forestry, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

As noted in Chapter 2, in September 2002, the Forestry Commission GB held a Social Forestry Networking Event, a large two day event in a Scottish hotel. The event was aimed specifically at staff engaged in the social areas of forestry, either because they held one of the new posts, or because their post had developed to involve aspects of 'social' forestry. A number of senior management staff were present, including the Director General. In his speech to the group which included about 80 people, the Director General described the purpose of the event as facilitating the sharing of experience among the group (social learning) as well as understanding how the Forestry Commission as an organisation could best support this group of staff. (Bills 2002, p. 1) The Director General described the group as the "*front line ambassadors for the "New Forestry,"*" and told them that "*[i]n your field there are few rules and little tradition.*"

The default learning strategy for the Forestry Commission has been to look inwards. Moreover, the Forestry Commission has been traditionally reluctant to employ staff who were not foresters, preferring to send foresters to training

courses. This was, for example, the case with the Forestry Commission's early engagement with civil engineering knowledges in the context of road building for planting and harvesting plantations, and also later with the Forestry Commission's engagement with landscape architecture. Later the Forestry Commission would send foresters to train as landscape architects. It was not until the 1980s that the Forestry Commission began to employ landscape architects in earnest as permanent members of staff and the Forestry Commission continues to be an organisation dominated by foresters in spite of recent changes.

When I joined [in the mid-1980s], it was at a time when there was a sudden realisation, and it was not a realisation by everybody, that you could not always turn a forester into an engineer, into a landscape architect, whatever. Previously, the organisation had taken foresters, sent them away to university for two years to do a post graduate landscape course. I was the first intake [of landscape architects] where they went and plucked people off the shelf ready trained [...] There was this feeling in the organisation, very much in the past, that you can take a forester and turn him into anything. For example, before the organisation employed forest civil engineers, it expected foresters to be building roads. It's a specialist technical job, so they did start employing engineers, did start employing land agent staff, landscape architects and such like.

Recreation and Community Manager, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

Who might the 'civil engineers, land agents and landscape architects' of the late 1990s, early 2000s be? I have already mentioned policy advisors who were put in place to take forward the programmes of the England Forestry Strategy. At the conservancy level, Regional Forest Framework Facilitators were put in place as well as 'development' staff to take forward the England Forestry Strategy in the regional context. At Forest Research, posts for social scientists have been created. At Forest Training Services a new trainer was appointed to develop the work of Forest Training Services in the social area. In forest districts, different posts with the word 'community' in them have been created (Community Ranger, Community Forester, Community Engagement and Environment Forester). Some of these posts are being taken up existing staff, but there seems to be a greater willingness to employ staff with different skills backgrounds than forestry. It was suggested by one research subject that the knowledges of such

new staff groups are still not being taken as seriously as forestry knowledges, and that this can be seen in the different levels of rigour in the employment process of foresters and for example recreation staff. This may also have to do with the fact that, as we shall see in Chapter 6, employing foresters is very much a buyer's market. It is also the case, that for an organisation largely made up of foresters, with forestry expertise, it will be easier to evaluate forestry based knowledges, than other types of knowledges on which they have less of a perspective from which to approach such evaluation. The many post in the new areas do indicate a shift in the kinds of knowledges which are regarded as important. One of the members of staff who had come in on the basis of his skills in the 'new' areas, in particular community work, told me how he had wanted for years to work for the Forestry Commission, but not having the skills was not able to do so. With the Forestry Commission's rising demand for staff with 'social' skills of different types, he was able to find employment with the Commission.

Existing posts have seen significant change in recent years. Many of these changes have related to what might be referred to the greater outward-orientedness of the Forestry Commission. This has involved staff at all levels of the organisation in new and more relationships. These changes have, in many cases, related to the overlapping, but not identical areas of seeking new funding through partnerships, and seeking to integrate a greater degree of public participation into the work of the Forestry Commission. It is clear from the fieldwork that devolution has meant that staff at senior level in the three countries have had to engage with a new set actors at the national level. And that similarly, forest district managers as well as conservators have increasingly had to engage in partnership work to access funding and develop work in the new areas. Moreover, regionalisation has meant that there are more actors for conservators to engage with. District foresters, in the forest districts, working in the area of environment and recreation have had to make fundraising and partnership activities an increasingly important part of their job, as these areas are increasingly seen as sources of income to replace timber income. Thus

Environment and Recreation<sup>37</sup> is one of the practical sites where recreation is being reinterpreted as part of the developing understanding of the social. H&M and Forest Management are less affected in terms of their day to day work, although the concerns of H&M now have less weight than in the past in terms of decisions about the overall management of the forest. But these parts of the forest districts can also be implicated in discussions about how to involve the public as part of a whole team approach. Woodland officers have been less affected, but with the changes to the Woodland Grant Scheme coming in they are likely to be more affected, and be expected to engage in a wider range of deliverables than in the past. Ground staff have increasingly been incorporated as part of the (inter)face of the Forestry Commission with the public, the organisation's presentation of self, therefore their work has in a sense also become more outward oriented.

### **5.2.2.2 Changes to the formal learning structures of the Forestry Commission**

The components of the research and training programmes tell their own story about the kinds of knowledges which the practices of the Forestry Commission have required over time. These components are the structural expressions of the Forestry Commission's knowledge culture.<sup>38</sup> They tell a story about the kinds of knowledges which has been valued over time in the Forestry Commission, and they also tell a story about the Forestry Commission's relationship to knowledge, how it has gone about getting it, what constituted good knowledge (to act on), etc.

#### **5.2.2.2.1 New internal capacity in social scientific research**

The commissioning of research by the Forestry Commission is chiefly a function of the Policy and Practice Division which also advises the Commissioners on the Forestry Commission Research and Development Strategy. In addition Forest Enterprise manages an independent budget primarily for operational research. Most Forestry Commission research is carried out by the Forestry Commission

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<sup>37</sup> Along with Harvesting and Marketing (H&M), Forest Management (FM) and Planning, Environment and Recreation is one of the typical functional differentiations within the forest districts.

<sup>38</sup> See also Tsouvalis 2000, for a discussion of the Forestry Commission's knowledge culture.

agency, Forest Research, but the Forestry Commission also commissions research from universities. In recent years, the Forestry Commission has developed a Social Research Programme. The Forestry Commission has a longstanding engagement with social science as noted above. The increasing interest in understanding what the social might mean in the context of the practices of the Forestry Commission led to the creation of the People, Trees and Woods Programme in the mid-1990s, and later the current Social Research Programme. It also led to the creation of internal capacity in the area, the Social Research Unit. The budget for both is controlled by the Principal Advisor on Social Benefits who is based in the Policy and Practice Division. The budget for the Social Research Programme was about £400,000 in 2001, very small in comparison with the rest of the budget for research.

It is significant that the title of the advisor who controls the budget for social scientific research is 'Principal Advisor on Social Benefits.' It suggests that he commissions research which will help articulate the social benefits of forestry. As such, the Social Research Programme sits in a long tradition of articulating the non-timber benefits of state forestry using different techniques in order to strengthen the case for the Forestry Commission with the Treasury. This suggests that an important function of the Social Research Programme is about the presentation of self. However, this instrumental aspect does not exhaust the meaning of the Social Research Programme in the Forest Commission. Some roles are more defined by having to defend the organisational interest, but that does not mean that for others, or even for the same people there may be an intrinsic as well as a strategic value in what they are doing. It was clear from several interviews and conversations during participant observation, that although interviewees were aware of the value of social scientific research in terms of 'performing' the new forestry in the sense of the 'presentation of self' (Goffman 1959), many also considered that *social* forestry required a much greater attention to *social* scientific knowledges. And that social scientific knowledges went beyond environmental economics and quantitative sociology to include interpretative social science as noted above. The Forestry Commission was itself becoming more interested in *verstehen* (Fielding and Fielding 1986).

The Social Research Programme consists both of research commissioned out of the Forestry Commission as well as in-house research. The Forestry Commission has in recent years been building in-house capacity in social science. It has done so through a mixture of employing new staff with a social science training (sociology and geography), as well as sending existing staff at Forest Research on university-based postgraduate training courses. The motivation to create internal capacity in social scientific research, other than economics, was a sense of insufficient knowledge base for making decisions about the social aspects of forestry among some senior managers. Initially the creation of internal capacity met with resistance from some in the Forestry Commission's Research Agency.

They thought it was all bonkers really. Didn't really think that social research was something we should be doing in forestry really, a very old fashioned attitude. I think there's still that feeling that if it's not something to do with trees then there must be something wrong. My view is that forestry is all about people, delivering goods and services for people, but of course most foresters are obsessed with trees. They tend to think of trees first and people second. So it's been a very important switch, and setting up the new unit has been important because it's then introduced, you know you start to see the culture change coming along within Forest Research.

Head of Policy and Practice division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

This internal capacity was set up as part of the Silviculture and Seed research programme, and headed by the Head of Silviculture and Seed, in addition to his normal responsibilities. The team consisted of the Head of Silviculture Research, who had recently taken a social science masters course and a sociologist based at Forest Research's southern research station at Alice Holt, another member of Forest Research staff with an interest in community forestry was based at NRS. Later, a human geographer was employed at NRS bringing the number of staff to four, although the Head of Silviculture and Seed had to share his time between the two very different areas of research.

The 'Social Research Unit' had a precarious status for the duration of the fieldwork. While the decision to develop in-house capacity had come from senior managers, the decision to separate this bit of reality in Forest Research out and

attribute a more obvious identity to it came from the people who were directly involved in the work.

There is still no such thing as the Social Research Unit in any official sense, it was invented by [the staff who form part of the Social Research Unit] then we recruited [the human geographer] into NRS and we sat round in a group and said we refuse to be called 'adjunct to Silviculture North', we're going to be called the 'Social Research Unit.' So we just started signing our names, Social Research Unit. We still haven't achieved official recognition.

Head of Silviculture and Seed, Forest Research, September 2003.

There was as noted in Chapter 2, a general debate in the Forestry Commission about the relationship between research and practice. As will become clear from Chapter 7, institutional change under Conservative governments during the 1990s had led to a distancing of the definition of research requirements from practice through the introduction of quasi-markets (Bevir and Rhodes 1999) in the Forestry Commission's institutional structure. There was a perception among some research subjects that Forest Research was not necessarily doing the research which was required by practitioners. In some cases this was a matter of Forest Research not moving fast enough with the new agenda, that the knowledge concerns of traditional forestry continued to weigh too heavily on the priorities of the research budget, whereas in others, the concern was that the socially oriented research which was conducted was not sufficiently applied in relation to the concerns of the practitioners. This bears out, the general point (also reflected in the development of the course on social forestry by Forest Training Services) that whereas it is the role of 'research' and 'training' to support practitioners, practitioners have often had to make it up as they went along, drawing on the knowledge which they had 'at hand', based on the way in which they were *situated*, in different ways at that time and place. This is not to say that research and training do not have a role to play, only to make the point that, whether or not an institution chooses to create functional differentiated parts of itself referred to as Forest Research and Forest Training Services,<sup>39</sup> there will

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<sup>39</sup> Forest Training Services and Forest Research have had other labels in the course of the Forestry Commission's history.

be much ‘learning by doing’, as practitioners draw on the resources available to them in the context of the boundedness of their setting of action whenever they are confronted by new challenges.

#### **5.2.2.2 A new training course in social forestry**

The work of Forest Training Services is fairly stable in the sense that there is not a great deal of change in the kinds of courses which they offer. This corresponds to the relative constancy of forest practice over time. The work of Forest Training Services consists of revising courses where necessary to keep them up to date with best practice. A lot of this best practice is identified within the Forestry Commission itself, the Forestry Commission prides itself with leading on a number of areas. It also means that, again, it tends to be quite turned in on itself when it comes to knowledge acquisition. The other part of the work is to ‘deliver’ courses. Courses are delivered when enough people are signed up for them. Courses are revised or taken out of the programme when people do not apply for them. Staff are encouraged to sign up for courses, for example through an annual performance review where they and their manager identify training needs.

Forest Training Services keep an impressive number of courses on their books. Trainers are expected to deliver a wide range of courses. They are not themselves necessarily specialists in the courses which they deliver. They are generally foresters who are doing a ‘tour of specialisation’ working for Forest Training Services, although the tour of specialisation appears to be less common now than it was in the past. This means that they have worked as practitioners in various capacities before and that they can be expected to move on to practice again later.

The system for developing new courses usually works on a top down basis. It is the Policy and Practice Division at HQ which contacts senior staff in Forest Training Services. However in the case of the development of the course on social forestry, it did not quite work like that. The steer seemed in the first instance to come from the practitioners rather than from the purchaser.

I was alerted to the need for social forestry-type courses by individuals working in the field who were asking for advice. Did we know of anything that was available? At the time they were generally coming from the South Wales coal fields, those sort of areas where we had problems. It was practising foresters who were asking for advice on arranging meetings, facilitating, that sort of thing. So that's come from the floor up rather than from the top down, although there are people working at HQ level in the area, but the demand has preceded the policy in many cases which is unusual.

Trainer, Forest Training Services, July 2002.

There were already some courses on Forest Training Services' books which would seem appropriate. There was for example a course on 'Involving People in Forestry' and another one on 'Negotiation', as well as a few different ones on recreation. However these were considered not to 'fit' with what was now required.

What was being asked for was a tailoring of our existing events, changing the focus of the existing events. When we look at things like 'negotiation', largely with these courses are things like marketing courses [...] But that wasn't what they were looking for, and I think one of the problems is that nobody actually knew what they were looking for. They knew they wanted something, they knew they wanted us to provide it, but exactly what was being asked for people were fairly unsure I think.

Trainer, Forest Training Services, July 2002.

The development of the Social Forestry Course demonstrates the point, expressed by several research subjects, that the default knowledge strategy of the Forestry Commission has been to *look inside*. What have we already got on this? Perhaps this is a feature of what one person called the 'mixture of scout and military culture of the Forestry Commission.' A kind of independent resourcefulness, which perhaps has its roots in its military war time origins. I asked whether there was a critical moment when Forest Training Services decided that they needed to get someone in from outside.

Probably when I realised I couldn't do this myself. I was being asked to give consideration to what I could provide in the short term. I found that very difficult, to think

outside of my own forestry experience. And I think at that point it became obvious that equally probably nobody else in the organisation [Forest Training Services] would be able to think outside of their small amount of experience. Largely we live and work and deal with rural communities, and actually that wasn't necessarily what we needed. We actually needed some urban experience. Particularly when you look at South Wales, Cheshire, Scottish Lowlands, perhaps Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, these kind of areas where traditionally very industrial areas and often quite urban in their outlook.

Trainer, Forest Training Services, July 2002.

So there was something new out there, happening in the field, that practitioners felt they needed guidance on, but so new that people didn't really feel they could name it. To paraphrase Foucault (1992), new institutional being was offering itself up to be thought, and the institutional actor sought to draw on existing (internal) resources, and when this was found to be inadequate, to pull in new ones, in this case, a to employ a new trainer with a very different profile of experience than most people at Forest Training Services.

### **5.2.2.3 The culture change programme**

The culture of the Forestry Commission was often referred to as a barrier to institutional change. In particular, the view that forestry was mainly 'about forestry', meaning about timber production for a market, as well as hierarchical relationships internally. It is likely that the 'culture change programme' which was started by the then Director General at the turn of the millennium increased references to 'culture' in the fieldwork material.

In December 1995, a new Director General with a modernising brief had been employed by the Board. Interestingly, the Board chose to bring in an outsider, all the way from Australia:

I was recruited by the Board fundamentally to establish two agencies, the Forest Enterprise and the Forest Research Agency and to reduce our costs. So I had to get rid of 500 people. Today we're at 3300, so that was quite a significant reduction. And so that was the hard work, that was the structural work. Then it was clear to me that after all of that you had to start to try to rebuild a culture. Because you can have wonderful structures in an organisation, but unless the culture's right nothing happens. And conversely I know organisations, which really don't have very sensible structures, but

they've got a wonderful culture, so things happen. So I saw my job really as working with very good clay to modernise the Forestry Commission, to better deal with modern forestry. And by modernisation, there are two strands. There is the actual structures which are important, but there's also a cultural change towards decentralising a lot of the responsibility, giving people the support and the confidence, and the mandate actually, to take decisions closer to the forest.

Director General, Forestry Commission GB, August 2003.

The culture change programme was essentially about changing the ways in which the Forestry Commission talks to itself so that it would be better to listen to others, it was an attempt to address the hierarchical aspects of Forestry Commission culture and decentralise decision making. This was based on the perception that 'a modern forestry' required decisions to be taken closer to 'the community' in order to ensure 'relevance' and that a centralised structure was not able to respond effectively to increasingly decentralised funding opportunities.

The culture change programme included an evolving series of initiatives as set out in Heeraman *et al* (2003), McCann (2003), Bills (2002; 2003), MacLachlan (2002) and Leslie (2002). In July 2000, the previously separate 'industrial' and 'non-industrial' staff categories were brought together in a common structure for pay, grading, communication, and training and development through a 'staff unification programme.' This allowed the Forestry Commission to reduce bureaucracy in the context of Labour government's requirements for public sector reform as well as to address, what was referred to by some research subjects as, the 'us and them' culture in the institution between industrial and non-industrial staff groups. During 2001, a number of events were held to enhance the leadership skills of approximately 250 senior and middle managers as well as the Executive Management Team (McCann 2003). The Forestry Commission had begun to conduct staff surveys as part of the culture change process. About forty so-called 'connect workshops' were held in order to present and discuss the findings from the staff survey and to discuss the general direction of change. They were intended to be *interactive* events and they provided

opportunities for executive and senior management to demonstrate their new listening skills (McCann 2003). About half of the total workforce of the Forestry Commission attended the connect workshops: 1600 people of different grades, skills and locations. The executive team produced an action plan to initiate changes on the basis of the feedback from the staff survey, the leadership events and the connect workshops. In particular, clearer leadership, greater trust in people, better communications, improved people management and improved performance management. Each member of the executive was made responsible for championing a key area of the plan. Moreover, a change support team was established to provide support for the action plan. Finally attention was turned on 'frontline managers', and a new type of event replacing the leadership events were developed as the main management development vehicle open to all levels of management. This was known as the 'Valuing and Supporting People and Change programme.' By March 2004, 26 events had taken place involving about 400 managers and supervisors with about 150 additional staff scheduled to attend future events as part of their Personal Development Plan (McCann 2003).

There was thus a self-conscious approach to working on both the structural and the cultural aspects of the organisation, a clear example of the reflexive incorporation of (social scientific) knowledge in practice.

The culture change programme was justified in part with reference to the Forestry Commission's capacity to respond to an increasingly unstable world where the only thing which was certain was that the setting of action would change, and that in consequence a more proactive stance needed to be adopted.

When I came here the unions came to see me, and many of the senior staff. And they said 'the best thing you could do DG, is give us a period to consolidate. We've had too much change - we don't want any more change'. And I said to them, I'm not going to do that. I said, the problem with organisations who don't face up to change is they get into some [...] where they're all comfortable and they relax and then suddenly, exogenous factors, other people, or other organisations suddenly question what you're doing and without you being ready for it, there's swinging change imposed upon you by other people. And that's very painful - very demoralising. And that indeed has happened to the Forestry Commission on a couple of occasions during the '80s and '90s. And the reason

I was recruited was that they didn't think an internal person could be a change manager. The politicians and some of the Board were saying 'too incestuous, unable to change, defend their old position - we're going to have to bring in some new blood.'

Director General, Forestry Commission GB, August 2003.

According to du Gay (1996), one of the most distinctive features of 'new wave management' embodied in the literature on 'excellence' is the shift from reactive to proactive postures, from bureaucratic to entrepreneurial styles of management, and the attempts to create new kinds of work based identities which it attempts to create among members of an organisation (Wood 1989, p. 387; in du Gay 1996, p. 57). Thus the literature is centrally concerned with issues of identity and of culture and many contemporary management texts portray culture change programmes as a way of addressing a whole range of organisational ills (Ouchi 1981; Peters and Waterman 1982; Peters 1987; Kanter 1990) (du Gay 1996, p. 57). In the management literature referred to above culture is, according to du Gay (1996), represented as an answer to the problems thrown up by the increasingly dislocated ground upon which globalised capitalism operates.

In the context of the Forestry Commission's culture change programme, the 'culture' of the Forestry Commission was seen as unequal to the challenge of a more unstable setting of action. The top of the organisation was seen to have insufficient information to decide effectively what should be going on at practitioner level. This was also reflected in the way, what used to be the top of the Forestry Commission hierarchy, Head Quarters, has been reconceived and relabelled, as a service provider to the national offices of the Forestry Commission, Forestry Commission England, Scotland and Wales respectively. But more importantly, in the context of the culture change programme what was being attempted, was the destruction (at least in part) of authority on the basis of position in the hierarchy in favour of those who were deemed to be closest to the forest, the community and potential partners:

*“The role of a public forestry body has undergone major change. As I have said I like to think of it as building a bridge between what is biologically and silviculturally feasible and what the community wants and values from their forest. It is simply not possible for this bridge building and partnership working to take place according to some head office formulae or template. The person close to the forest is in the best position to identify the opportunity from the partnership and achieve the objective. But for this to happen a major change from an old culture which was essentially about central command and control to a new culture of devolved decision-making is required” (Bills 2002, p. 3).*

As du Gay puts it, drawing on Laclau (1990), “*the effects of dislocation require constant ‘creativity’, and the continuous construction of collective operational space that rests less on inherited objective forms (bureaucracy) and more on cultural reconstruction. Thus ‘new wave management’ is concerned with changing people’s values, norms and attitudes so that they make the ‘right’ and necessary contribution to the success of the organization for which they work*” (du Gay 1996, p. 58).

The culture change programme was about moving power downwards in the hierarchy to enable differentiation of forestry policy at smaller spatial scales. But this was also taking place at a time when the kinds of actions, meanings and bodies which were seen to belong to forestry as practiced by the Forestry Commission were becoming more uncertain, the Forestry Commission was, at different spatial scales, asking ‘society’ what do you want us to do and how, what do you want us to be? At the same time resources were becoming increasingly scarce. This combination of a delegation of power downwards in the organisation and the delegation of power, to decide about forestry management, out to society put practitioners in an interesting position. There was at the same time a retreat from a hierarchical mode of operating and a greater openness and even uncertainty about the ends (and means) of forestry. The ends of new forestry were less clearly defined because they were still in the process of emerging from the process of institutional change. But perhaps they were also less clearly defined because they were less easy to pin down through the usual methodologies and languages for pinning down ends (quantitative natural

science). And because, defining the ends at a given scale such as the country, region or some smaller community level had increasingly become *part of* the deliverable. Whereas in the past the objectives of forestry policy were comparatively clear, working out what the objectives should be had increasingly become part of the ‘deliverable.’ This required skills to get data about what society at different scales wants, skills to balance the interests of different groups at different spatial and administrative scales against each other, and to relate all of this to existing skills of forest management.

There is no doubt that many people find this extremely difficult, and many people find it difficult to tolerate ambiguity, the tolerance of ambiguity is a skill which foresters traditionally didn’t have, it was all pretty clear cut [...] These days it’s much more nebulous, it’s much more ephemeral. There’s no right answer, just a series of answers which are not bad. And there’s a lack of information and data. And even if we spent a lot getting it all, there would still be a lot left to intuition, understanding, to the powers of persuasion at the community or at the partnership level.

Director General Forestry Commission GB, August 2003.

This ambiguity challenged the ethos summarised in the motto ‘we deliver!’ which I came across many times in the fieldwork, expressed in different ways, and which summarised the competent application of skills to the satisfaction of the ‘customer.’ The competent application of skills is an important part of any professional identity since professionalism *is* the competent application of skills. The sense of competence was challenged not only by changes to the kinds of skills required in forestry, but also by uncertainty about what the new deliverables were. Or to cast it in terms of psychological theories of social learning, in the context of a changing setting of action, the opportunities for ‘enactive achievement’ (Kagan and Gall 1997) were coming under pressure.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have substantiated the claim made towards the end of Chapter 2, that the Forestry Commission is going through a process of reinventing itself brought on by a crisis of identity, precipitated by the destabilisation of its relation to its setting of action. I have thus begun to concretise the institutional part of the

conceptual model set out in Chapter 3, by filling in the empirical detail. I have shown how the story-line of social forestry was a symptom of the existing identity of the Forestry Commission having become problematised, resulting in an at times passionate debate about the future of forestry among a group of people for whom the Forestry Commission and the work it does is both important and meaningful. I have also shown that the perception that the relationship between the Forestry Commission and its setting of action had become destabilised had led actors to initiate different kinds of work on the institutional self of the Forestry Commission, as well as work on various of the Forestry Commission's others who were perceived to be able to re-confer value and legitimacy on the Forestry Commission.

In Chapter 6 I turn to have a closer look on the identity structures which the Forestry Commission had built up over time since its formation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

# **Chapter 6 A narrative of institutional self-identity**

In this chapter I set out the events which were talked about as important in the history of the Forestry Commission in terms of what it has become. As such, events included may be conceived of as a 'reconstituted' institutional narrative of self based on the oral accounts of the research subjects. Most of the events are included because they were referred to consistently as important events. A few events were only referred to by a few people, but nevertheless seemed significant for understanding what the Forestry Commission had become and the way in which it was struggling with current challenges. In doing so, I am dimensionalising the changes to the setting of action of the Forestry Commission over time as represented in the narratives of the people who work there, and in this way I am illuminating the institutional narrative of self.

## **6.1 Formative years 1919-1979**

### **6.1.1 A strategic reserve**

In the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century state involvement in forestry was mainly directed at ensuring security of supply of oak wood for ship building, especially for the Royal Navy. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the growing need for oak for the navy had resulted in acceptance of the idea of planting trees for timber production, in contrast to the management of natural forests for local needs under a coppice system, or the designation of areas of land as Royal Forests for hunting under the Normans where trees were almost incidental (Blunden and Curry 1988, p. 54-55).

The management of the Crown forests had been transferred to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests in 1810 and they had as a target to ensure

the availability of 100,000 acres of productive oak woodlands regarded as necessary for the requirements of the Royal Navy, a target which was nevertheless to remain elusive (James 1981 in Winter 1996, p. 276). However the introduction in the 1860s of iron-clad ships meant that the demand for oak for ship building greatly declined and the interest of the state in forestry as a significant concern for public policy declined correspondingly (Winter 1996, p. 281). In consequence many woodlands fell into neglect (Blunden and Curry 1988). There were, however, still some who thought that forestry was a 'good thing' (Winter 1996, p. 279). In 1902, a Departmental Committee was appointed by the Board of Agriculture. According to Winter (1996), the report castigated the neglected state of forestry in Britain and urged a programme of education and practical demonstration to encourage better management of the nation's woods and fresh planting. As Winter (1996, p. 279) observes, "*[i]t was essentially an exercise in piety, with forestry seen as a good thing but with little attempt to justify such a position or suggest how the objectives might be achieved.*"

However in the next 15 years two important arguments were to be added: the creation of jobs in rural areas and the return of the argument about security of supply of timber in wartime.<sup>40</sup>

In 1907 an Afforestation Conference was held to consider afforestation as a means of addressing growing unemployment in urban as well as rural areas. In 1909 a Royal Commission on Afforestation reported that a national scheme of afforestation would contribute to the solution of the problem of unemployment (James 1981, p. 201, in Winter 1996, p. 280). The Royal Commission concluded that 9,000,000 acres of afforestation in the UK would be desirable, and that this would provide permanent employment for one man per 100 acres resulting in the creation of some 90,000 jobs.<sup>41</sup> It also concluded that a Board of Commissioners with the powers of compulsory purchase should be set up to implement the programme (Winter 1996, p. 280). In response a Forestry Committee was set up as part of the Development Commission established by the

<sup>40</sup> Rural unemployment had become politically more important due to a combination of the rise of the labour movement, the loss of rural Tory seats to the Liberals in the 1906 elections, and the emergence of Lloyd George from rural Wales (Winter 1996, p. 280).

<sup>41</sup> And that the net revenue after eighty years should show a return of 3.75% on the net cost (Winter 1996, p. 280).

Development and Road Improvement Fund Act of 1909. However, the Forestry Committee had very few powers. It could only offer advice and aid, but not to profit making organisations (Minay 1990, in Winter 1996, p. 280).

Meanwhile war broke out in Europe in 1914 and put security of supply of timber back on the political agenda. It was no longer oak to build ships which made timber so important, but pit props for the mines as coal was the main source of power for nearly all sectors of the economy (Winter 1996, p. 281). The UK was dependent on imports, mainly from Northern Europe and Russia, for most of its timber supplies and German submarines disrupted supplies by sinking the ships which transported the timber. As a result 450,000 acres were felled during the war (Winter 1996, p. 282) and security of supply was back on the political agenda.

In 1917 the Ackland Committee, a forestry sub-committee of the Selborne Committee, reported. This was, according to Winter, a virtual blueprint for the forestry policy which emerged after the war and dominated British forestry for the following seventy-five years (1996, p. 282). Interestingly, Winter points to the origin of the focus on upland afforestation: *“[a]ware of the need to reduce reliance on timber imports, but aware also that similar arguments were being applied to domestic agriculture, the Committee effectively abandoned the lowlands, focusing all its attention on the potential for coniferous afforestation of the uplands”* (1996, p. 282). The sub-committee calculated that 1.7 million acres were needed to ensure independence from imported timber for up to three years in an emergency; it recommended a reserve of 5 million acres based on 3 million acres of new planting and better management of 2 million acres, and recommended a planting programme of 80 years (Winter 1996, p. 282, 285). Moreover it considered that afforestation of the uplands would be able to provide 10 times more employment than if the land remained in agricultural use (Winter 1996, p. 282). And so, as Winter observes, *“was born the idea of a public body with twin aims – on the one hand to regulate the private sector and provide advice and grant aid; on the other, to act as a commercial enterprise in its own right, in effect a nationalised industry”* (1996, p. 282). Because there were, at the time an agriculture department each for England and Wales, for Scotland, and for

Ireland, the sub-committee pressed for a national body covering the British Isles. The Forestry Commission was established in September 1919 with the first Forestry Act.

While the main objective of the Forestry Commission was to create a strategic reserve of timber to ensure security of supply in the event of another major war, or world shortages of timber, the creation of jobs in rural areas to reduce rural depopulation was present as a minor objective (Blunden and Curry 1988 p. 57). Nevertheless, Thetford Forest, in East Anglia, now one of the biggest industrial forests in England, was mostly planted as a job creation scheme in the late 1920 and 1930s (Blunden and Curry 1988, p. 57).

According to Winter, the emphasis on technical forestry expertise in the constitution of the Forestry Commission meant that in practice most of the eight commissioners were not only enthusiasts for forestry but also major landowners. In forestry, in contrast to agriculture, the establishment of the Forestry Commission meant that *“the implementation, and to a considerable extent the formulation, of forestry policy were places in the hands of the foresters themselves”* (1996, p. 283).

Forestry Commissioners held their first meeting on 7 December 1919 (Pringle 1994). At the meeting the new chairman, Lord Lovat, and one of the commissioners, Lord Clinton decided to have a competition on who could get home first and plant the Commission's first trees. Pringle (1994, p. 7-8) recounts the anecdote:

*“Lord Clinton’s journey was to Devon, whilst Lord Lovat had the longer trip to northern Scotland. When he arrived at Eggesford station Lord Clinton was met by local foresters and proceeded to a site in what is now known as Eggesford Forest where they heeled-in a number of beech and larch. Lord Clinton then sent a telegram to his Chairman which was handed to Lord Lovat as he got off his train at Elgin!”*

Moreover the separation of forestry from agriculture, aggravated an existing dichotomy between the two. Drawing on work by Lloyd, Watkins and Williams (e.g. Lloyd *et al.* 1995; Williams *et al* 1994), Winter suggests that the “*way in which the Forestry Commission was constituted held out little promise for any fundamental examination of the relationship between forestry and agriculture and may be partly to do with the lack of interest in woodland matters still displayed by many farmers*” (1996, p. 284).

In 1939 war broke out in Europe again, timber imports were interrupted and more than 500,000 acres were felled, most of it in private ownership (Winter 1996, p. 285). Timber shortages reinforced the concerns that had led to the establishment of the Forestry Commission. In 1943 the Forestry Commissioners submitted a report, *Post-war Forestry Policy* (Cmnd 6447) recommending an expanded peacetime role for the Commission on strategic grounds, and on the grounds of a projected post-war shortage of timber (Winter 1996, p. 285; NDAD 2003, p. 3).

In 1944 the Commissioners published another report, *Post-War Forestry Policy, Private Woodlands* (Cmnd 6500) which recommended the establishment of a "dedication scheme" of afforestation grants to landowners who adopted Forestry Commission plans for afforestation and management. These were introduced in 1947 (Winter 1996, p. 288; NDAD 2003, p. 3). The afforestation grants of the dedication scheme provided the Forestry Commission with a second major instrument in the creation of a strategic reserve of timber. In addition the responsibility for felling licences, introduced during the war, were transferred from the Board of Trade to the Forestry Commission in 1950 (Winter 1996, p. 288; NDAD 2003, p. 3).

The main ways in which the Forestry Commission thus set about creating a strategic reserve was through purchasing private land and planting it up, persuading private landowners to plant and manage their land in accordance with the forestry policy objectives of the Forestry Commission, and through controlling felling through licensing.

In the mid-1950s the Government commissioned an independent report on forestry in the uplands, *Forestry, Agriculture and Marginal Land* (Zuckerman 1957). The Zuckerman report fundamentally questioned the strategic justification for afforestation (Winter 1996, p. 290). Instead a continued high rate of planting was recommended on the grounds of social and economic benefits especially in the countryside (Pringle 1994, p. 45), and rural employment now became a formal policy objective (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 62-63). Thus in a policy statement by the Minister of Agriculture in July 1958, the Minister said that in deciding where the trees should be planted,

*“special attention will be paid to the upland areas, particularly in Scotland and Wales, where expansion of forestry would provide needed diversification of employment and important social benefits”* (Minister of Agriculture 1958, cited in Pringle 1994, p. 45).

None of the people I interviewed had been around during the early decades of the Forestry Commission’s existence but the early objective of creating a strategic reserve of timber was often referred to. And as we have already seen in Chapter 5, the creation of rural employment was referred to in the context of positioning the social as a longstanding part of the Forestry Commission’s identity. It was clear however, that the strategic reserve objective was the most important in the re-telling of the early days of institutional self-identity. This reflected the fact that rural employment as an objective of the Forestry Commission was only formally introduced with Zuckerman report (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 62). The strategic reserve objective was at times portrayed as having lasted until the late 1980s, only really ‘hitting the buffers’ with the termination of tax incentives to private afforestation in the 1988 Conservative government Budget. At other times, it was portrayed as having given way to a justification for continuing afforestation on the grounds of forestry being an economic resource for the nation, sometime during the 1960s. In either case, it was clear that the early strategic reserve objective left a deep imprint on the self-conception of the Forestry Commission:

The Forestry Commission comes from a starting point of having a single focus of producing a strategic reserve of timber, and that was deeply embedded in the culture, up until I would imagine the early 80s, that was the *raison d'être* for the organisation and for many of the individuals that made up that organisation.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, 2003.

Moreover the strategic reserve objective and its relationship with agriculture was also portrayed as having had an impact on the location of the forests:

The factors which moulded the estate - one was the strategic reserve objective and another was that we also had to be self sufficient in our own food resources after the Second World War. So high quality agricultural land was protected and the only land available for forestry was the very poor quality remote upland hilltops. And almost by definition, but accidentally, that's a long way from where most people live. It's a long way from the cities.

Chief Executive, Forestry Commission England, 2003.

### **6.1.2 Military and colonial influences**

Many people made reference to the influence of the armed services and the empire on the Forestry Commission. The structure of the Forestry Commission was often described as 'hierarchical', 'military' and/or 'colonial.' The reduction in Britain's colonial involvement during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, meant that many colonial foresters came back and got involved in forestry in Britain. Moreover, the two world wars meant that many men joining the Forestry Commission had recent military experience. The titles of different staff groups were often drawn from the terminology of colonial administration, and authority was based on position in the hierarchy. This affected the relationship between staff groups a great deal.

When I look back to my early days as a forest craftsman, if the forester said jump, you said how high? That was the way it was. You could not question his decisions at all. You would not even consider even answering back to him.

Beat Forester, a forest district in England, September 2003.

The attitude towards staff discipline was influenced by the military experiences of many of the foresters.

The background of most of the people a few years before me, say seven years before me, was ex forces. Practically all foresters were actually ex army, and there was a sergeant major type attitude to discipline in those days. [...] A lot of trainees, like me, were under people who said this is how you manage people: being bullying and threatening and that sort of thing. Of course, now it is all by encouragement, and it's much better, because in those days it was sort of, 'do this or else'.

Woodland Officer, a conservancy in England, October 2003.

From early on, the Forestry Commission established forest workers holdings, later known as 'forest villages', as a way of having access to labour in remote areas (Edlin 1952, p. 1; Forestry Commission 1929, p. 25, in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 55). During the 1930s depression, the Forestry Commission came under increasing pressure from the Government to create more small holdings (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 56) . After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, forest villages became the preferred method of settling forest workers in forests (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 56).

Drawing on Foucault's concept of 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1991), Tsouvalis has drawn attention to the way in which the Forestry Commission disciplined forest workers. Disciplining, through surveillance, extended to the families of staff in the forest villages.

Your wife and your family were also judged as to how you were going to fit into the forestry village life. A lot of the foresters lived in forestry villages then. It wasn't until ten years later that the drift started, that foresters weren't expected to always live in the middle of the forest on top of their work. [...] You know on some of my probation reports it said 'wife fitting in well', this kind of thing. It was just at the end of that, there were still that kind of thinking, you were judged a little bit on your family as well.

Beat Forester, a forest district in England, September 2003.

It should be noted that this interviewee also spoke positively about the social atmosphere in his forest village. Nevertheless, the quote suggests that the Forestry Commission saw its role as going beyond the creation of a labour force for the production of timber, to engage in the creation of communities which included the families of those who worked for the Forestry Commission and on whose comportment it felt it had a right to pass comment as late as the end of the 1970s.

The hierarchical structure and culture of the Forestry Commission was seen to have persisted in the culture of the organisation for a long time as the observations by this interviewee who joined at the beginning of the 1980s suggests,

It was an organisation which was highly disciplined, run on quasi military and colonial lines. For example, if you have had any exposure to the former colonial services, you'll find concepts like 'conservators', 'district officers', 'non commissioned officers' and 'men' work the way through. Highly disciplined, highly structured, and full of foresters, absolutely full of people with a great deal of technical and practical and professional expertise in forestry. Highly focused, completely obsessed with production of wood and the expansion of the woodland area in this country.

Director, Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

As we have seen in Chapter 5, the Forestry Commission is still struggling with this, hierarchical, rule-bound part of itself.

That thinking has persisted for quite a long time in the history of the organisation. Maybe longer than some people would like. There are still vestiges around of it today, but nothing like what there might have been 20 years ago when I joined the organisation.

Head of Environment and Communication, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

I will come back to the way in which this is articulated in the context of the Forestry Commission's response to current challenges and opportunities in Chapter 7.

### 6.1.3 Economic benefits

A commercial return on investment had been largely irrelevant to the strategic reserve objective. The strategic reserve objective could be seen as arising from a kind of 'categorical imperative' originating on the dependence of British society on coal and therefore on pit props for the mines and therefore on having access to timber. The Zuckerman report put paid to the strategic reserve objective of the Forestry Commission in 1957, and stressed instead the social and economic benefits of the forestry programme. It was however the economic benefits of forestry which were, for the time being, most in focus. As Tabbush (2001, p. 8) has observed:

*"while the social benefits were defined mainly in terms of rural employment, and this justified the concentration of afforestation in the uplands, the dominant paradigm within forestry was economic, and based on the individual forest stand, rather than in terms of economic optimisation for rural land-use as a whole."*

Forestry was, with the creation of the Forestry Commission, at least partly a nationalised industry (Winter 1996). It now had to demonstrate that it was providing an economic return on state investment. This was however difficult, in part because the long term nature of growing trees meant that the net present value of the return on investment would be low compared to other shorter term investments available in the economy. As Blunden and Curry (1988) put it, there is a long time from planting to harvesting.

We were in post-war Keynesian economics, so forestry had to produce a return on investment. So we spent decades arguing about the social return which was appropriate from forestry, the social discount rates in other words. Because the interest rate which the banks demanded for a commercial investment was never going to be attained by forestry and therefore there was a gap between the two.

Head of Silviculture and Seed, Forest Research Agency, September 2003.

As the strategic reserve objective fell away, the trees managed by the Forestry Commission were no longer valued as pit props, they had become comparable to

timber imports and to other kinds of investments through their translation to a commodity bought and sold. The ‘pit prop’ part of the meaning (or even identity) of the trees had been abstracted away. The *value* of the trees managed either directly or indirectly by the Forestry Commission was now as ‘timber’.

The increasing importance placed on economic optimisation as a guide to action had effects on the kinds of actions which were carried out in forestry since everything had to be related to the discount rate. Decisions about what to do were supposed to be based on a comparison of the rate of return of different options. There was scepticism about, and resistance to this at the time. This was, for example, indicated by a narrative about the policy of killing off oak trees which emerged a few times during the fieldwork. Oak trees of course have an even longer rotation than the conifers the Forestry Commission was planting: 120-150 years against 40-60 years. The oaks were either poisoned or ring barked. One person I interviewed, who was working as a forester at the time put his men on piece work and as a result the ring barking was ineffective and ‘although it did not do the trees any good, they were still there a few years later.’ However the comments of another interviewee suggests that the practice of killing of oak trees during the 1960s had not met with universal disapproval.

I can remember, it would be in about the 1980s, one of the foresters coming in. I was working at the time and he sort of came in and said ‘you’ll never believe what they’re doing, they’re planting broad leaves.’ It was like a horror thing for him. He was horror stuck that all that conifer ground was being used for all these grotty oaks and things like that. ‘Oh they’ll rue the day’. But it was good practice, the people that planted they were ten years earlier in thinking that way than the stick-in-the-muds if you like.

Beat Forester, a forest district in England, September 2003

In 1972 an interdepartmental cost-benefit analysis of the Forestry Commission was published (HM Treasury 1972). The purpose of the study was to “*provide information on the costs and benefits involved in the Forestry Commission’s operations, which can be taken into account in decisions about the Commission’s future planting programme, and possibly in the development of policy in relation*

*to their existing plantations.*<sup>42</sup> The study considered the role of forestry in areas of high unemployment, balance of payments and strategic considerations, recreation facilities and other amenities provided by plantations, environmental effects of forestry, revenues and costs, future trends in timber prices and decisions on re-stocking and the management of forests. The study concluded that new afforestation did not give rise to any strategic defence or commercial considerations, though it considered that the existing estate did represent a strategic reserve. While the study group considered that the estate offered little recreational value at present it also thought that the future potential was considerable, and while forestry was considered to give a lower return than hill-farming, it was seen as offering better local employment than hill farming.<sup>43</sup>

In spite of these conclusions, the report recommended that the forestry estate should continue to expand, although at a lower rate (Winter 1996, p. 293). The planting targets, which had rarely been met in the past, were reduced by 10% and the Forestry Commission was instructed only to give grants where there were proven employment and environmental gains (Winter 1996, p. 293). Following the report, the concept of expectation value was adopted as the basis of accounting. This meant that future revenues and expenditures of the existing forest estate were estimated and discounted from their present-day value at 3% target rate of return as opposed to 10%, (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 81), thus acknowledging the long term nature of forestry compared to other public investments. Even this proved difficult for the Forestry Commission to achieve (NAO 1986, p. 1, in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 81) and the emphasis on establishing the economic benefits of forestry continued.

#### **6.1.4 Landscape**

Early plantations were planted, military style, in large rectangular blocks of what came to be seen as 'dark serried ranks.' Although criticisms were made of the aesthetic effect of the Forestry Commission's plantations from the late 1920s onwards, it was only in 1963 that the Forestry Commission appointed its first landscape consultant, Sylvia Crowe, to improve the aesthetics of its plantations

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<sup>42</sup> Treasury (1972) in <http://www.bopcris.ac.uk/bopall/ref12419.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Treasury (1972) in <http://www.bopcris.ac.uk/bopall/ref12419.html>.

(Tsouvalis 2000, p. 125). Crowe revolutionised the approach to upland afforestation by insisting that planting should follow contour lines and that broadleaved trees and larch replace Sitka spruce in more sensitive and edge locations, and that water courses should also be treated sensitively (Crowe 1978; in Winter 1996, p. 291).<sup>44</sup>

The landscape debate had drawn attention to the negative externalities associated with the afforestation programme, in particular the loss of amenity from 'unsightly' plantations. The Forestry Commission sought to address this by bringing in new knowledge, in particular contemporary knowledge about landscape aesthetics. Crowe continued to work for the Forestry Commission until she retired in 1976 when she was replaced by Clifford Tandy (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 126). The main strategy of the Forestry Commission for accessing knowledge was to train foresters in landscape design. As discussed in Chapter 5, from the second half of the 1980s the Forestry Commission began to employ landscape architects on fixed term contracts. One of those who joined at that time commented on the perception of the new landscape architects:

I was part of the first intake where they went and plucked people off the shelf, ready trained. There were people who weren't sure at the time whether this was going to work or not, whether we'd be able to learn the forestry language, and integrate ourselves, and be useful, or would we always be these airy-fairy designers off to one side who couldn't put their feet on the ground.

Recreation and Community Manager, Forestry Enterprise England, September 2003.

Landscape architects in some ways were able to bypass the Forestry Commission hierarchy on the basis of claims to scarce expert knowledge.

My experience was different because I came in not as a forester, from a very specific technical background. I was expected to talk to everybody from forester on the ground through to the director general. I came in at a specific grade but I was

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<sup>44</sup> Inspired by a tradition of landscape design known as Irregular Style, Crowe developed various principles for blending in trees with other landscape features to make plantation forests appear more natural (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 126).

expected to be able to communicate with all of them.

Recreation and Community Manager, Forestry Enterprise England, September 2003.

However, although landscape expertise was on one hand, a passport to transcend the Forestry Commission hierarchy, on the other hand, being in a sense *outside* the hierarchy and *lacking* a claim to forestry expertise weakened the landscape architects' capacity to influence practice:

The landscape architects had been effectively in-house consultants [...] If a forester at that grade was working in the regional office and he went out, he effectively carried the authority of the conservator, but the landscape architect didn't. So he went out and people either took his advice or ignored it. And that has gone on if not to the present day, very much longer in the other countries [Wales and Scotland]. Basically if you weren't in the foresters club...We had our traditional groups, the admin people, the foresters, the engineers and the land agents, and they were all well established. But anyone else who came in was liable to be rather discounted as being slightly inferior and the established groups felt they were quite entitled to override what those people were saying. We still have troubles over design issues.

Head of Sustainable Forestry, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

Only at the end of the 1980s, did the first landscape architect become a permanent member of staff.

The introduction of Forest Design Plans in the early 1990s was also portrayed as an important factor in landscape architecture becoming a more central part of Forestry Commission practices. Forest Design Plans apply to existing forests in the public estate. They show what the forest is going to look like in the next 10-15 years and are revised every 5 years. A given forest district can have as many as 70 Design Plans. The Design Plans have to be placed on the public register for a month and there have external as well as internal audiences.

A lot of our woods were beginning to mature then and so we faced the decisions of felling and replanting. There was a lot of attention paid to landscaping and what we call restructuring: if you have a big forest which has all been planted in twenty years or ten

years then it all matures and you should fell it all; we didn't want to do that, we wanted to fell some bits early and some bits late. Quite a lot of input from landscape architects to try and make that look attractive and the benefits would be certainly in landscape but also in turning what would have been just a very uniform first rotation plantation into a real forest.

Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

The circumstances around that [landscape design ceasing to be bolt-on] were really forest planning. Forest planning became essential and the forests had to get approval. So at that date where their plans had to be approved by the Forestry Commission and they could be scrutinised by the public. Suddenly over night almost everybody realised that they couldn't miss out the landscape bit, the visual bit. [...] It would be slightly disingenuous if I say nobody cared before that point. It wasn't that nobody cared. It was that there were still people around who felt they could ignore it, ignore the issue.

Recreation and Community Manager, Forestry Enterprise England, September 2003.

The landscape design ideas of Sylvia Crowe embodied a predominantly external vision of the forest landscape, looking at contour lines from the opposite side of the valley. It was a doubly external view since it was based on normative ideas about the beautiful as opposed to being based on the meaningfulness of the landscape to the individual. More recently the Forestry Commission has shown an interest not only in the intimate perspective on the forest in the sense of seeing the forest from the *inside* of the forest, but also in the sense of the (intimate) meanings (or values) which people attach to the forest (O'Brien 2003).

### **6.1.5 Access and recreation**

The Forestry Commission's new productive landscapes were not only criticised for their impact on the landscape from early on, but also for the loss of public access to open moor land which had been afforested (Revill 1996, p. 100).<sup>45</sup>

During the 1930s, the Forestry Commission established the first Forest Park, Argyll National Forest Park, established in 1935 (Revill 1996, p. 109). This was

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<sup>45</sup> Both debates reached a pre-war peak in the controversy over proposals to afforest the Lake District (Revill 1996, p. 100).

in part a defensive move in response to the idea of establishing National Parks in upland areas of Britain by a Forestry Commission concerned that the establishment of such parks could limit large-scale afforestation and inhibit the management of established woodlands for commercial purposes (Revill 1996, p. 102). Revill argues that it was not so much that the Forestry Commission was against public access but rather that it was very much against the “*formation of National Parks run by bodies that would interfere with traditional land management and imperil the large-scale conversion of unproductive land to productive woodland*” (Revill 1996, p. 102). During the 1930s and 1940s, the Forest Parks became increasingly popular, the estimated number of visitors rising from 18,755 in 1949, to 53,600 in 1951 (Revill, p. 123).

Winter (1996) echoes Revill’s analysis of the motivations behind the establishment of Forest Parks suggesting that when the Forestry Commission stressed the recreation benefits of its forests in an policy statement in the early 1960s, it was part of an attempt to outmanoeuvre critique from the Ramblers Association about access (Winter 1996, p. 292). One might say that while those critical of the Forestry Commission were drawing attention to the *negative* externalities of its activities, the Forestry Commission itself was attempting to mount the case for the presence of *positive* externalities to the production of timber on a large scale. In doing so information (or data) on such positive externalities became increasingly important, and moreover such data collection was shaped by the dialogic context the institution found itself in. The Forestry Commission thus made estimates of the number of visitors from early on. In 1947 the Forestry Commission had appointed H.L. Edlin as a publicity officer (Revill 1996, p. 109). He was, among other things, responsible for editing the guides to the three Forest Parks. Revill argues that it is obvious from Edlin’s writings (in the Forest Guides and elsewhere) that the Forestry Commission “*had little idea how many people were using their amenity provision, let alone who these people were*” (Revill 1996. p. 126). However, from the early 1960s the collection of information about visitors seems to have become more important. Thus a visitor survey was undertaken in a selected number of the Commission’s forests during the summers of 1963 and 1964 (Mutch 1968).

The 1967 Forestry Act repealed and up-dated the 1919, 1945 and 1951 Acts, and gave a new special responsibility to the Forestry Commission to cater for public recreation and to enhance the beauty of the countryside. The year after, the Countryside Act empowered the Forestry Commission to plant and manage for amenity reasons and granted the Forestry Commission powers to provide facilities such as campsites, picnic places and visitor centres (Winter 1996, p. 292). In 1971, the Forestry Commission published its first comprehensive Recreation Policy (Forestry Commission 1971, in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 133). In 1972, the Treasury Cost-Benefit analysis of the Forestry Commission was published, from which recreation emerged as “*one of the few positive aspects of afforestation*” (Winter 1996, p. 292). There was thus plenty of motivation for the Forestry Commission to demonstrate its capacity for providing such recreation. In 1973, Recreation Planning Officers were appointed in most conservancies (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 134). Many Forestry Commission staff became as involved in the theory and practice of recreation management as they were in growing trees, adding “*erudite monographs on recreation*” to “*learned aboricultural texts*” (Winter 1996, p. 292). Moreover research into recreational matters was being commissioned from Edinburgh, Birmingham and Reading Universities (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 134). Through its Day Visitor Surveys, the Forestry Commission was able to estimate that 24 million day visits had been made to its forests in 1977 (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 135). Thus, as with the landscape agenda, the rise of the access and recreation agenda meant that the Forestry Commission was engaging with new, more social, scientific knowledges.

In 1977, the 1973 Recreation Policy was revised indicating a greater differentiation in terms of the kinds of activities taking place on Forestry Commission land, and also a distinction between commercial recreation (camping, caravanning, cabins, fishing, and shooting) and forest recreation (car parks, picnic sites, forest walks, and visitor centres). For commercial recreation, the Forestry Commission had to ensure a commercially acceptable rate of return, whilst for the latter no particular rate of return was required and costs were incurred as part of forest management expenditure (Forestry Commission 1976, in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 135). Tsouvalis identifies, in the commercialisation of

access and recreation, the beginnings of a shift from a concern with the 'rambler' to a concern with the 'forest consumer' (2000, p. 135).

The rise of the access and recreation agenda in forestry was repeatedly referred to by interviewees and people I met doing fieldwork as an important event in the history of the Forestry Commission. The growth of access and recreation was usually located from the 1960s onwards, with a big push in the 1970s, although sometimes reference would be made to the Forest Parks.

While there's always been a right, they didn't try and emphasise that to people. There was a big push in the 70s to get people into the forests. The government wanted to show this as a benefit to the nation, that it wasn't just producing wall to wall conifer timber, that there were lots of other benefits with the forest.

Beat Forester, a forest district in England, September 2003.

The growth of access and recreation would usually be portrayed as something which society had demanded of forestry, and which forestry had somewhat reluctantly agreed to both at an institutional and an individual level.

That sort of changed in the mid 60s, there was still [...]: 'who's that? don't like people walking in the forest, they might set the place on fire'. People gradually got used to public access and obviously you kind of laugh at it now. I can remember being on fire duty and someone ringing up saying 'there's a car parked somewhere, you'd better check they're not throwing their fag ends out'. So they didn't like people using the forests that much.

Beat Forester, a forest district in England, September 2003.

In this context reference would sometimes be made to what the Forestry Commission or foresters were like. For example, a certain sense of ownership in relation to the forest both at the institutional level and at the individual level, or that 'foresters were people who preferred trees to people.' This was a narrative I came across very early in the research, and which appeared in different versions during the research, but it contradicted my own experience of interacting with

individuals in the course of the research. I commented on this to one interviewee towards the end of my research. He replied that I had not been meeting the right people and that such people were, while fewer in numbers, still about.

Partly it's a generation thing, partly is often down to personalities and those who are comfortable making the more outward looking leap, those who would rather be hiding away growing the trees. And there are certainly some people who are very good at the whole communities thing. The primary thing you need there is to be a really good listener. There are others who are uncomfortable with it, and others who think they're good at it, but actually are appallingly bad at it and are paid to listen. I can think of people who really struggled with the idea that if you engage with a community, you are actually going to gain influence rather than lose it. There are still people, in isolated pockets of the organisation, who think that in talking to a community you are going to lose control.

Recreation and Community Manager, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

The instrumental perspective on the Forestry Commission's engagement in recreation referred to by Revill (1996) and Winter (1996) also came out in different ways.

Recreation has been important to us because it's the most visible form of non-market benefit. You can't deny that there are millions of people in the forests. Treasury is constantly saying 'why is it in the state sector?' How do we justify this expense? I think only for two or three years out of forty has forestry made money. So there's this loss making activity. How do you justify it? You justify it in terms of further benefit. The one that's most visible is recreation. People in the forests are visible, physically there.

Principal Advisor on Social Benefits, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

## 6.2 Recent influences 1979-1997

### 6.2.1 Environment

#### 6.2.1.1 'The Flow Country episode'

While nature conservationists had been concerned about the loss of upland habitats it was initially the issues of landscape and access which dominated the

critique of the Forestry Commission. However, by 1980, these concerns had largely been replaced by concerns over the ecological impact (Winter 1996, p. 291, 295). The Forestry Commission was criticised from a conservation perspective in a 1980 House of Lords report, *Scientific Aspects of Forestry*, as well as in a number of other publications (Grove 1983; RSPB 1985; Tompkins 1986). The Forestry Commission responded by launching the Broadleaved Woodland Policy with grants to encourage broadleaved plantations in the lowlands as well as in the uplands (Watkins 1986, in Winter 1996, p. 295). The Broadleaved Woodland Policy aimed to maintain and increase broadleaved woodlands by encouraging good management for a range of objectives, giving special attention to ancient semi-natural woodlands to maintain their special features. The Broadleaved Woodland Planting Grant meant that timber production no longer had to be the primary objective of planting grants, as had up till then been the case (Mather 2001, p. 254). An amendment to the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act passed in 1985 required the Forestry Commission to strike a reasonable balance between forestry and the conservation of natural beauty, flora and fauna (Mather 2001, p. 253; Pringle 1994):

*“In discharging their functions under the Forestry Acts 1967-1979 the Commissioners shall, as so far as may be consistent with the proper discharge of those functions, endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between: a. the development of afforestation, the management of forests and the production and supply of timber; and b. the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physio-graphical features of special interest”* (Wildlife and Forestry (Amendment) Act 1985, cited in Pringle 1994, p. 88)

During the 1970s and 1980s the importance of tax relief as an inducement to private afforestation had grown, allowing wealthy individuals to offset their taxable income against the expenditure of establishing forests. Such tax inducements came under heavy criticism for encouraging absentee landlords to gain tax relief by planting forests in environmentally sensitive areas. This came to a head in the so-called Flow Country episode in the far north of Scotland (Tsouvalis, 2000; Mather 2001). In the aftermath of the Flow Country episode,

tax exemptions as a way of encouraging afforestation were abandoned in the 1988 Budget.

During 1986, there had also been two NAO reports critical of the Forestry Commission. The first broadly replicated the 1972 Treasury White Paper, the second rejected upland forestry on import saving, employment and environmental grounds (Winter p. 296). It pointed out that while the Forestry Commission achieved a real rate of return of 3% per annum on its total forestry estate, it achieved only 2.25% on new investment, and that for a large part of the current planting programme at the time, the Forestry Commission only expected 1.25% return as this was on the poorest sites (NAO 1986, p. 1, in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 81). As we have seen, the tax inducements to investments in upland forestry were removed in the 1988 Budget.

Concerns over the aesthetics of plantations may also be considered as part of an environmental agenda. But here I am thinking more about the concerns which emerged over 'environment' as biodiversity and conservation than as landscape. In making a distinction between the two agendas I am following how my interviewees discussed these issues. More than the landscape agenda the rise of the environmental agenda was talked of as a major change in the history of the Forestry Commission. The two events which came up again and again as far as the early, pre-Brundtland, environmental agenda was concerned were the changes in 1985 in terms of the introduction of the Broadleaved Woodland Policy and duty to balance forestry and the conservation of natural beauty, flora and fauna on the one hand, and the Flow Country episode on the other.

Since 1980, the biggest change, and I believe it is still the biggest change, was in 1985 when there was an amendment to the Forestry Act which gave us what we call the 'balancing duty' to ensure that the interests of afforestation in the production of timber is balanced with the need to conserve the environment. Alongside that we also introduced the Broadleaves Policy. I think if we take a perspective since 1919 that was a fundamental shift. It fundamentally drew a line between the world that had various expressions before 1985, that we were here primarily to produce timber and to expand the forest area of this country, and one in which wood production was a valuable thing to

do but it was subordinate to the wider role of woodlands in the environment, and it must never take precedence over that.

Director of the Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

The Flow Country episode was also an important event in the history of the Forestry Commission (and therefore in its understanding of itself), and has left an imprint on people's memories. Douglas Pringle, who worked for the Forestry Commission for nearly forty years, provides the following commentary in his 1994 history of the Forestry Commission, The Forestry Commission. The First 75 Years:

*"the most lasting memories of many of those who worked in the Commission in the 1980s probably relate to the battle – which is surely the right word – for hearts and minds between the Commission and a number of influential conservation bodies, who sought to demonstrate that forestry as currently practiced was incompatible with the needs of nature conservation. The battle threatened both Government and public support for forestry, and came as a great shock to a Commission that for many years believed it had pursued enlightened environmental policies"* (Pringle 1994, p. 86).

Together with the story about foresters as individuals who prefer trees to people, the Flow Country episode was among the most recurrent stories I came across in the fieldwork. The episode was several times portrayed as a source of major learning for the Forestry Commission and sometimes it was described using quite emotional language like 'deeply hurt' or 'scarred'.<sup>46</sup>

There was a big conflict over that [the Flow Country] and we lost it. It almost destroyed the Forestry Commission and we learned from that, that was a learning. That led to fundamental changes in the way we do things.

Principal Advisor on Social Benefits, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

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<sup>46</sup> The impact of the Flow Country episode has been analysed in depth by Tsouvalis (2000).

I came across the view that the Forestry Commission had played an important role in the creation and/or maintenance of tax exemptions for conifer planting. But others tried to distance themselves from this practice, seeing it as unfair that the Forestry Commission as a whole had been tarnished with the brush of the private sector. The Flow Country and associated events around upland planting as major learning is epitomised in this account of experience of the confrontation between conservation interests and the Forestry Commission:

The really seminal influence on me was when I came up here in 1988. It was the height of these big conifer production programmes. The Forestry Commission was strongly supportive and creating enormous environmental damage in places. I went into a meeting with the policy head of one of the conservation agencies and we had a real battle. And I told him all these trees were wonderful and they were going to grow quickly and not going to blow down and were going to create a lot of employment. And he told me that all the trees were useless and they were all going to blow down and they weren't going to create any employment. So he wasn't telling the truth and I wasn't telling the truth, and the more we spoke and had a dialogue the further we went apart. And I just thought, this is stupid, this isn't what I believe is the way in which to manage a countryside or rural affairs or a forestry policy, this is just stupid. We're saying you can only practice forestry, if you're practicing forestry you can't deliver conservation, major conservation. And that was so far removed not only from my real practical experience but also my education. I just decided. That was quite a seminal moment for me. I decided I was never going to do that again. I was never going to do that, trade insults with people. At that time forestry and conservation were seen as competing land uses which is just stupid, I mean they should be compatible. That was 1988. I spent the rest of my time trying to make forestry policy more inclusive and to say well you can deliver so many things if you get it right. It's not a question of do you want timber production or do you want good looking forests on the landscape, you can have both.

Head of Policy and Practice division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

However the learning associated with the Flow Country episode was also accompanied by pain. This is exemplified in the quotation below where I asked an interviewee who joined the Forestry Commission in the mid-1970s what he thought were the key things that the Forestry Commission drew from the episode:

That's a difficult question. I think that for some people there was the realisation that the justification of trees for trees sake, which had driven the Forestry Commission very strongly, was not going to run. But I think for an awful lot of people in forestry, it was a terrible shock to their systems which left them damaged, but without being able to see a way forward. So that I think for an awful lot of people, and this is I think a theme that runs through, it was a damaging rather than a learning experience, which left them feeling that something they valued had been lost but not actually realising that there was a light at the end of the tunnel if they headed in a different direction.

Head of Sustainable Forestry, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

Fateful moments are moments when the non-trivial aspects of what we assume in acting about the relationship between ourselves and our setting of action are called into question. They are “*transition points which have major implications not just for the circumstances of the individual’s future conduct, but for self-identity. For consequential decisions, once taken, will reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which ensue*” (Giddens 1991, p. 142-143). On the basis of the emotions attached to it, the Flow Country episode can be conceived of as a fateful moment in the history of the Forestry Commission, although, it was probably not the episode by itself, but a combination of events of which the Flow Country episode and the threat of privatisation were particularly significant and which *together* produced a fateful moment for the Forestry Commission in the late 1980s (see also Tsouvalis 2000).

### **6.2.1.2 Multi-purpose forestry and sustainable forestry**

In 1991 the Forestry Commission issued a policy statement in which it “*accepted the principle of multiple objectives and asserted the importance of environmentally sustainable forestry and the delivery of public benefits*”. It also stressed the role it could play in absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> (Forestry Commission 1991; in Winter 1996, p. 297). Winter portrays the policy statement as a response to the examination, in particular of the environmental aspects of forestry, by the Agriculture Committee of the House of Commons in the 1989/1990 session (1996, p. 297). But of course it also came after two negative NAO reports in 1986, the Flow Country episode and the termination of tax inducements for

private forestry in 1988, as well as continuing threats of privatisation. A 1993 House of Commons Environment Committee scrutiny of the Forestry Commission served to keep up the pressure on the Forestry Commission.

During the 1990s the environmental agenda was increasingly transformed into a sustainable development agenda which in the context of forestry came to incorporate other agendas such as access, recreation, landscape and rural employment as well as economic regeneration and public involvement. In 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) took place in Rio de Janeiro. At UNCED a Statement of Forest Principles was adopted with the Rio Declaration, a 27 point statement of principles for the integration of environment and development. The Statement of Forest Principles was a “*non-legally binding, authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests*” (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 166). Among the requirements was that “[n]ational policies and strategies should provide a framework for increased efforts, including the development and strengthening of institutions and programmes for the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and forest lands” (Cayford 1992, p. 425). At the 1993 Second Ministerial Conference on the protection of European Forests in Helsinki, Britain adopted the Helsinki Principles which interpret the Rio Principles for European conditions and require participating nations to implement them for the sustainable management of their forests and the conservation of forest biodiversity.<sup>47</sup>

In 1994, the British government published *Sustainable Forestry: The UK Programme*. It defined the government’s forest policy as “*the sustainable management of our existing woods and forests*” and “*a steady expansion of tree cover to increase the many diverse benefits that forests provide*” (Secretary of State for the Environment et al. 1994, p. 7). Sustainable management was defined as the “*stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate,*

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<sup>47</sup> Four resolutions were adopted at Helsinki, covering the sustainable management of European forests, the conservation of their biodiversity, the implications of climate change, and forestry co-operation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. (Forestry Commission 2003c, p. 1).

*that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration, capacity, vitality and potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems” (p. 8).*

### **6.2.2 Conservative public sector reform**

In 1979 the Conservative party won the election and Margaret Thatcher came to power. She stayed in power until 1992 when John Major became Prime Minister. The Conservatives stayed in power for a further five years under John Major, until May 1997. 18 years of Conservative government with a neo-liberal agenda left a deep imprint on British society (Keat and Abercrombie 1991). It also left its mark on the Forestry Commission.

The incoming Conservative government wanted to reduce the involvement of the state in the economy. The underlying idea was that if left to its own devices the ‘invisible hand of the market’ would produce a socially optimal outcome. The Government therefore set about liberalising the economy by removing regulations which circumscribed the actions of market actors, and privatising industries in state ownership as well as selling off other state owned assets such as public sector housing. The Government also wanted to reduce what remained of the public sector after privatisation and introduced various measures including contracting out, in order to reduce the number of people working in the public sector. Finally, the Government wanted to make what was left of the state after that more like the market. The result was very substantial changes to existing institutional structures, imposed by the state on itself and these affected the Forestry Commission in a number of different ways which came out in the fieldwork interviews and conversations. Such changes can be seen as part of New Public Management, a global phenomenon in public sector reform (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 221). New Public Management covers many varieties of public sector reform (Hood 1995; Rhodes 1998), but Bevir and Rhodes suggest that there are six changes identified in the literature which are particularly relevant for understanding trends in British government: privatisation, marketisation, corporate management, decentralisation, regulation and political control (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 221). All of these dimensions affected the

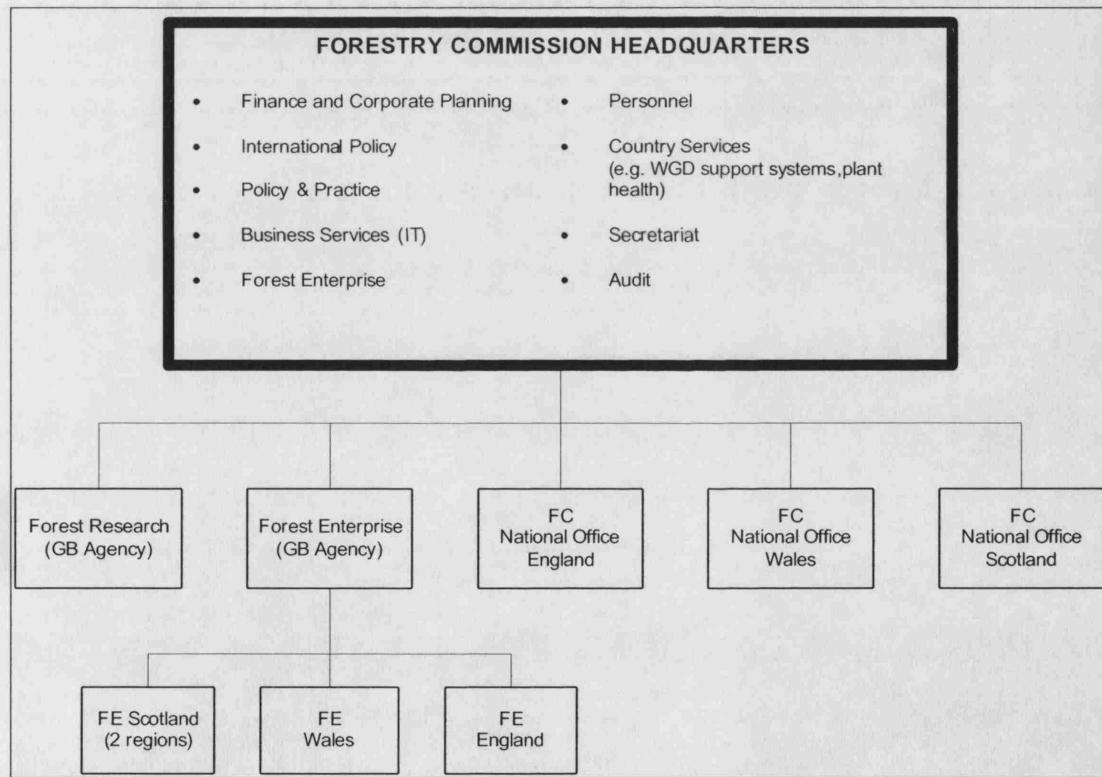
Forestry Commission to a greater or lesser extent as will become clear in the remainder of this chapter as well as in the following chapter where I will discuss the challenges and opportunities which the Forestry Commission was negotiating while I was doing fieldwork in 2002 and 2003, drawing on the structures of its identity formed in the course of experiences over the previous 80 years.

### 6.2.2.1 Privatisation

The Conservatives wanted the state to be only minimally involved in the economy. They therefore set about privatising national industries. During the 1980s and 1990s most state owned industries such as mining, rail, steel, post office and aerospace were privatised. Over all, the British government sold off 50 major businesses and reduced the state-owned sector of industry by about two-thirds, raising about £64 billion to pay for tax cuts (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 222). The government also tried to privatise the Forestry Commission. The December 1980 Government forestry policy statement had signalled that the Forestry Commission would have to dispose of some of its land. This requirement was enshrined in the 1981 Forestry Act (Winter 1996, p. 294). The Act gave ministers powers to sell off Forestry Commission land and plantation forests (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 136). In 1989, the Secretary of State announced that the disposals programme should continue and that it was the private sector which should carry out most of the afforestation (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 136). By 1991 about 100,000 hectares had been sold off and it was envisaged that another 100,000 hectares would be sold during the 1990s.

The 1991 policy statement (Forestry Commission 1991), in which the Forestry Commission accepted the principle of multiple objectives for forestry, had also announced a reorganisation of the Forestry Commission. This led to the separation of the Forestry Authority from its commercial arm, Forest Enterprise in 1994. During 1993 and 1994 the Forestry Commission underwent a two-year review and it was rumoured that Forest Enterprise would be privatised (Winter 1996, p. 297). This brought together an *“unlikely alliance of environmentalists, ramblers, timber users and private landowners”* to oppose the proposal (Buxton 1993; in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 137). The Forestry Commission sought to persuade the Government of the need to retain the state forests within the public sector on

the grounds of maintaining public access and implementing many of the new multiple objectives that had now been accepted (Winter 1996, p. 299). The new policy statement, as well as new co-actors which could now be mobilised (instead of fought against), thus became resources for the Forestry Commission in its struggle with the government to avoid privatisation. The review was published in August 1994 and rejected privatisation, instead it proposed the creation of a Next Steps Agency (Winter 1996, p. 299). In 1996, Forest Enterprise became a Next Steps Executive Agency, and in 1997, Forest Research followed suit. Figure 6. 1 shows the structure of the Forestry Commission after agencification.



**Figure 6. 1 Organisation of the Forestry Commission after 1996/1997 agencification**

Source: Adapted from Interdepartmental Group (2002, p. 34).

The disposals programme and subsequent threats of privatisation were an important theme in the interviews and ethnographic fieldwork material. The disposals programme was talked of as something which was resisted, and the continued ownership of land as important. However from the late 1980s the

threat of privatisation appears to have intensified. This probably related to the confirmation of the disposal's programme with another 100,000 hectares which was announced in 1989:

We'd had a long relatively stable period, and then we had a sudden bit of change when the Observer Newspaper in 1988, I think, wrote a story that the Forestry Commission was going to be privatised. Everybody panicked that they were going to lose their jobs and it was all going to be sold off. Ever since then we've never had stability. Now in a way that's probably a good thing. But I sense that in almost one year we went from [a sense that] everybody had a job for life and it was unthinkable that the Forestry Commission would be sold off. I mean it was started in 1919, it's been going for almost one hundred years now you know. And all of a sudden people suddenly lost that feeling of safety, of security that this was just going to go on forever. And we moved into a much more dynamic period when change became normal.

Regional Development Officer, a forest district, England, October 2003.

The experience of new alliances during the campaign against the privatisation in the early 1990s had clearly made an impression. The way in which the aborted privatisation was talked about is significant. The Forestry Commission was portrayed as having been saved by others (defined in different ways) *from the outside*. The story was often told in a way which suggested that a conscious lesson had been learned: that it was important that such actors were now kept onboard, that the Forestry Commission continued to have the support of such actors. One of the things which is interesting here is that this way of positioning the near-privatisation suggests that the Forestry Commission is changing the way in which it conceives of its constituency, its principal co-actors, towards interests associated with the access, recreation and environmental agendas, and 'the community' or 'society' more generally, rather than the timber industry and private landowners.<sup>48</sup>

The most important change [...] was to make this forestry sector that kept looking in on itself, look outwards. A lot of people, particularly in the private sector found that deeply uncomfortable, so they didn't really welcome the England Forestry Strategy when it

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<sup>48</sup> See Winter (1996) for an account of the important influence which the timber industry and private landowners have wielded over forestry policy since the creation of the Forestry Commission.

came out. People in the public sector did, and some of the agencies in government thought it was a huge step forward, and that finally the Forestry Commission had changed and become more grown up, more responsive, which was what we were trying to achieve. But the private sector felt threatened, because the Strategy didn't talk about them the whole time and how important they were and what they were doing, it talked about these wider agendas.

Head of Policy and Practice division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

This is portrayed as a shift from being 'inward oriented' to being 'outward oriented'. Inwardness in this context refers to the existing relational orientation of the Forestry Commission with co-actors drawn from the timber industry and large landowners. Outwardness is about developing a different relational orientation, involving changes to the co-actors the Forestry Commission interacts with in the mobilisation of its identity. It is about changes in who is seen to be able to confer legitimacy on the Forestry Commission.

The separation of Forest Enterprise from the Forest Authority in 1994 and the creation of the Next Steps Executive agencies, Forest Enterprise and Forest Research in 1996 and 1997 also came up regularly in the interviews and participant observation. The 1994 separation was sometimes referred to as 'the split.' The name 'Forest Enterprise' whether intentionally or not inserted itself into what has been referred to as the 'moral crusade' of the Thatcher administrations to turn Britain into an 'enterprise culture.' This has been analysed for example in Keat and Abercrombie (1991) and du Gay (1996). In some ways, the changes were perhaps smaller than the new names indicated since the creation of Forest Enterprise and the Forestry Authority formalised a distinction between the Commission's regulatory and commercial aspects, which had been made in its accounting procedures and annual reports since 1966 (NDAD 2003, p. 4). Nevertheless, 'the split' appeared to be an important event in the history of 'we.' While the framework document of Forest Enterprise charged it with producing some environmental and social benefits as well as financial targets and outputs, the agency framework document was essentially a constitution, based on a private sector model which charged the organisation to

operate on commercial lines within the public sector (Garforth and Dudley 2003, p. 9).

### **6.2.2.2 Reducing the public sector**

The Conservative government wanted to reduce what remained of the public sector and the Forestry Commission went through a very stringent cost-cutting exercise through the 1980s and 1990s. Mechanisation from the 1960s onwards with the introduction first of chainsaws and later of harvesters had led to dramatic reductions in the number of forest workers and undercut the basis for the forest villages even as they were being constructed. When Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979 she temporarily put a freeze on employment in the civil service. The 1981 Forestry Act had expressed the hope that significant manpower and cost savings could be achieved as a result of the disposals programme (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 64). Staff cuts of 5% were announced and then a further 8% (Forestry Commission 1980; p. 24; 1982, p. 14; in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 64). A management structure review led to the creation of a single tier structure of the management below the conservancies, and this was expected to lead to reductions of about 20% in clerical and supervisory staff (Forestry Commission 1983, p. 14; in Tsouvalis 2000, p. 64). Thus while in 1950 the Forestry Commission employed 13,220 industrial and non-industrial staff, in March 1980 this had dropped to 8,129. By March 1995, the total number of staff had been reduced to 3,921 (Tsouvalis 2000, p. 65-66). The reduction in staff numbers over the 1980s and 1990s was frequently referred to in the interviews. The recruitment ban had, for example, affected the early career of some of the people I interviewed.

The problem then was that, the Conservatives, Maggie, had come to power, and she put a ban on recruitment for three or four months. So I came out of college and I could not actually start although I had been accepted by the Forestry Commission as a forester.

Acting Operations Manager and Woodland Officer, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

Moreover, this reduced the opportunities of getting a job with the Forestry Commission substantially.

When I left college [around 1979] it was almost *de rigueur* that half of you would go to the Forestry Commission and half of you would go to the private sector. And really there was no competition. [...] You had the interview but quite honestly you didn't expect to fail. We were all good enough to pass, obviously (laughing). Not many years after that, the contraction of the industry and the bringing of machinery meant that there were not so many foresters required and the intake shortly afterwards was something like six foresters. So all of a sudden you had forestry colleges turning out perhaps fifty foresters between them and only six being employed by the Forestry Commission.

Acting Operations Manager and Woodland Officer, a conservancy in England,  
September 2003.

Contracting out was usually described as having resulted in big changes in terms of the number of people working directly for the Forestry Commission.

When I first went there [in the early 1980s] there were three foresters, and a head forester and a district manager. By the time I'd finished we were certainly one member of staff less than there were when I first started. And on the squad, the work squad outside, I had twenty-seven. Today there are four in the same place. Now all the work's being done on contract, that's what's happened to it, it's been contracted out.

Community Engagement and Environment Forester, a forest district in England,  
September 2003.

Contractors were often positioned as people who came from outside, from further away, and as, therefore, not necessarily belonging to the communities surrounding the forest, nor having any positive economic impact on those communities. Although in some cases those who came as contractors were those who had not long before taken voluntary redundancies. Contracting out was seen by some as a cut-throat business where standards were not necessarily as those in-house. A number of people made the connection between the staff reductions in the 1980s and 1990s and the current emphasis on engaging with the community, portraying the reduction in staff numbers as a withdrawal from the community, necessitating both a devolution of power downwards in the

organisation as well as a more self-conscious approach to communicating with 'the community.'

That had quite a lot of negative impacts on social outputs in that we were seen to be an organisation in retreat - we were withdrawing our staff, cutting the numbers, centralising our office provision.

Head of Environment and Communication, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

### **6.2.2.3 Marketisation of relationships: making the public sector more like the market**

Garforth and Dudley (2003, p. 9) also note that during the 1980s and 1990s the *"management of state forests were encouraged to become more commercial with asset sales raising cash to balance the books and environmental and social values being of lesser importance."* In addition to wanting to reduce state involvement in the economy and reduce what remained of the public sector, Conservative governments also wanted to make what was left more like their conception of the economy, the market. Marketisation refers to the use of market mechanisms in the delivery of public services. In the UK this covers mainly contracting out, quasi markets in the guise of the purchaser-provider split, and experiences with voucher schemes (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 222). I have already discussed contracting out above, here I want to turn my attention to the introduction of quasi markets in the Forestry Commission with the introduction of a customer-contractor relationship in the early 1990s between Forest Research and Forest Training Services and the rest of the organisation. Representing the purchaser was a civil servant sitting in the (then) Policy and Practice Division in the (then) Forestry Commission Head Quarters in Edinburgh. The effects of the introduction of the customer-contractor relationship was expressed in different ways in Forest Training Services, and in Forest Research. In Forest Training Services it emerged as a sense of Forest Training Services seeing itself as a commercial operation in competition with others for the provision of work on social forestry. In Forest Research, it showed itself as a critical perspective on the ability of 'the customer' to know what practitioners needed and also to represent the needs of society.

In a more subtle way, what du Gay (1996) has referred to as the culture of the customer also affected the external relationships of the Forestry Commission. One person I interviewed commented acerbically on the fact that the private landowner in receipt of a grant is considered as 'the customer.' In his view it was the woodland officer who as the grant provider, was the customer, and by extension society. Thus during the 1980s and 1990s the Forestry Commission was encouraged to treat both internal and external relations in market terms.

### **6.2.3 Urban and community forestry**

I include urban and community forestry among the recent influences on the Forestry Commission not because of the influence which their emergence had on the Forestry Commission at the time, but for their later significance. In 1987, the Countryside Commission (1987a) identified the pressing need for major new forests to be developed on the edge of cities and in a policy statement entitled *Forestry in the Countryside* (1987b) it proposed small-scale networks of woodlands surrounding major cities as well as a new national forest in the English Midlands (Cloke *et al.* 1995). There are now 12 community forests in England.

The Forestry Commission was portrayed as having been initially sceptical about the Countryside Commission's initiative by several interviewees. In such narratives, community forestry is positioned on the periphery of the conception of forestry practice which prevailed at the time. When one of the people I interviewed took the (then) Director General of the Forestry Commission around Thames Chase community forest in the early 1990s and suggested that the Forestry Commission should buy up derelict land in the area, the Director General replied that this was 'all very well but not what the Forestry Commission was about.' This attitude was still in evidence by the mid-1990s in the context of the development of the Nottinghamshire collieries project, which was forced to justify planting on the basis of timber production, although the project was about restoration of derelict land. It was also clear that, for the most part, community forestry was not part of the kinds of actions or meanings which were considered

to be part of forestry, and therefore of what most foresters would consider engaging in:

But the community forests have essentially been the pioneers. They were doing this fifteen years ago in the case of the Great North Forest, at a time when any self respecting forester wouldn't have been seen dead on a slag heap in Newcastle. It's not a cosy environment for somebody who has grown up in rural Northumberland. But that's where it's at in terms of what the region is likely to be interested in. And probably what the Government with its real emphasis on social policies, social exclusion, education, health, is going to be interested in. That's where forestry can make a difference, unfortunately it's not out on the hills really.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

The Countryside Agency and the local authorities co-funded community forests teams and the Forestry Commission seconded foresters to give technical advice to the teams. It was clear that Forestry Commission staff who had become involved in such work had found it a significant and positive learning experience. It also involved such practitioners in early experiences of 'outward-orientedness' where they had to learn on their feet as the following interviewee suggests.

So that role was a lot of promotion, going out and speaking to local authorities, councillors and managers of country parks. Managers of departments. And that was all new ground really. I wasn't trained. Really the Forestry Commission had no idea what training was required because they didn't know what these foresters were going to be doing. And I don't think anybody realised that we were speaking to people at quite senior levels. Before only the district forester would have spoken to them. Here we were speaking to councillors.

Acting Operations Manager and Woodland Officer, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described key moments, including a 'fateful moment' (Giddens 1991) in the late 1980s, in the history of the Forestry Commission which have shaped collective and individual identities in it. The events were in evidence in the narratives which people created to make sense to themselves

and/or to me (in the context of our conversations together) of what they or the Forestry Commission had gone through in the past or were going through in the present. I have thus drawn together the kinds of events which had emerged as important in the context of internal narratives of the Forestry Commission. Put together these events can be regarded as a form of re-constituted institutional narrative of self understood as the story or stories by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood, both by the individual concerned and by others (Giddens 1991, p. 243). In other words, experiences and our responses to them lay down structures of action meaning and materiality which we draw on when moving forward in negotiation with the present. As Wenger (1998) has noted, it is through learning that we become who we are. This is also what Mead's (1934) idea of the social self expresses: the self has many aspects to it, and possesses many capacities stored from past experiences which can be used in the future. The active 'I' draws on these resources as it moves into the future, reflexively planning activity in accordance with the conception of 'me' - or of parts of 'me' associated with past acts (Burkitt 1991). The Forestry Commission as a collectivity, and the individuals within it, draw on what they have become, their existing identities, these structures which are both rules and resources (Giddens 1984) when they negotiate their present. Figure 6. 2 shows the multiple belongings of the Forestry Commission by the mid-1990s and thus sets out the key dimensions of the Forestry Commission's identity which emerged out of the re-constituted narrative of self set out in this chapter.

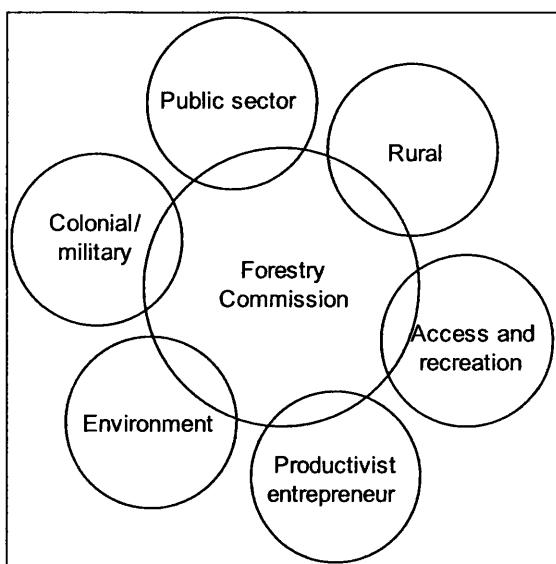


Figure 6. 2 The multiple belongings of the Forestry Commission by the mid-1990s

## Chapter 7 Negotiating a mobile present

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the present which the Forestry Commission was negotiating while I was doing fieldwork during 2002 and 2003. Here I continue the chronological account begun in Chapter 6, taking as my point of departure the way in which the Forestry Commission was negotiating its setting of action drawing on the identity structures established through past experiences and engaging with *challenges* to its existing identity, as well as *opportunities* for shifting this identity in a different direction. In this chapter I therefore get behind the sense of uncertainty, articulated in a debate about what forestry is for, and to which the work on institutional self described in Chapter 5 responded, to show what the changes in its setting of action the Forestry Commission was responding to, leading me to form the impression in the first part of the fieldwork that the Commission was experiencing an identity crisis. Inevitably, this also means that I will be going over again, this time from a different perspective, some of the material which was presented in Chapter 5 and 6. I will also, to a greater extent than in Chapter 5 and 6, move down the conceptual model to consider how the response of the Forestry Commission was changing the setting of action for individuals inside the organisation and how they experienced this. Because of devolution, the institutional picture was getting more complex, I therefore narrow the geographical focus to the Forestry Commission England.

### 7.1 New rules and resources in the setting of action

#### 7.1.1 New Labour, new relationships, new agendas

During the 1980s and 1990s Conservative governments had tried to privatise the Forestry Commission, made it substantially reduce its labour force and remake

itself in the image of the entrepreneur. When New Labour came into power in May 1997 after 18 years of Conservative government, the relationship between the Forestry Commission and the government changed overnight.

We had 20 years of Conservative administrations who wanted to get rid of the Forestry Commission. Then we had a change of government, and it was very interesting, because we never used to get to see ministers because they didn't like us. They didn't like forestry and certainly didn't like us because we were a public sector body. We got into see the new Forestry Minister in England, Elliot Morley, within the first week of the Labour government being elected, which was quite a shock to us, and he clearly wanted to achieve something through the forestry.

Head of Policy and Practice Division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

### 7.1.1.1 Devolution

New Labour came in with a 'modernising agenda' which among other things included decentralisation of government through devolution and regionalisation. This continued the trend towards decentralisation of public services begun under the Conservatives.

*Decentralisation* of government encompasses de-concentration and devolution of government. De-concentration refers to the redistribution of administrative responsibilities in central government. This was what most of the reforms in the 1980s and 1990s under successive Conservative governments were about, as for example in the de-concentration of managerial authority to agencies (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 222), a process which as we have seen, also affected the Forestry Commission with the establishment of the two Next Steps Agencies, Forest Enterprise and Forest Research in 1996 and 1997 respectively.<sup>49</sup>

*Devolution* on the other hand, refers to the exercise of political authority by lay, elected institutions within areas defined by community characteristics (Bevir and Rhodes 1999, p. 222). It is only since New Labour came to power that devolution has become a feature of public-sector reform. In 1999, the UK government transferred responsibility for forestry to Scottish Ministers and the Assembly for

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<sup>49</sup> Forest Research became a Next Steps Executive on 1 April 1997, just over a month before New Labour won the elections.

Wales, retaining responsibility for forestry in England and international issues (Interdepartmental Group 2002).

From this perspective, the devolution (and regionalisation) agenda of New Labour can be considered as an expression of the continued influence of, what Bevir and Rhodes (1999) refer to as, New Public Management.

### **7.1.1.2 A social agenda**

Interviewees often referred to the importance of the New Labour government's social agenda. New Labour had a communitarian concern to strengthen communities and achieve an 'inclusive' society with strong 'social cohesion' (Fairclough 2000, p. 51). This was expressed for example in the language which developed around social exclusion and by the establishment as early as December 1997, of the Social Exclusion Unit as a unit within the Cabinet Office steered personally by the Prime Minister (Fairclough 2000, p. 51). Importantly, this was also set up to produce what the Prime Minister referred to as 'joined up government' to ensure effective co-ordination between government, local government, voluntary organisations, and business (Fairclough 2000, p. 51).

### **7.1.2 The Lisbon conference**

In June 1998, a Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of European Forests was held in Lisbon. Here two important resolutions were adopted, one focussing on the socio-economic aspects of forestry and the other on endorsing a set of 'Pan European Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management'. The Lisbon Declaration was signed by the UK and other European countries in July 1998 (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 2). Taken together, the Helsinki and Lisbon Resolutions provided a framework covering the environmental, economic, cultural and social pillars of sustainable forest management and ensure an equitable balance between them (Forestry Commission 2003c, p. 2).

The importance placed on the social dimension of sustainable forestry at the Lisbon conference was noted by several interviewees. A small number of senior policy staff from what was then the Forestry Commission's HQ in Edinburgh

attended the conference. The conference was seen to have concentrated the minds of senior policy staff on articulating the social dimension of sustainable forestry in the British context.

In the last 5 years or so the social agenda has come up, both in international discussions and domestically. We've understood bits of it, so we understand in the forestry context things like recreation and access, we know about the importance of the work force and people in forestry. But then there's this whole wider agenda of what goods and services we are delivering to people, and to what people. And so I guess actually, the ministerial conference that took place in Lisbon at a European level conference is quite important. It didn't really come out with anything very practical, but it highlighted the social agenda, so tended to focus minds of policy people on that.

Head of Policy and Practice Division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002

## 7.2 The Forestry Commission England breaks away

The England Forestry Strategy was the first of three national strategies to be published for England (1998), Scotland (2000) and Wales (2001). The England Forestry Strategy was thus developed before devolution was formally in place.

The new strategy, written by policy staff at the Forestry Commission with Government approval, was titled '*England Forestry Strategy. A New Focus for England's Woodlands. Strategic Priorities and Programmes*'. It described how the Government would deliver its forestry policies in England and set out the Government's priorities and programmes for forestry in England for the next five to ten years (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 1).

The Strategy was based on four key programmes which were not meant to be mutually exclusive. *Forestry for Rural Development* covered forestry's role in the wider countryside, including its contribution to the rural economy and timber and marketing opportunities. In this context the strategy promised a focus on how both new and existing woodlands could be managed to deliver more benefits to local economies through creating jobs upstream as well as downstream of the

forest industry. The programme on *Forestry for Economic Regeneration* outlined what the government saw as the opportunities to play a positive role in strategic land-use planning through the restoration of former industrial land, and the creation of a green setting for future urban and urban fringe development. The programme on *Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism* was about promoting more and better-quality public access to woodlands as well as ensuring that woods and forests are used for a wide range of recreational pursuits as well as complementing and supporting the tourist industry. Finally, *Forestry for the Environment and Conservation* referred to the role that woodlands could play in enhancing and conserving the character of the environment and cultural heritage, and in delivering the governments nature conservation, biodiversity and climate change objectives. It also concerned the impact that woodland creation and management could have on other environmental resources and other land uses (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 7).

The Strategy thus stressed the multiple benefits of ‘woodlands and forests’:

*“Woodlands and forests can provide timber, enhance the beauty of the countryside, revitalise derelict and degraded landscapes, reduce pollution, improve health, and enhance wildlife habitats. Woodlands can also generate employment, provide opportunities for sporting and recreational activities, and improve the quality of life in and around towns and cities by screening development and improving the setting for housing and industry. Few other land uses can boast such a diverse range of benefits”* (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 1, my underlining)

Timber production and marketing is part of the Forestry for Rural Development Programme, *one* among four programmes. Other than being the first programme which is described, there was little indication that the Rural Development Programme was more important than the other programmes. In his preface to the Strategy, the Forestry Minister, Elliot Morley, asserted that the strategy firmly closed the door on singly-purpose plantations (Forestry Commission 1998).

England had, being mainly lowland, traditionally been comparatively less dominated by productivist forestry than Wales and in particular Scotland. A better relationship with government, the new Government's agenda of devolution, social inclusion and joined-up-government, the growing focus on the social dimension of sustainable forestry at the European level facilitated a shift away from investment and production forestry in England:

When we kept trying to apply policies across the whole of Britain they tended to come out as rather bland, because you're trying to push into a box big production forests and small broadleaf woodlands, and you're trying to provide a policy framework that fits across all of that and it didn't prove to be very easy. When we were able to focus upon England it gave us an opportunity to really shift forestry policy in a new direction, taking a lead of course from the government, which had a different set of priorities than previous ones. So issues like social inclusion and social forestry started to feature much more strongly.

Head of Policy and Practice division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

Moreover policy staff who had been close to events during the Flow Country episode, and who had been affected by it, were also closely involved with the development of the England Forestry Strategy. Thus institutional and individual biography intersected.

As we have seen in Chapter 6, the near privatisation during the 1980s in combination with conflicts over upland afforestation and in particular the events surrounding the Flow Country episode meant that the Forestry Commission experienced a 'fateful moment' in 1988. This led to a revision in the actions and meanings which were now seen to be part of the Forestry Commission's practices. To a certain extent it revised its conduct and conception of its self, its self-identity. It was no longer timber production *or* environment, but timber production *and* environment. This revision to the Forestry Commission's identity was articulated in the concept of multi-purpose forestry. With the growing importance of sustainable development in public discourse, multi-purpose forestry became absorbed into sustainable forestry, with the production of the

government's programme for sustainable forestry in 1994. However, although, the multiple purposes of forestry was now recognised by the Forestry Commission, timber production remained dominant.

With the *England Forestry Strategy*, the Forestry Commission England was thus able to break away from the relatively uniform policies of the Forestry Commission GB. In this context, the influence of the social agenda of the new government and the increasing focus on the social dimension of forestry at the European level can be conceived as a structure operating as resource and rule (Giddens 1984). Such developments in the setting of action (Goffman 1959) of the Forestry Commission, set a particular agenda for the Forestry Commission (rule) but they also provided an opportunity (resource) for certain actors within the Forestry Commission who perhaps felt that the compromise articulated as 'multi-purpose forestry' at the beginning of the 1990s remained too dominated by timber production.

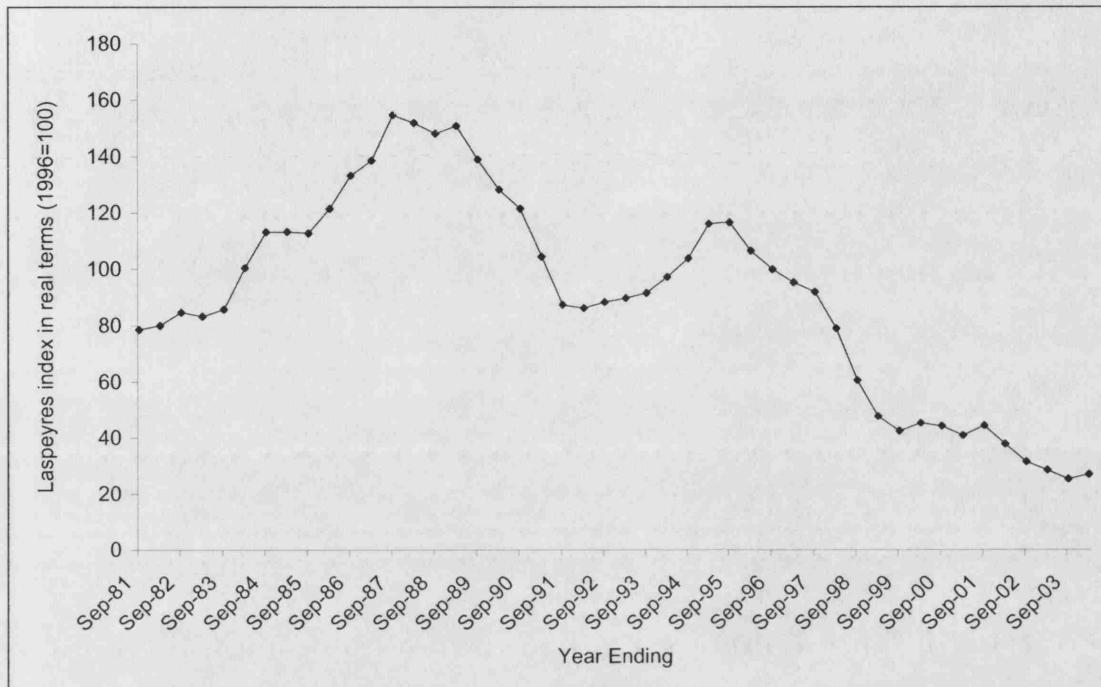
## 7.3 Developments in the setting of action reinforce the English shift

### 7.3.1 Declining timber prices

The continued fall in timber prices strengthened and reinforced the 'new focus for England's woodlands.' Figure 7. 1 shows the real timber prices from the year ending September 1981, to the year ending September 2003. When the England Forestry Strategy was published in December 1998, timber prices had been falling for three years running. However, this, on its own, is unlikely to have had a decisive influence on the development of the England Forestry Strategy, since it followed four years of consecutive increases, albeit modest, in the timber price.

OK, the cynics would say, timber prices dropped, you then had to prove that the Forestry Commission was worth keeping around for other reasons, and that is where you got onto the social agenda. I think that's absolute rubbish actually, because I think if you look at the history it had already started turning.

Forestry Commissioner, Forestry Commission GB, August 2003.



**Figure 7.1 Coniferous Standing Sales Price for Great Britain (per m<sup>3</sup> overbark).**

Source: Forestry Commission 2003a

However, during 1999 the price fell again and Forest Enterprise went into loss (Garforth and Dudley 2003, p. 12). While over the next two years the price stabilised, it fell again between 2001 and 2003.

In Chapter 6 I showed how the Forestry Commission had, from the late 1950s onwards, become increasingly focussed on the *economic* value of its activities and how, during the 1980s and 1990s, it had been encouraged by Conservative public sector reforms to remake itself in the image of the entrepreneur. The falling timber price put this part of the Forestry Commission's identity under severe pressure. As we have seen, the argument (to the Treasury) for public investment in forestry on economic grounds had always been a difficult one to make due to the comparatively long term nature of investment in forestry. With the continuing decline in timber prices, this became even more difficult. The

continued fall in the timber prices thus strengthened the arguments of those within the Forestry Commission who were arguing for a greater emphasis on the social agenda.

All that the drop in timber prices did for me was help me be heard in a little more of a reasonable arena. Because if timber prices had been very high and had remained high, I'm not sure that other people would have agreed quite so readily. I think they know that what I was talking was sense. I wasn't the only one. But I think it made it much more receptive, because it provided the logic, it provided another strand. And when you compared the two agendas, if there was ever any conflict, one of them wasn't paying and one of them was clearly providing benefits. So much as I think it's terribly sad that timber prices have dropped, and I'm sorry for the forestry industry, it has been almost a blessed relief in making people realise that there are other benefits and values there.

Forestry Commissioner, Forestry Commission GB, August 2003.

### **7.3.2 Ongoing negotiations about reform to the EU**

#### **Common Agricultural Policy**

The new focus for England's woodlands was also reinforced by introduction of the Rural Development Regulation as part of the agreement on reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy in 1999. The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) had been established in the 1960s. In 1992, reforms to the CAP had been agreed which involved reducing support prices and instead compensating farmers by paying them direct aids. Several rural development measures had been introduced at the time, notably to encourage environmentally sound farming. Production limits were introduced to reduce production surpluses, and farmers were encouraged to rely more on the market (European Commission 2004, p. 2). During the preparation of the England Forestry Strategy, a new round of reforms to the CAP were under negotiation as part of the EU's Agenda 2000 package, the so-called Agenda 2000 reforms. The proposals were a continuation of reforms begun in 1992, to move support for agriculture away from support for commodity production towards more direct methods of payment to farmers, especially for environmental protection and enhancement (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 3). The Agenda 2000 proposals included proposals for the introduction of a new Rural Development Regulation which would subsume

existing regulation on the afforestation of agricultural land and other forestry measures and seek to achieve a better integration of environmental, forestry and rural support measures (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 3). In 1999, the Agenda 2000 reforms to the CAP were finally agreed. As part of this a “*major new element – a comprehensive rural development policy*” (European Commission 2004, p. 2) was introduced. The Rural Development Regulation contained a number of articles which could be used to support forestry through the provision of grants (Tresidder and Snowdon, 2003, p. 12). The reinforcement of the shift in emphasis made in the England Forestry Strategy by the CAP reform agenda continued as new round of reforms were under negotiation during the early 2000s. These included the possibility of subsidies to state forests for ‘investments in forests’, actions over and above day-to-day good management (Goodall and Rogers 2003, p. 2). The continuing reforms to the CAP was referred to by several interviewees as representing an important opportunity for forestry.

The big change likely to take place is to get more money coming in through the rural development agenda, the reform of the CAP, I mean that's the big opportunity for forestry [...] Under the Rural Development Regulation [...] there's a chapter on forestry measures and we're really saying well we need to work up forestry programmes that could deliver these wider rural development objectives because forestry is very well placed to do that. Because of the bio diversity and landscape and economic development [inaudible], a whole range of programmes that forestry delivers.

Head of Policy and Practice Division, Forestry Commission GB, February 2002.

A settlement was reached in June 2003. As part of the settlement, a new system of compulsory modulation (i.e. switching funds from production to rural development) will be used to finance the introduction of new rural development measures. This will lead to an additional euro 1.2 billion being available for rural development (European Commission 2004).

## 7.4 Changes to the relative importance of practices

The changing setting of action of the Forestry Commission and the Forestry Commission's response to it was leading to changes in the relative importance of different practices and in the setting of action of individuals working for the Forestry Commission.

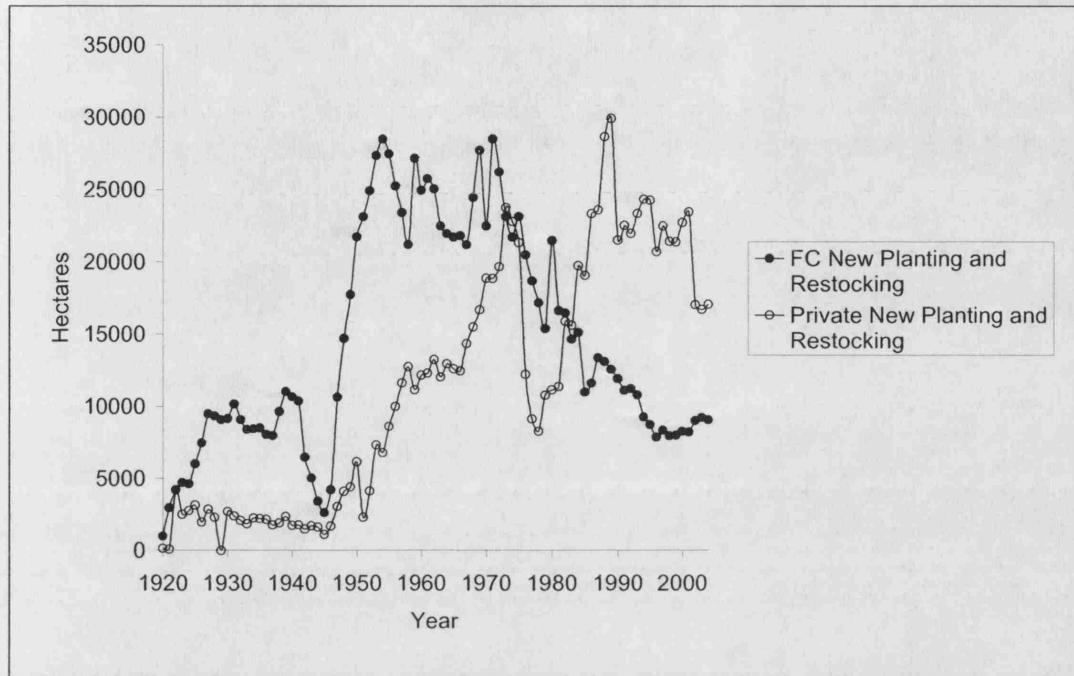
In the story about the changes to the relative importance of different practices there are three strands which are articulated in the narratives of research subjects. Firstly, there are the changes in policy objectives over time. These were reflected in the accounts given in Chapter 6. Afforestation, the continued *expansion* of forestry cover in Great Britain remained a stable part of forestry policy objectives.

Secondly there are the changes in the relative importance of different instruments for achieving those objectives over time, in particular the relative importance *the state as forester* (through direct state action on the public estate) and *the state as regulator* of private actors (through the provision of grants and felling licences and the monitoring of compliance). Both the state as forester, as well as the state as regulator are historically important practices in the Forestry Commission taken as a whole. And the careers of individuals have, as noted in Chapter 4, tended to span the 'different sides of the business' (as well as Forest Training Services and Forest Research in the context of 'tours of specialisation'). Over the history of the Forestry Commission, the relative importance of these instruments in achieving the objectives of forestry policy has shifted. Figure 7. 2 shows new planting and re-stocking by the Forestry Commission and by private actors grant aided by the Forestry Commission from 1920 to 2004.<sup>50</sup> Figure 7. 2 gives an indication of the relative importance of the different practices associated with the state as forester and the state as regulator in the course of the Forestry Commission's life. It is clear that from most of the period until the early 1980s,

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<sup>50</sup> Re-stocking refer to planting of areas which had previously been planted by the Forestry Commission or by private actors grant aided by the Forestry Commission. Grant aided restocking therefore does not begin until the early 1970s.

planting by the Forestry Commission was the most important instrument. But from 1982, planting by private actors has been more important.



**Figure 7. 2 Total planting (new planting and restocking) by the Forestry Commission and private grant aided, 1920-2004, GB**

Source: Forestry Commission Annual Reports<sup>51 52</sup>

From this we might expect the practice of granting to be seen by practitioners as 'where it was at' during the 1980s and 1990s. However the contrary appears to have been the case. For example, one interviewee who began working on the grants and licences side of the Forestry Commission at the very beginning of the 1990s suggested that at the time the post of the woodland officer, responsible for carrying out the day to day work on grants and licences, was seen as a post for foresters at the end of their career.

When I first started on this side, this was, well it wasn't exactly a side line, but it didn't seem as if it was a major part of what the Commission did. It was the older sort of forester. They did this, when I first started they tended to do this towards the end of their career.

<sup>51</sup> The data was compiled from the Forestry Commission's Annual reports by a helpful member of staff at the Economics and Statistics Branch of the Forestry Commission.

<sup>52</sup> Up to 1967 the year was to 30 September, from 1969, the year was to 31 March. For the purposes of presentation the point for 1968 is therefore based on the average of 1967 and 1969.

Administrative Officer, a conservancy in England, October 2003.

In 1994, following the 1991 policy statement (Forestry Commission 1991) which had announced a reorganisation of the Forestry Commission (as well as the acceptance of multi-purpose forestry), the Forestry Commission separated itself into the Forest Authority which dealt with grants and licences and a commercial part, and Forest Enterprise, which dealt with the public estate.<sup>53</sup> Within the Forestry Commission this was referred to as 'the split'. In the context of the split, it also seems to have been the case that posts associated with the state as forester, now referred to as Forest Enterprise, were regarded as more desirable than those with the Forest Authority.

Thirdly, there have been changes over time in the relative importance of different practices *within* these broad divisions, and this in turn affected the relative importance of the state as forester and the state as regulator within the Forestry Commission. The practices associated with the state as forester are ground preparation, planting, looking after the trees, harvesting and marketing the timber. Ground preparation, planting and looking after the trees is referred to as Forest Management (FM), harvesting and marketing is, unsurprisingly, referred to as Harvesting and Marketing (H&M). For most of the Forestry Commission's life, what is now Forest Enterprise was dominated by FM. This affected the culture in so far as FM was what was seen to be most important. The softwood plantations planted by the Forestry Commission had a 'rotation' of about 40-60 years, it was therefore not until the late 1970s that the emphasis on 'establishment' began to change as more and more of the 'first rotation crop' began to be ready for harvesting.

I joined and have worked in a different Forestry Commission to the preceding generation in that most of the older people I worked with when I started, and an awful lot of the effort of the organisation, had been involved in establishing new forests. My generation were probably the first ones to work with existing, established forests. It was very interesting when I joined, that most of the more senior people were very interested in

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<sup>53</sup> This was *before* Forest Enterprise and Forest Research were turned into Next Steps Executive Agencies in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

planting and growing trees but not in harvesting them. I suppose my generation was the first that were actually harvesting them.

Head of Sustainable Forestry, Forestry Commission England, September 2003.<sup>54</sup>

As Figure 7. 2 shows, since the mid-1970s direct planting by the Forestry Commission has been falling. However, in the period from 1920 to the mid-1970s afforestation expanded very substantially, with only a few significant exceptions. This was not surprising, as afforestation was the *raison d'être* for the Forestry Commission. Figure 7. 3 indicates that from the late 1970s H&M became increasingly important relative to FM as direct planting by the Forestry Commission dropped off and as increasing areas of first rotation crop became mature. It also indicates a legacy of first and second rotation crop which will be ready for harvesting in the decades to come.

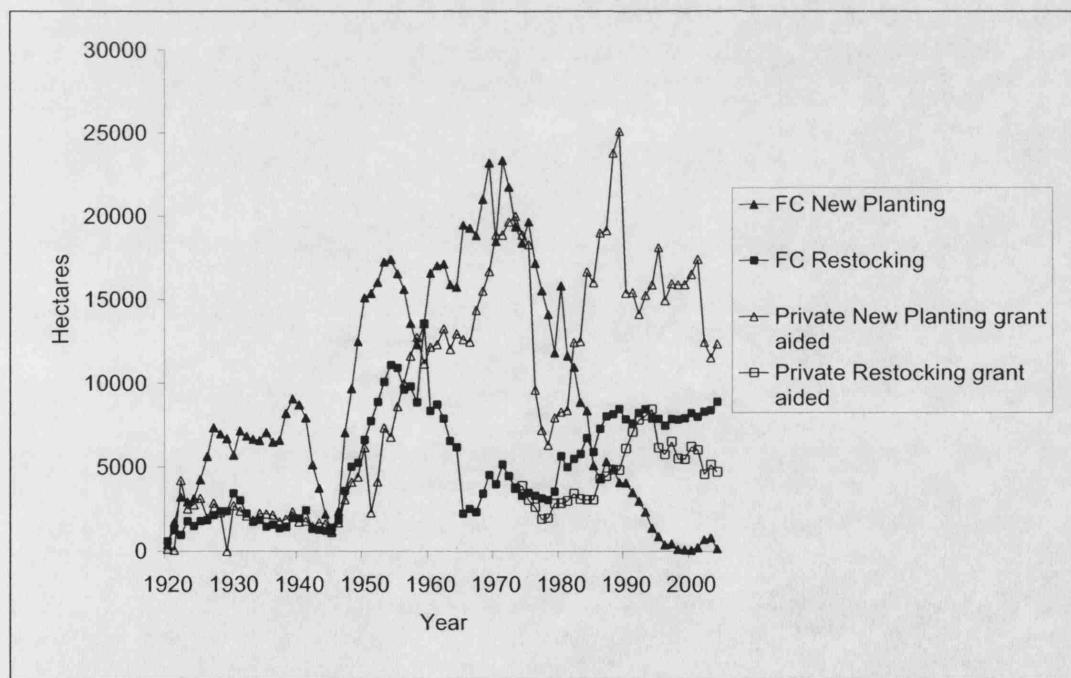


Figure 7. 3 New planting and restocking by the Forestry Commission and private grant aided, 1920-2004, GB

<sup>54</sup> The importance of H&M was also reflected in the interviews by the presence of a substantial amount of material on harvesting. As shown in chapter 4, more than three quarters of interviewees had joined the Forestry Commission since 1975.

In this context, concern was expressed by some that the window of opportunity for felling is actually quite small in some areas. Some planting has taken place in areas of poor soils and high wind, resulting in great risk of the crop blowing over. The window of opportunity between maximising the economic value of the timber and reaching the age where the tree is at its most vulnerable, can be quite small. Here the materiality of the plantations which the Forestry Commission have created, and the existing narrative techniques for creating value together set an agenda for when an area of planting should be felled. It is unclear, how the reinvention of the Forestry Commission, and the attempts at redefining the value of existing plantations will affect this agenda.

Table 7. 1 shows how the wood production from the public estate and from private woodlands increased between 1970 and 2000. By 2000, wood production by the Forestry Commission had increased more than threefold from 1970.

**Table 7. 1 Wood production 1970-2000, GB (thousand m<sup>3</sup> overbark standing)**

Year	FC	Non-FC	Total
1970	1490	900	2390
1980	2410	980	3390
1990	3460	2200	5660
2000	5530	3100	8630

Source: Forestry Commission (2003a), p. 17

The Conservative election victory in 1979 meant a shift away from the state as forester, to the grant aiding of private individuals and tax incentives. However the Conservative election victory also coincided with increasing areas of first rotation crop reaching maturity. As noted in Chapter 6, the Thatcher reforms were also cultural reforms, and the public sector was being encouraged to remake itself in the image of the entrepreneur. H&M was the part of the Forestry Commission which could be said to be closest to the practices of the market in that it actually participated in them, and through which the Forestry Commission could most easily signal its entrepreneurialism. This may also have contributed to importance of H&M within the Forestry Commission. In the age of the

entrepreneur, some of the glories of the market could rub off on the Forestry Commission through H&M. By the end of the 1990s, the H&M departments were thus the most important departments of the Forest Districts, those around which the planning of the rest of the work revolved. Arguably, H&M not only dominated the state as forester, in that it was now more important than FM, but also the state as regulator because the state as forester was at the time perceived to be most important within the institution as a whole: H&M as a practice thus dominated the Forestry Commission. *It was the central practice.* The Forestry Commission was, in other words, substantially identified with H&M and harvesting foresters were seen as emblematic of the forester, as 'real foresters.' However by the early 2000s this was beginning to change.

#### **7.4.1 'It used to be that harvesting was king'**

During the early 2000s and in the years to come, increasing areas of first and second rotation planting will become ready for harvesting. In spite of this, several interviewees expressed the view that the dominance of H&M in relation to other material practices in the Forestry Commission had declined. For example, during participant observation in a forest district in Scotland, one person commented, in the context of a group discussion involving most of the district staff, that 'it used to be that harvesting was king'. The forest district manager thought the point so important that he noted it together with other 'layby' points to take up later. The shift away from a dominance of harvesting and marketing is also evident in the following quotation from an interview with a harvesting forester at a major industrial forest in England, discussing the balance of priorities in district planning:

The biggest change that I've seen is that, when I came into the operation, the harvesting operations were very much based around efficiency, making sure that we got the wood out, out of the forests as cheaply as possible, and essentially harvesting came first. The biggest change is now, that harvesting is now no longer first and no longer the priority. Yes we've got to do harvesting operations and everyone understands that. The difference now is that the planning process goes via the conservation officer first, so that Conservation gets a key element of input into that. Recreation then get a key element of input into that. It all filters down until it gets to us and we're left with almost, it's almost

defined for us how we harvest that site based on the limiting factors, whereas previously harvesting was the limiting factor for everyone else.

Harvesting Forester, a forest district in England, October 2003.

Harvesting was no longer 'king', no longer the 'limiting factor on everyone else.' It has been a gradual development in the relative importance of harvesting and marketing in relation to practices associated with conservation and recreation, whereby those practices appear to have caught up with harvesting and marketing sometime between late 2001 and late 2003. Exactly the time I was doing fieldwork. I asked this interviewee to tell me about the key changes in forestry since he joined:

Really quite radical changes. I think the underlying factors are really two. I think one is the collapse of timber prices - that's relatively recent. It's really in the last 6 or 7 years it's really hit us hard. It's completely undermined what we thought was an investment and production orientated business. And I think the other is that all of the time I've been involved in this, and I remember talking about it as a student which was thirty years ago I suppose, the growing interest in social and environmental factors, public access, recreation, biodiversity. I think that's grown in strength throughout my career. I think, certainly in the past 5 or 6 years it's had quite a strong push forward because of the impact of timber prices undermining the investment and production side of the rationale of the business. So there's been an opportunity and a tremendous interest in following that up.

Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

The drop in timber prices was thus putting pressure on the part of the Forestry Commission's identity which was concerned with producing timber for a market. It also challenged work-based identities which were based on the practices of H&M:

So the world changes and the price of timber collapses and suddenly we're not there to produce timber anyway. Timber is a bit of an embarrassment let's be honest because we can't get it out of the wood [...] the price that it commands is less than the cost of removing it from the stump to the road side or to the factory. Now how can you say that

being a harvesting forester is being a real forester under those circumstances? Peoples identities are challenged by that.

Head and Silviculture and Seed, Forest Research, September 2003

The changes in the Forestry Commission was thus taking place against a background where H&M had been the dominant material practice to the extent that harvesting foresters were emblematic of 'the forester', they were real foresters. The drop in timber prices challenged the value of their work associated with the market and being entrepreneurs and thus challenged work based identities substantially sourced from belonging to this practice. Taking up work which is not identified with being a forester will challenge professional identity: if I am doing this, am I still a forester? Is this forestry? 'This is not what I joined forestry to do' as one person put it.

The Forestry for Rural Development programme of the England Forestry Strategy emphasised the post-productivist opportunities for the Forestry Commission through playing a role in supporting tertiary sector activities such as tourism. In engaging with the rural development agenda, the Forestry Commission was drawing on established structures in its identity, in particular the argument for public intervention in forestry on the basis of job creation in rural areas which as we have seen formed part of the arguments for public intervention in forestry even before the Forestry Commission was formed. In this way the Forestry Commission was *re-incorporating* existing elements of its self in the course of dealing with the challenges of the present. However at the same time the Forestry for Rural Development programme, and the England Forestry Strategy as a whole, was giving job creation in rural areas an increasingly post-productivist slant. The entrepreneurial aspect to the Forestry Commission's identity was based on the production of a *primary* commodity, timber. The drop in timber prices and the Forestry Commission England's response to it, was therefore also putting this *productivist* aspect of the Forestry Commission's entrepreneurial identity under pressure.

There's a very, very deep seated belief in the countryside that the honourable thing to be doing is to be a primary producer. So that producing wheat or Corsican Pine is an honourable, macho, white male thing to do.<sup>55</sup> That selling people cream teas is really a bit peripheral and it's inferior and I'm afraid this is terribly sexist, but the countryside is terribly sexist, it's a thing women do and they do it part time. Whereas men chop down trees full time. And I think there's a really deep problem there. And it is not just with us.

Head of Sustainable Forestry, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

While the emphasis on the production of a primary good may be declining, there were examples that the entrepreneurialism associated with the market was being ploughed into the new areas. The interviewee below took on a newly established post of District Forester Environment in the second half of the 1990s:

I came as you gathered from an industrial background, through operations and harvesting, and forest management. So suddenly I'm in there with this environment job and I didn't really have a very good job description. The forest district manager was slightly vague about what I was expected to do, so really I had a full canvas, nothing on it at all in a way. 1 or 2 interesting things going on in the conservation world, but the forest district manager at the time had taken those under his wing. So I was left with a slight void, sort of looking after recreation, planning and conservation. I'm no great expert in conservation, general interest as most foresters have. No knowledge at all of recreation in the context in which we were operating, and probably a reasonable knowledge on planning, so the job sort of evolved, and it evolved in a really interesting way. I applied the skills I'd acquired in operations which are business skills. Recreation was all slightly woolly and intangible, you couldn't quite get hold of anything. So I applied this more business approach to that and the interesting thing was once we started shaking out recreation, the way the income, which was pretty low, showed this amazing steep incline, started going up.

Operations Manager, a forest district in England, September 2003.

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<sup>55</sup> The quotation suggests that work identities are gendered, and forestry is clearly a very male dominated profession. The gender aspects of work-based identities in the Forestry Commission is clearly something which could have been developed in the research. But it is something which I chose not to explore within the thesis.

What is *also* evident from this quotation, is the way in which some individuals, even though they have spent decades in traditional industrial forestry, take on the new areas of forestry as a positive challenge. This interviewee, who joined the Forestry Commission in the early 1970s, positioned himself as someone who had successfully mastered the skills of traditional forestry, but who welcomed the challenges of the new *because* it was a challenge.

There could also be an entrepreneurial feel to the way in which the new opportunities were being taken up:

The number one objective as I see it these days is not timber. We deliver timber and it is important - trees are important but it's a part of that mixed balance of timber, people and environment. And I'm hoping that in the future that the people will get through to the Government and say we can't get the income from the timber but look at what we're delivering socially; look at what we're delivering environmentally; look at the value for money that we can deliver because of the expertise that we've built up. Not in forestry but in all the other sensitive land management qualities. And what we're now saying is that the recreation comes with a price tag of X; the conservation comes with a price tag of Y; working with the entomologists, archaeologists etc. comes with a price tag of - mixed all together and we believe that over X amounts of hundreds of thousands of hectares, our whole estate, we can deliver it throughout England for the bottom line of X million pounds. Compare that with what others can do.

Forest District Manager, a forest district in England, September 2003.

Of course it can be discussed the extent to which the Forestry Commission (and other parts of the public sector with it), really succeeded in re-casting itself in the image of the entrepreneur during the 1980s and 1990s, however it is clear that the crisis of funding brought on by the drop in timber prices, as well as the Forestry Commission as productivist entrepreneur had an important influence on the way in which the Forestry Commission was coming to articulate the new forestry.

### **7.4.2 'The forestry' comes to town – moving into a new urban setting of action**

The 'new focus' for England's Woodlands had implications for the until now predominantly rural identity of the Forestry Commission. This came out, for example, in the context of the Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism programme of the England Forestry Strategy:

*"Woodlands are a major resource for recreation, tourism and sport. [...] However, the pattern of distribution of England's woods bears little relation to where people live [...]. The Government's programme of Forestry for Recreation, Access and Tourism aims to provide more and better quality access to woodlands" (Forestry Commission 1998, p. 18).*

The early access agenda had been about accessing land owned by the Forestry Commission. Now 'access' appeared to be undergoing a subtle re-definition. The problem of access was no longer so much restrictions on access to existing land owned by the Forestry Commission defined in terms of whether or not there was a right to public access to particular areas. Now the estate became 'abstracted' from particular locations and the issue of access became re-cast in terms of travel distances, and access to resources to overcome the distance (car and money). There was a right of access, but not everyone had equal capacity to access the forest. This was already a contradiction in so far as multi-functional forestry contained the idea that recreation provision was part of the purpose of the Forestry Commission. But with the increasing emphasis on the non-timber benefits of forestry, this contradiction became more important. The Forestry Commission therefore sought to increase its presence in urban areas. The Labour government's social agenda was an *opportunity* for the Forestry Commission to demonstrate value and legitimacy, but it also raised issues for the Forestry Commission about the *location of its forests*, most of which had been, as shown in Chapter 6, established in remote rural areas. In this context the Forestry Commission re-incorporated its until now limited experiences in urban and community forestry, and perhaps to some extent, at least discursively, the community forests themselves.

We've developed a programme of trying to acquire new land in the community forests and plant a completely new type of woodland for us. [...] It was to put it mildly, radically different. Up to that point, there hadn't been any new planting by the Forestry Commission in England to speak of for 30 years, probably since the late 60s. And what it was then was spruce planting in the uplands for production - very much production dominated and very controversial in terms of landscaping impact on semi-natural sites. So now we were talking about buying land close to urban communities, to give ready public access to people who live next door. [...] And instead of saying we must have the most productive species, we must put as many trees as possible on this land, we must be as productive as possible, we say what kind of wood do you want here? What kind of wood do you find attractive and we might have 50% urban space, 50% woodland. We might have a mix of native broadleaf species. We're not concerned at all if it doesn't produce very much timber for a very long time.

Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

Community forestry used to be a marginal practice within the Forestry Commission, its main involvement was to encourage the private sector to contribute new forests. Until recently the Forestry Commission had difficulty *understanding* the community forest in other terms than their timber value, and conceived of from the point of view of timber production, they were not very interesting. Urban and community forestry, as well as more generally recreation and access were now being re-interpreted in the light of the Government's social inclusion agenda, and this shed new light on the forest, leading the Forestry Commission to understand the forest in a different way from before.

For me it was encapsulated by the fact that in Thames Chase when they went through the consultation process, some people said they rather liked the idea of going out and picking apples in the woods in the autumn and children would like to go and collect conkers because they like a game of conkers. Ten years ago, if you'd suggested to me that we might grow apple trees and conkers because people thought that was a nice idea, that would have been very strongly counter to the organisation's culture and policy. But now we say ok if you want apple trees we can grow them, and we can put in some conker trees.

Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

Struggling with the Labour government's social inclusion agenda had enabled the Forestry Commission to see community forestry in a different light, they were now more able to see the value of the community part of community forestry, because the value of the forests to those communities counted for more in the new interactive context. Community forestry was beginning to be seen as an important part of Forestry Commission practice. It was on an 'inward trajectory'. And the community forests were now seen as initiatives which the Forestry Commission can learn from to inform its social forestry agenda. The role of the community forests in terms of informing social forestry is also commented upon by staff in the community forests. Thus, "*the Director of the Mersey Forest, believes that much of the practical experience of engaging with communities has come originally from the Community Forests and that the practical experience of doing community forestry has been instrumental in changing the overall perspective and policy on social forestry*" (Weldon 2003, p. 19).

Nevertheless institutionally speaking the Forestry Commission was still struggling with parts of itself as the following quote referring to a proposal for the acquisition of land adjacent to the existing Thames Chase community forest for the Capital Modernisation Fund project suggest:

The acquisition proposal was put up to the FE and must have gone over somebody's desk, I suppose a land agents desk in HQ somewhere, and the response came back and said, well this area of land won't support enough trees to justify our acquisition.

Researcher, Forest Research, February 2002.

The inward trajectory of community forestry as a practice within the Forestry Commission was also reflected in interviews with practitioners. For some community forestry, was clearly perceived as a very important part of the future of forestry:

If people are going to understand what the Forestry Commission is about or Forest Enterprise is about, they're going to look at Thames Chase, it's going to be the thing they see. I think basically it's the forefront, it's where it's happening. The forest side of this has been around for what 90 years now. People know these forests. It's these community woodlands where it is happening. It's beating the urban sprawl that is the key.

Harvesting Forester, a forest district in England, October 2003.

In FM and H&M the tasks of foresters are in practice substantially subscribed. This can lead to a sense of 'forestry as resource management' as one younger forester put it, where the only opportunity for making one's mark is to do the work as efficiently as possible.

The challenge then turns into resource management. As I say we've got fixed resources, we've got 2 machines, we've got 3 men and we've got to get the timber in that stand out and to the customer as efficiently as possible within the limiting factors. So it is very different to what you learn at university. It is a whole different kettle of fish in some respects. It's when you start looking at these non-standard operations that it becomes interesting.

Harvesting Forester, a forest district in England, October 2003.

Among some younger foresters, community forestry was perceived as offering more of the satisfactions of making your mark since, as a 'non-standard operation', it is less guideline bound:

I mean to me it's that massive opportunity of being at that forefront. No one's written a rule book on how a community woodland should happen, should occur, and if they have it's out of date 5 minutes after they've written it. To me it's that challenge, it's that opportunity.

Harvesting Forester, a forest district in England, October 2003.

Nevertheless, the challenges of community forestry were perceived to be substantial:

I got picked for this job down here which is a major, major learning curve, because none of the education I'd undergone in forestry could prepare you for social forestry, especially in such a fast moving project as the CMF project, establishing woodlands down here. Major, major learning curve, I think for everybody, even those who specialised in social forestry have found it tough. It's very interesting though, very different [...]. I hadn't dealt with the public before and never really expected to in forestry. I got into forestry so I could work in the countryside and I could deal with like minded people, and then I came down here to an urban area, which is very alien to me, very new, and its social problems and the population pressures in this area was a real cultural shell shock (laughs). It was a big shock.

Acting Team Leader on a CMF funded project in one of the community forests, a forest district in England, September 2003.

The quotation shows how, as the Forestry Commission sought to build up the participatory and urban dimensions of its identity by actively moving into a new urban setting of action, the setting of action of individuals working for the Forestry Commission also changed. Here staff were confronted with new tasks and unfamiliar environments for which they often felt they did not have the competencies and which can feel alien to them in terms of a predominantly rural identity. They were having to draw on other knowledges than those which they had been equipped with through their forestry training or experience.

#### ***7.4.3 English regionalisation - new roles for the conservancies***

While harvesting continued to be an important practice, materially speaking, in the sense that lots of areas were reaching maturity, and would continue to in years to come, its importance in terms of the extent to which it had priority in relation to other practices within forest districts and the extent to which it was seen to define the Forestry Commission, was in decline. The state as forester was seeking to build up aspects of its identity which had so far been overlooked. But there was still a long way to go before it could be said to be principally about the non-timber related benefits of forestry.

Meanwhile, in the organisational part in which the state as regulator had been organised, new roles were appearing. During the mid-1990s, 'forest design plans' for the public estate managed by the forest districts and long-term forest plans for the private sector had been introduced. It was the role of the conservancies to approve both types of plans. The introduction of such plans represented a re-organisation of the licence giving role of the conservancies. This is likely to have been a response to the increasing areas of timber which were coming on stream by a Forestry Commission by now more aware of the importance of the potential controversy which could arise over large scale clear felling. Now the Forestry Commission's response to English regionalisation meant that conservancies increasingly had to take responsibility for a process which sought to articulate the 'new forestry' at a regional level. The Labour government's devolution agenda had developed into a regionalisation agenda in England where power and funding streams were increasingly being devolved to the regions. The Forestry Commission England began to work on its capacity to engage at a regional level.

The conservators in England, about three years ago, started actively trying to engage with the region. That came about probably as the regions were starting to get beefed up and there was more emphasis being put on regional decision making and policy making. And the Government Office started to grow and be more inclusive in terms of lots more agendas being co-ordinated there. The Regional Development Agencies were getting more money, more power. Regional Assemblies were being talked about. And suddenly we woke up and thought, well, it's no good just hobnobbing at Whitehall and trying to influence people there, some of this work needs to go on at regional level.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

In 2000 none of the Forestry Commission England's staff were organised on regional lines. Conservancy boundaries might cross several regional boundaries. As a consequence, a conservator could be engaged in three or more regions at the same time and each one with different agendas, different personalities.

Conservancy boundaries and functions were aligned to each region during 2000, and conservators were given a year to get to know their region and their key contacts in that region. Each conservancy was required by the Forestry Commission England to prepare a Regional Forestry Framework to articulate the 'aspirations of the region' for forestry. As part of the process of developing the regional frameworks, a foundation study to establish the contribution of woodlands and forestry in the region was also required. During 2003, the Forestry Commission England began to recruit regional framework facilitators, providing them also with about £100,000 - £150,000 to fund support for regional partnerships in their respective regions.

A body of statistics and evidence about each region, which neither we nor anybody else knew because we'd never collected data at a regional level. There was no platform to build on, so we're developing a common set of information saying, this is what woodlands and forestry are doing in this region today. It's information to us, information to other people and we can then say do you want more of that, less of this? But we have some common terms of reference.

Director of the Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

The foundation studies pointed up the Forestry Commission as *knowledge producer*, (co-)producing a new body of knowledge in order to be able to identify the way in which it may most effectively present itself in a new *regional* setting of action. At the same time it also points up the Forestry Commission as *knowledge producer*. The foundation studies were supposed to serve as a platform for engaging with other actors. The 'Wood Bank' was a published document based on the foundation study:

So we then worked out an actual game plan for the strategy, the first bit being the release of the Wood Bank as the advocacy document. This is the calling card to say trees and woodlands are important to you as a health professional or you as a tourist provider, or you as a planner rather than just you as a forester. Clearly this isn't trees for their own sake.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, October 2003.

The Forestry Commission England responded to the English regionalisation agenda by devolving decision making further downwards in the organisation, giving the conservators responsibility for articulating, through the regional forestry frameworks, what forestry should be about in their different regions. The setting of action for conservators, and other existing staff which had taken on such 'development' roles thus changed substantially in the early 2000s:

What I'm trying to get at there is that there's a kind of progressive pacing over the last 3-4 years of kind of new tools, new people, new dimensions, new networks which we're encouraging them [the conservators] to engage in different ways. Some of them have gone roaring off, like our friend in the North West doing incredibly exciting things, reinventing the Forestry Commission every week. There are others who are very, very cautious and I have to kind of kick and prod and encourage a long the line, but it's all part of building up their capacity.

Director of the Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

Devolution meant that country directors became much more involved with actors outside the traditional forestry sector, through engagement with the (national) political agendas in England, Wales and Scotland, in particular in the context of the development of the national forestry strategies. Similarly, conservators have since 2000, increasingly been engaged in regional political agendas. Apart from the development of the regional forestry frameworks, from 2003 they were given the role as forestry policy advisor in the regional Government Offices under the concordat between the Forestry Commission England and DEFRA. This increasing outward-orientedness of their work, raises a number of issues for conservators. For one thing it can be difficult to keep up with the multiple policy agendas.

We're a minnow trying to keep up with all these big fish. A typical scenario is that I'll go along to say 4 or 5 meetings and encounter somebody from the Countryside Agency at each one, but it's a different person. It's their person that deals with farming, their person that deals with access, their person that deals with urban fringe initiatives, their person

that deals with regional policy. There will be 5 different people. And we're trying to keep up with an organisation that's got essentially something like 5-10 times the capacity to get engaged in these sort of areas, so it's quite a challenge.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

The engagement with other policy agendas also challenge the hierarchical culture of the Forestry Commission. In a hierarchy power derives from relative position. The person who is 'higher up' in the hierarchy has power over the person who is 'lower down' in the hierarchy. However in the engagement with other policy agendas, conservators are engaging with other practices to which they are marginal.<sup>56</sup> This throws the conservator back on himself, he has to find other way of 'getting things done' than through the authority which comes through line management. Listening, evidence and argument become more important:

I could go up there and say 'everybody round this meeting, I'd like you all to take note we're going to put more resources into woodlands and recognise that they're important.' They'd look at you like you're daft, even if you're a senior, established conservator or whatever. That carries no weight in that forum. So you've got to influence by different styles, you've got to have coherent well supported arguments, you've got to understand their agendas, got to make a reasoned argument and reasoned judgement as to where forestry can make a difference and where they're going to recognise that it is relevant. There's no point bashing your head against the wall trying to get somebody to accept something that from their perspective is just a waste of time and insignificant. But to do that you have to understand how they would look at things, you have to understand where they're coming from and what their priorities are, so the world becomes much more complicated.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

This kind of work takes different skills than those that were most important in traditional forestry. It requires knowledge about a wide range of other

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<sup>56</sup> And perhaps to a certain extent the meetings of joined up government are meetings where each participant is somehow outside his or her hierarchy, perhaps this re-enforces the need for 'argument'.

government agendas, sufficient to be able to relate forestry to the interests embodied by those agendas, to the right people and/or institutions. It also requires substantial influencing and networking skills. Influencing and networking skills are skills where the *person* is increasingly engaged in the work. It is therefore not only a question of evidence and argument, of knowledge, but also a question of 'social' skills. Not that these were irrelevant before, my point is that they are becoming *more* important in the new forestry, requiring staff to use *more* of their self at work.

What is implicit here is also that forestry knowledge does not *count* in the same way as it does in the Forestry Commission, to the point where it becomes almost irrelevant, something to occasionally dip into that is 'useful to have as a foundation for the advocacy work', as one interviewee put it. As noted in Chapter 6, while forestry knowledge is assumed in the Forestry Commission, the experience of landscape architects suggests that its *absence* makes authority more difficult to achieve.

Tsouvalis (2000) has described how during the 1980s the Forestry Commission became increasingly concerned with its image. Revill (1996) has described how the Forest Guides of the 1950s tended to reflect the interest of the forester in the forests. It is clear that this situation has been reversed, and the predominant timber interest in the forest, is now marginalised in the visual imagery of the Forestry Commission as far as its publicity material is concerned. In attempting to engage with the regional on the basis of what they think will work best, conservators can also come up against the universalising tendencies in the organisation as far as aesthetic norms are concerned.

To some degree we've had to ignore our own corporate inertia with [the production of the Wood Bank]. We've got designers in Edinburgh, but they're physically remote, actually culturally remote from us, they're mainly Scottish people, living in central Edinburgh. The whole of the Commission was traditionally very Scotland orientated until devolution. And you see that very clearly with that whole corporate services stuff up in Edinburgh. And if you want to do anything it takes forever, and you've got no control over it. So we realised that this product, the strategy, (a) wasn't going to be Forestry Commission anyway, it had to be bigger than that. (b) I didn't really like the stuff that was

coming out of Cambridge and Edinburgh in terms of design, and [the Regional Development Advisor] had got quite strong ideas on this because we were trying to move away from the corporate style, which every department has now, it's all the same thing [...] There is a look to sort of Countryside Agency, English nature, DEFRA, Forestry Commission they all look pretty similar.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, October 2003.

Change is also afoot for the more traditional aspects of the conservancies' work. After the England Forestry Strategy a scoring system was introduced in the administration of the Woodland Grant Scheme, which sought to differentiate between applications in terms of the extent to which they contributed to the objectives of the England Forestry Strategy. The scoring system (Forestry Commission 2001a) selects for five outcomes, rural development, economic regeneration, recreation, and environment and conservation. It is a system of equal weighting for each outcome with additional points for size and certain other factors (CJC Consulting 2003, p. 83). Towards the end of 2003, a new Woodland Grant Scheme was out for consultation. This was described as a grant scheme framework which will satisfy European Commission rules as well as DEFRA. The idea of the new scheme is that it will permit further differentiation of grant provision according to the regional priorities identified as part of the regional forest framework processes. The new revised grant scheme is described as the end of a process of relationship building and learning. This illustrates the importance now attributed to understanding the priorities of the Forestry Commission's new regional 'others' as part of the process of defining new roles for the Forestry Commission England.

We couldn't have got to that stage unless we'd had all those previous components because they had no sense of what a region was, what its priorities were, they didn't know what sustainable development priorities of that region were at all, had no networks, no advisory bodies, no nothing.

Director of the Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

If the Woodland Grant Scheme develops in the way outlined above, then the work of the woodland officers could also see substantial changes in the near future, it will require different kinds of knowledges to evaluate compliance in terms of a greater number of outcomes. In this context it is worth noting that woodland officers in the conservancies, as well as foresters working in the forest districts, are covering a much greater area than they did in the past.

While the entrepreneurial and productivist part of the Forestry Commission's identity associated with timber production was under pressure from a falling timber prices and changing conceptions of rural development towards a greater emphasis on the tertiary sector as well as from migration to an urban setting of action, the conservancies in England were increasingly taking on new policy development roles which would set the context for the work on the public estate, as well as for the private sector. The conservancies were therefore, to a greater extent than was the case at the time of the split in 1994, coming to be seen as where it was at for ambitious young foresters.

I took a positive decision to develop my career in this way because I see forestry as going in this direction. The core operations of the business will always be there, but it's not going to be the entirety of our business, it's only going to be one dimension of the many strands. And I felt that the future lies in the wide range of agendas where forestry can contribute. That's why I actively moved from the hard core operations, very much internal and people you dealt with were all to do with forestry, to the policy development which is much more externally focused

Conservator, a conservancy in England, September 2003.

#### **7.4.4 Ambiguity of role, ambiguity of purpose**

As forestry sought to engage with other practices, roles were becoming more varied.

I think we're just at the end of this period of engagement where we realise we've got to talk to other people. And because as I said earlier, I've lived through it, it's difficult to be objective about how big that change is. But my guess is that this is the biggest change because we're no longer forester. We're well, I don't actually know what we are, we're

social scientists, we're environmentalists, we're politicians, we're advocates, we're communicators, we're a whole bunch of things and we happen to be using trees as our metaphor for benefiting society.

Conservator, a conservancy in England, October 2003.

As this interviewee noted, such practices were not easy to identify with forestry, and yet not easily identifiable in other terms either, leading to a loss of work-based identity as the interviewee below highlighted:

In a world where we're trying to change the culture, there will be people within the system who suddenly find that they go to the bar and people say to them, what do you do, as people always do, and they'll say Oh God I haven't the faintest bloody idea.

Head of Silviculture and Seed, Forest Research, September 2003.

This quotation highlights the discomfort for the individual of being dislocated from his or her existing work-based identity, easily recognisable by oneself and easily explained in an interactional setting, but now finding himself unable to present himself to himself or others in terms of his work based identity. To the extent that the work based identity is an important source of identity for the overall identity of the person this is likely to at best be an unsettling experience, at worst profoundly disturbing and stressful. This will be exacerbated if the new role also involves competences which the individual is not able to master to his own satisfaction, as he will then be affected on the part of his identity which is based on being a competent adult actor, in particular if he is cut off from being able to practice the skills which he did master but which are now no longer valued, or perhaps ever required. The sense of de-skilling and loss of identity is equivalent to a culture shock as described in Furnham and Bochner (1986) and Ward *et al.* (2001).

While at the institutional level, the relative importance of different practices is changing, from the individual's point of view, the process is about going from being a forester to being something else which is not normally part of how a forester, and doing forestry is defined. This relates to Burton's research on the

way agricultural restructuring is challenging the identity of farmers by asking them to do things which they do not consider to be part of farming (Burton 2004). Productivist farming matters to farmers, as productivist forestry matters to productivist foresters in the Forestry Commission. Change may involve changes in what farmers and foresters *do*. This can run into the barrier that I have just referred to: if the forester changes what he does he runs the risk of bringing into question the extent to which he can continue to perceive himself (and be perceived by others) as belonging to the category of objects labelled as 'foresters.' An important part of his self-identity would thus be challenged, not only in terms of his relationship with himself, but possibly also in his relationship with others. Change may also happen at the level of *meaning*, a redefinition of what forestry is about, so that foresters can change and still consider themselves as part of the category of objects labelled 'foresters.'

However, individuals will have struck their *own* 'identification bargains' in terms of what bits of forestry they personally feel they identify with and which bits they don't identify with. 'Forestry' in this sense is similar to the cognitive story-lines of Hager (1995), in that that individuals, located in the practice of their lives, have different perspectives on forestry, but are nevertheless united in a 'vague' kind of way (Hager 1995). A redefinition of what is in and what is out in terms of actions, meanings and bodies that are considered to belong to forestry, will affect the identification bargains which people have struck with forestry.

Figure 7. 4 illustrates how different foresters strike different identification bargains with the practices of forestry.

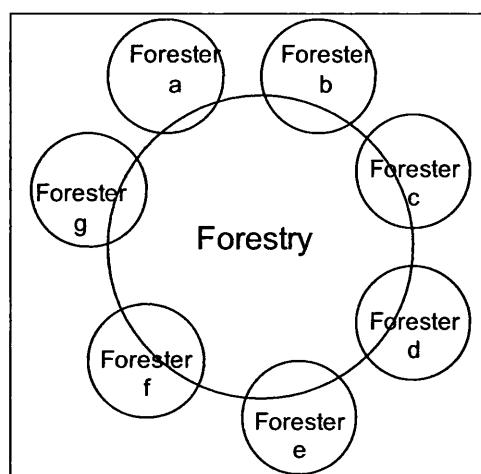


Figure 7. 4 Individual identification bargains

Aspects of forestry which were important to A may be up for negotiation as far as B is concerned. Or aspects of forestry which were definitely not part of forestry for C, could be included as far as D is concerned without it jeopardising the appropriateness of the label forestry. In this way, attempting to redraw the boundary around what is seen to belong to forestry will also touch people's identifications with forestry. For some it has been the case for a long time that community forestry was an important part of what forestry was about, whereas for others this was emphatically not the case. Conversely, for some the relevance and value of production and investment forestry has perhaps been questionable for some time, whereas for others, this has been a core part of what forestry is seen to be about.

Like farmers, foresters are being asked to take on new roles (concert organiser, fund raiser, recreation manager) which, depending on the identification bargain which they have struck with 'forestry' interferes in different ways with (their) existing conceptions of what forestry is about (the kinds of actions, meanings and bodies that make up forestry) and what a forester should therefore do. However, the situation for foresters working for the Forestry Commission is different from that of farmers. In Burton's (2004) example, attempts are being made at persuading farmers to diversify through changes to subsidies. Farmers do not belong to an organisation in the same way that individuals working for the Forestry Commission do.

The changes underway in what constitutes forestry as practiced by the Forestry Commission, also meant that there were changes in norms about what the 'good forester' does, or more broadly what it takes to be a good employee of the Forestry Commission. A certain tension between different definitions associated with different aspects of the Forestry Commission's identity were evident. At the same time, doing the 'right thing' was important for people working in the Forestry Commission, this was indicated by the investment that people had in their work.

Garforth and Dudley (2003, p. 5) point to how Forestry Commission staff were “*feeling trapped between the conflicting demands of an organisation that some stakeholders see as a commercial company, while others view it as a not-for-profit enterprise delivering social and environmental benefits.*” The discourses of the market and public benefits were mixed up in a complicated and confusing discourse. The two intermingled discourses can be expressed in the following way: on the one hand ‘we are a business and as a business we can market ourselves.’ On the other hand ‘we are a public sector organisation, we have to provide public benefits – not through manipulating people into buying our product, but by finding out what they want.’ These two kinds of discourses were expressed by different individuals, but were also sometimes mixed together in the narrative of the same individual.

Many interviewees talked in different ways about the importance of understanding ‘what society wants from us.’ And this is inherent in the more outward oriented stance of the Forestry Commission, particularly since New Labour came to power. However often understanding what society wants became merged with a kind of instrumentalism so that society became cast as the customer, sometimes in the guise of the ‘tax-payer’, for the purposes of ensuring the survival of the Forestry Commission. There was thus a tension between the entrepreneurial aspect of the Forestry Commission’s identity and the public benefit aspect, between the Forestry Commission as an entrepreneur and as a public servant. Sometimes the ‘push forward’ on the social agenda was portrayed in quite instrumental ways and, in this context the social agenda often became synonymous with recreation.

I think you have to look at the other benefits that forestry can provide, conservation and recreation what have you, although it's more difficult putting a value on it, there are issues surrounding that, so for forestry to stay as it is as an industry they've got to sort of tap into its other benefits and make them work to keep the forestry industry going.

Operations Forester, a forest district in England, October 2003.

The Forest Training Services course on social forestry, explaining to attendees why changes were necessary, put together the decline in timber prices and visitor numbers in a way which suggested that the value of the social agenda lay in covering the deficit in Forestry Commission funding. However this instrumentalising of the social agenda also ran the risk of alienating staff for whom this was an important part of forestry:

I thought it was about social forestry and where we're going, but what it seemed to be about was justifying their job. [...] He had graphs about the timber price going negative basically, and in place of this we have to do things differently and have to work with partners and if you set up your friends of group as a charity then you can help them apply for European funding, or heritage lottery funding, because obviously as a government body you can't apply for government funding or outside charity funding, but if you work with partners you can apply through them to do your projects, which seems hugely cynical and hugely missing the point of social forestry to me.

Community Ranger, a forest district in England, September 2003.

The contradiction between the entrepreneurial and public servant identities of the Forestry Commission was introduced into the state by the public sector reforms of the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s which encouraged the remainder of the state to remake itself in the image of the market, the drop in timber prices during the late 1990s, and especially the early 2000s exacerbated this contradiction.

Tsouvalis (2000) has noted how during the 1980s the Forestry Commission began to be more interested in its 'self' and that this in the first instance expressed itself as a concern with image, with the presentation of self. This increasing institutional self-consciousness encompasses all members of staff, hence the concern that office staff and ground staff are also equipped to deal with the public. Forest craftsmen were for example now seen as part of the face of the Forestry Commission in a way they were not before. It was important that this was seen to be a responsive face which did not suggest a hierarchical organisation where those who mend the fences are not willing or able to explain

why they are doing what they are doing. This kind of face-work, or ‘body language’, which captures the Goffmanesque idea that actors ‘give off’ impressions of themselves which they are not really aware of. But of course as soon as this insight is articulated it can be reflexively incorporated and actors can scrutinise and monitor impressions given off and attempt to modify them to establish new habits of comportment, leading to a kind of enterprising dissimulation which was in tension with the public service ideal.

There was a difficult balance to tread between using the energy and inventiveness of the ‘entrepreneur’, but not instrumentalising the public benefits of forestry. The relative importance between different practice was perhaps changing, but the question was ‘why are we doing this?’

#### **7.4.5 From multi-purpose forestry to ‘something much stronger’**

At the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s actors within the Forestry Commission were, under the banner (or storyline) of a ‘new forestry’, or ‘social forestry’, trying to move the Forestry Commission further away from a set of practices centrally geared towards the production of timber for profit, to something different. But why, with multi-purpose and sustainable forestry on the agenda since the early 1990s, was there a need for a ‘new’ forestry, for ‘social’ forestry? As noted in Chapter 5, it seemed that much which was being included in the new forestry and in social forestry had already been present as multi-purpose forestry.

The idea of multi-purpose forestry had emerged out of a situation where environmental concerns and forestry were seen as contradictory. Multi-purpose forestry had ‘responded’ to this dilemma starkly posed in the context of the Flow Country episode by articulating the idea that not only were access and recreation compatible with investment and production forestry, but so was environmental concerns, and forestry could moreover be used to meet environmental public policy objectives, as well as providing access and recreation, while getting on with the main business of investment and production forestry. In the words of the

interviewee below, multi-purpose forestry had however ‘fudged’ the relative importance of different outputs (or outcomes) from the public intervention in forestry, as well as the issues involved in balancing objectives.

I think the biggest challenge for many of them was a recognition that growing trees for profit, which is what they were all aiming for, which was what many of their upbringings had been, perhaps was not as important as growing trees for people. That was difficult for some to make that leap. But in some ways there was an interim between growing for profit and growing for people: we went through this whole thing in the 90s of multi purpose forestry, and basically multi purpose forestry fudged a lot of issues and we've come out the other side with something much stronger.

Recreation and Community Manager, Forest Enterprise England, September 2003.

The 1998 England Forestry Strategy sought to take the idea of multi-purpose forestry further by including timber production as part of *one* of the four programmes of the strategy, thus reducing investment and production forestry to one part of a total of four equally important programmes within the strategy. In the course of producing the England Forestry Strategy, and in the years after, the Forestry Commission England sought to strengthen the case for the non-timber benefits of forestry in different ways by building the case for forestry as a mechanism for delivering to a range of policy agendas, some of which were rural, some of which were urban, and developing closer integration with a range of ‘partners’ including other government departments. As timber prices continued to drop and a new settlement for CAP reform grew nearer, forestry as a ‘metaphor for benefiting society’ became increasingly important.

It's a step that takes them away from being tree growers or forest managers. I think a lot of people still think that the Forestry Commission think of themselves as tree growers. I feel they left that behind a long time ago, that they've already moved on to seeing more than the trees. They can see more of the forest, and all the benefits the forest brings. But I think now they have moved even further than that and see the forest itself and the process of managing the forest can be part of a process of doing other things.

Forestry Commissioner, Forestry Commission GB, August 2003.

This interviewee articulated several conceptualisations of the forester, and the Forestry Commission, and ideas about what forestry and in particular the practices of the Forestry Commission are for. The Forestry Commission used to see itself as 'tree growers', but have moved away from that to a more multi-purpose perspective on the forest and seeing 'more than the trees' in the forest. The difference now, as this quotation suggests, was that the Forestry Commission was now trying to think about the process of managing the forest as part of a process of doing other things, not as an add-on to investment and production forestry, but as the *point* of managing the forest. And that this involves a repositioning of the Forestry Commission and the process of managing forests as part of wholes which extends beyond the traditional co-actors of the Forestry Commission to other communities of practice. In the course of its history the Forestry Commission has internalised what might be referred to as the externalities which had been put on the agenda by others in its setting of action. Figure 7. 5 illustrates this argument.

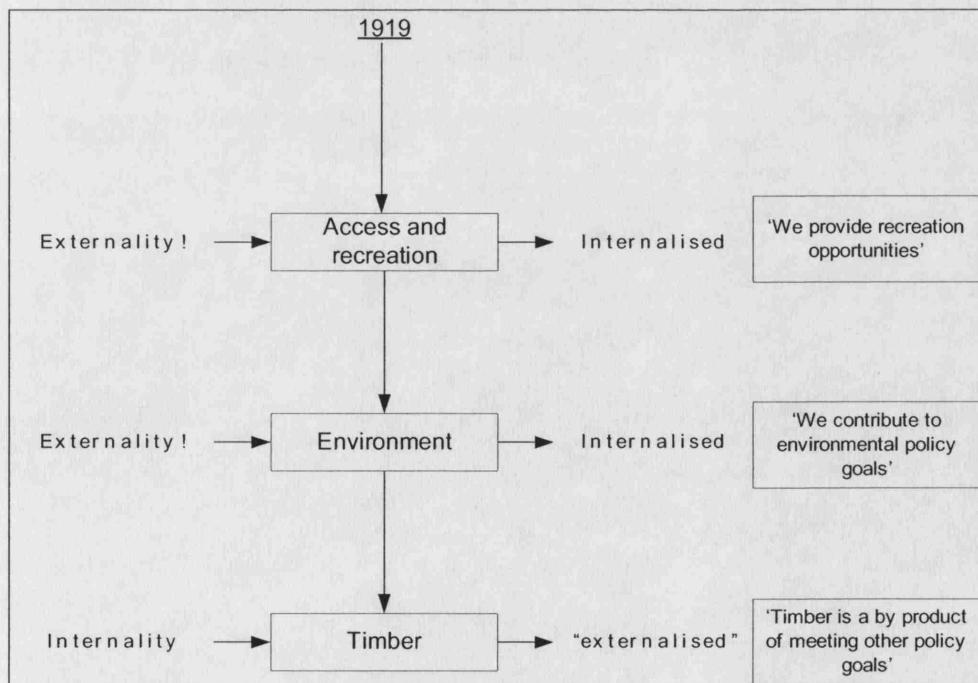


Figure 7. 5 Embracing the “externalities” of timber production

Firstly the access and recreation agenda had been ‘internalised’ by the Forestry Commission re-casting itself as an important provider of recreation opportunities. Later the environmental agenda had been internalised and the Forestry Commission recast itself as a contributor to the meeting of environmental public policy goals. To give these new aspects of its personality greater rhetorical weight the Forestry Commission began to make use of the concept of multi-functional forestry, but the tenor was still very much on investment and production forestry. However developments in the late 1990s and early 2000s have meant that the Forestry Commission, at least in England, but probably also in Wales and to a lesser extent in Scotland, is embracing what it had internalised as what might be called the positive externalities of timber production *more fully*. As noted earlier, in one of the biggest industrial forests of England, harvesting is no longer the practice around which everything else revolves, and even in Scotland harvesting is no longer necessarily ‘king.’ Timber production is increasingly being positioned as a by product of the main business of producing social and environmental benefits of different kinds, in other words, timber production is being positioned as a (positive) externality of the main business of producing other social and environmental benefits.

The trees are just a medium to develop this other thing. It would be very interesting to see how forestry developed over the years, to see if we’re brave enough to accept that. There are all sorts of cultural organisational problems I suppose associated with going that way, not least because a large majority of people who work for the Forestry Commission still came in trained as silviculturalists. Basically people who were charged with growing and managing trees, and are very committed to trees in that regard. And we have a very committed workforce, foresters are very committed people, they love trees, and if we’re saying that trees are almost incidental to what it is we’re about, that is quite a difficult thing. [...] I think this raises the whole question about when will we be brave enough to not call ourselves the Forestry Commission and describe ourselves as something else.

Researcher, Forest Research, February 2002.

## 7.5 Negotiating the mobile present: between joined-up-government and full integration

There was a difficult balance to tread for the Forestry Commission. The devolution agenda had allowed England to break free and put together a ‘new focus for England’s Woodlands.’ But in the context of the same agenda, questions were being raised over the continued separate existence of the Forestry Commission. In May 2001, forestry ministers in England, Scotland and Wales announced their intention to review the administrative arrangements for forestry in light of the continuing experience of the devolved structure. The review by an interdepartmental group<sup>57</sup> whose terms of reference were to: “*review the current administrative arrangements for delivering sustainable forestry policies in England, Scotland and Wales and the UK’s international commitments, including options for further devolution of these arrangements*” (Interdepartmental Group 2002, p. 3).

In August 2002, the results of the ‘devolution review’ were announced. The review concluded that the only way to achieve a full integration of forestry with rural affairs responsibilities would be to abolish the Forestry Commission, Forest Enterprise and Forest Research. The powers of the Forestry Commission would be transferred and the devolved administrations would have to decide how to organise the work currently undertaken by Forest Enterprise and Forest Research. This option was rejected (at least for the time being) and instead a package of administrative measures to ensure closer integration with the rural affairs departments were proposed. The measures agreed by the English, Welsh and Scottish ministers were:

- Greater integration of policy development and delivery between the Forestry Commission’s national offices and the rural affairs departments in Scotland, England and Wales, underpinned by concordats worked up between each rural affairs department and the relevant Forestry Commission national office.

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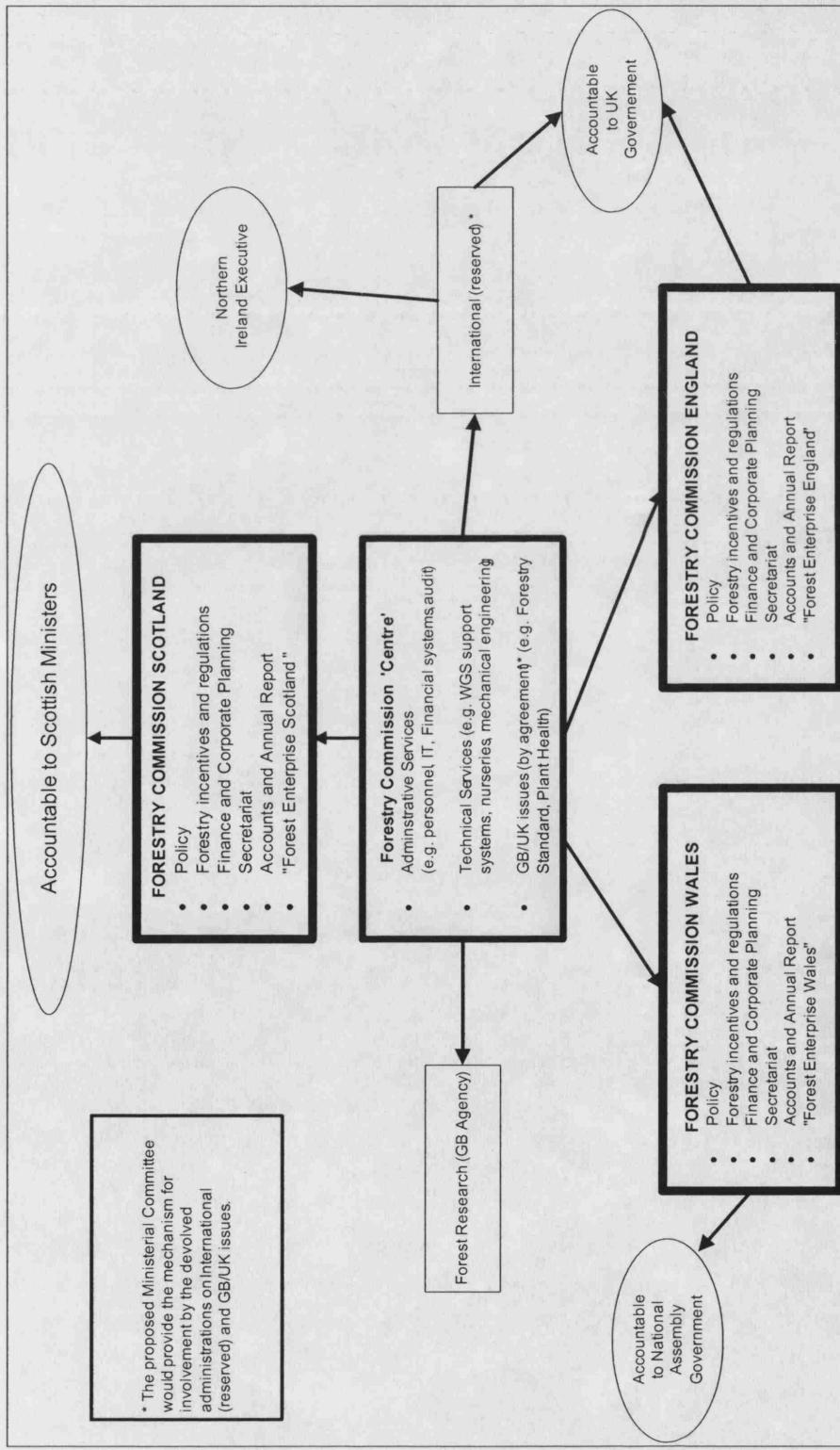
<sup>57</sup> Consisting of the Cabinet Office, the Forestry Commission, DEFRA, Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department, Welsh Assembly Government Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department, HM Treasury, Northern Ireland Forest Service.

- Devolving the Forestry Commission's Forest Enterprise agency into three bodies, charged with managing separately the public forests in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Enhanced role for the devolved administrations in Scotland, England and Wales in determining research priorities, with joint approval by forestry Ministers of the research strategy and annual research programme.
- Enhanced representation from Scotland, England and Wales on the Board of Forestry Commissioners.
- A new ministerial committee, involving Ministers from Scotland, England , Wales and Northern Ireland, to discuss international issues and any cross-cutting issues where collaboration would be advantageous and to monitor the effectiveness of these new arrangements.<sup>58</sup>

Figure 7. 6 shows the new arrangements which came into force on the 1st of April 2003.

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<sup>58</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/pages/news/2002/08/SEen123.aspx>



**Figure 7.6** Organisation of the Forestry Commission after devolution review  
 (Interdepartmental Group 2002, p 35)

Meanwhile in England, a review of rural delivery meant that full integration was still on the agenda. More change was afoot. In 2001, the establishment of DEFRA as the new rural affairs department in Whitehall had begun to create a momentum for change in rural delivery. In November 2002, the Haskins review of the delivery of DEFRA's rural policies was announced. Haskins was invited to look at the arrangements for delivering the government's rural policies in England because "*it was clear to Ministers that they needed to be reviewed following the creation of DEFRA [...]. The complex delivery mechanisms that exist are the collective legacy of many past governments and changing priorities. Most people accept that changes need to take place to meet the ambitious and growing rural agenda that the government faces in the years to come*" (Haskins, p. 7).

The terms of reference of the review was to make recommendations on how best to improve the effectiveness of delivery arrangements for DEFRA's rural policies with a view to 1) simplifying or rationalising existing delivery mechanisms and establishing clear cut roles and responsibilities and effective co-ordination; 2) achieving efficiency savings and maximising value for money; 3) providing better, more streamlined services with a more unified, transparent and convenient interface with the customers; and finally 4) identifying arrangements that can help to deliver DEFRA's rural priorities and Public Service Agreement Targets cost-effectively (Haskins 2003, p. 7).

During 2002, before the announcement of the Haskins review, a broad review of the government's forestry policy objectives and delivery in England had been agreed as part of the DEFRA settlement of the Spending Review 2002. A steering group was set up to oversee the review. Its terms of reference were 1) to carry out an examination of the economic rationale which underpins the Government's policy goals for forestry in England; 2) to consider the role for forestry in the Government's strategies of sustainable development in England and internationally; 3) in the light of the findings which emerged from this examination, to make recommendations on what organisational structure would be most appropriate for delivery of this role in the context of the wider review of

environmental and rural delivery arrangements across DEFRA and its agents (DEFRA 2003). This review became absorbed in the Haskins review.

There were thus a number of important reviews going on during 2002 and 2003, while I was doing fieldwork, and these contributed to the sense of uncertainty about the Forestry Commission's future in England. Thus in August 2003, *British Wildlife* could report that "*One rumoured outcome is the proposal for the Rural Development Service of DEFRA to be merged with English Nature. The future of the Forestry Commission and Countryside Commission are also questionable – with the possibility that a new rural 'delivery' agency could be on the future agenda for public sector reform*" (2003, p. 447).

The Forestry Commission was traditionally a rural body. Three of the four programmes in the England Forestry Strategy were focussed on action in rural areas, the only one which was not was Forestry for Economic Regenerations which was based in urban and peri-urban areas. If the Forestry Commission England was, through its new, more outward-oriented stance, increasingly meeting the objectives of other departments, and most of these were based in rural areas there seemed to be a good argument that the Forestry Commission England should indeed be absorbed into a rural delivery agency, since it now had less of a distinctive role. The Forestry Commission England therefore had to strike a balance between 'joined up government' and maintaining a distinctive identity. It was perhaps part of the reason why the Forestry Commission was talking up its urban identity.

We are not exclusively a rural body now. We used to be, when I joined the Forestry Commission, we were entirely. We will work alongside DEFRA on the rural agenda. But we work in a similar and developing fashion with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which leads on urban land use issues, particularly through the current drive called the Sustainable Communities Plan, which is to improve the quality of life and environments in urban areas. And our particular niche is to green urban areas, green new growth areas, and to restore ground-filled land. We are developing exactly the same relation with the ODPM as with DEFRA

Director, Forestry Commission England, November 2003.

In this quotation the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is given a role as important as DEFRA in the life of the Forestry Commission, and to a certain extent the ODPM is even presented as the future of the Forestry Commission. This example underscores the relationality of identities. It is an example of how the Forestry Commission sought to enrol other institutional actors in the collaborative construction of new parts to its identity. In order to build an urban role, the Forestry Commission had to establish relationships with powerful actors in the new urban setting of action who were able to confer legitimacy on it in such roles. In this way the Forestry Commission was building and strengthening the non-rural part of its identity, in part perhaps an attempt to provide some bolstering against being sucked into the vortex of change underway in the rural decision fabric.

In November 2003, the results of the Haskins review were finally published.<sup>59</sup> Recommendation 1 called for DEFRA “*to review and clarify its rural policy remit in order to ensure that it is consistently understood by all concerned, including those who deliver its policies*” (Haskins, p. 33). A key concern of Haskins was the separation of policy and delivery functions. Thus recommendation 2 called for DEFRA’s prime responsibility to be “*the development of policy, and it should arrange for the delivery of its policies through national, regional and local agencies. Policy and delivery functions should be managed separately so that accountability for policy and delivery is clearly defined*” (Haskins 2003, p. 34).

This had implications for the Forestry Commission. Haskins recommended, in recommendation 18, that the policy development role of the Forestry Commission should be transferred to DEFRA. The recommendation was also motivated by a desire for public intervention in forestry to “*increasingly be integral to a wider policy of sustainable land use*”, Haskins considered that this

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<sup>59</sup> The report is dated October 2003.

could best be achieved if forestry policy functions (and staff) were transferred to DEFRA (Haskins 2003, p. 70).

In order to “*prepare for the expanding land management agenda and to improve co-ordination and service delivery to customers*”, Haskins also recommended (recommendation 16) that the government should establish an integrated agency to promote sustainable use of land and the natural environment. This should be achieved through a merger of English Nature, DEFRA’s Rural Development Service and some functions of the Countryside Agency. The remit of the new integrated agency should include biodiversity, historical landscape, natural resources, access and recreation (Haskins 2003, p. 62).

A key concern for Haskins in the establishment of the new agency, was that responsibility for the regeneration of the English Countryside was fragmented. However although the Forestry Commission was identified as one of four national bodies (together with English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency) with responsibility for the regeneration of the English countryside, Haskins stopped short of including the delivery functions of the Forestry Commission as part of the new integrated agency, although the Forestry Commission was included in diagrams of the new agency for purposes of illustration (Haskins 2003). In recommendation 19, Haskins called for the integration or lose alignment of the Forestry Commission in England with those of the new integrated agency. Haskins believed that there was, on the basis of the preliminary conclusions of the Inter-departmental Steering Group on the review of forestry policy, a good case for the full integration of the Forestry Commission into the new agency, but that if Ministers were to pursue this option, he would nevertheless advise against transferring the management of the estate (by Forest Enterprise) as well (Haskins 2003, p. 72). This would then mean that only the advice, incentives and regulatory functions of the Forestry Commission would be transferred to the new agency. Haskins does not make any suggestions as to what should happen with the management of the public estate, but suggests that if the government were to opt for integration of the Forestry Commission’s advice, incentives and regulatory functions into a delivery agency, that there would be a

need to review the arrangements for managing the public estate in England (Haskins 2003, p. 72).

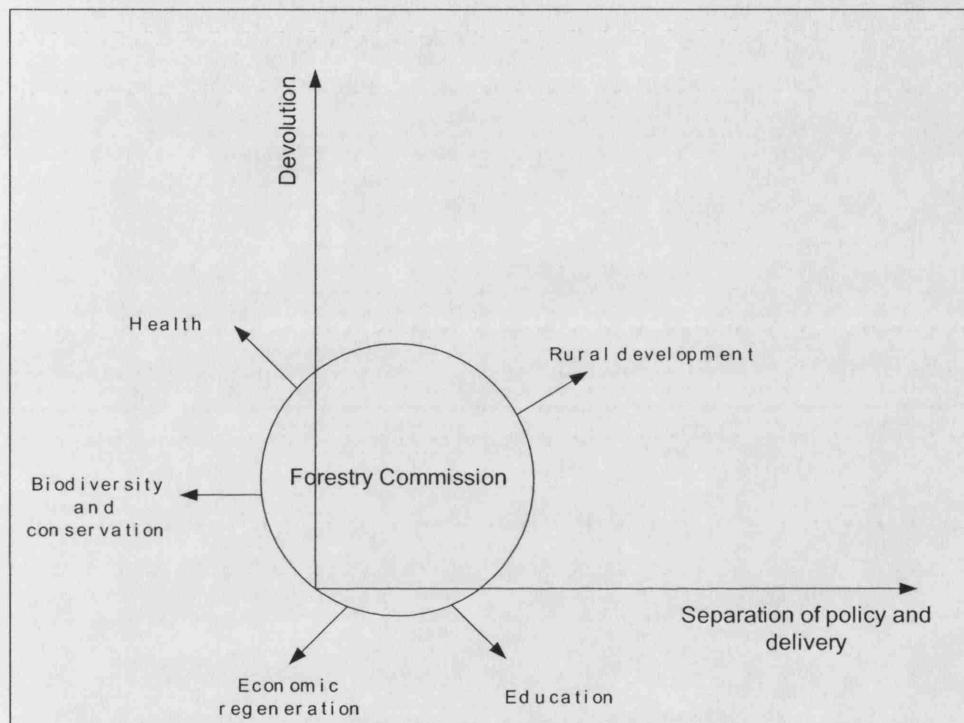
In response to Haskins the Government published a rural White Paper and later the Rural Strategy 2004 which set out the new rural delivery arrangements (DEFRA 2004) to be implemented in a phased programme to 2007. The Rural Strategy also included a point by point reply to Haskins. The Government accepted that principle of separation of delivery and policy functions, and in particular the recommendation that the policy development functions of the Forestry Commission England should be absorbed in core DEFRA. The Government committed itself to, by September 2004, to transfer relevant policy functions and resource from the Forestry Commission in England to DEFRA, and to establish a small forestry policy team within DEFRA to allow the department to take a strategic and integrated approach to the development of land use policy (DEFRA 2004, p. 82). The Government also accepted the recommendation for an integrated agency and committed itself, subject to legislation, to establish the new integrated agency in statute by 2007 as a non-departmental public body. The Government agreed with Haskins that following the creation of the new integrated agency it would be logical to integrate or closely align the delivery functions (regulation, incentives and advice) of the Forestry Commission in England with those of the new agency. However, the Government did not opt to fully integrate the Forestry Commission into the new agency for the time being. Instead DEFRA committed to work with the Forestry Commission in England and the integrated agency to identify opportunities for greater collaborative working, and assess the success of partnership working between the Forestry Commission in England and the integrated agency *“in the light of the initial phase of moving towards the integrated agency”* (DEFRA 2004, p. 82). Thus the door was still open for full integration, at least as far as the regulation, incentives and advice functions of the Forestry Commission were concerned were concerned. The Rural Strategy 2004 was silent on the future arrangements for Forest Enterprise.

## 7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I put together the analysis of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Chapter 5 identified that the purposes of forestry as practiced by the Forestry Commission had been problematised and that there was a debate about the ends and means of forestry, as well as work on the Forestry Commission's institutional self and its 'others' as part of an attempt to collaboratively construct a modified identity for the Forestry Commission. Chapter 6 sought to understand the collective experiences which had led to the formation of a particular institutional self. This chapter has sought to understand how these structures of self were brought into play, re-conceptualised or challenged and transformed in negotiation with a highly mobile present at the beginning of the 2000s. In doing so it has sought to get behind the problematisation of institutional self and the work on self and others identified in Chapter 5 and to explain what the Forestry Commission was responding to and why it responded in the way that it did (based on the analysis of institutional identity set out in Chapter 6) and with what consequences.

I have shown how the Forestry Commission, and the people who work in it are being challenged on important dimensions of institutional as well as individual work based identities. In the course of producing the England Forestry Strategy, and in the years after, the Forestry Commission England sought to strengthen the case for non-timber benefits of forestry in different ways by building the case for forestry as a mechanism for delivering to a range of policy agendas, some of which were rural, some of which were urban, and developing closer integration with a range of 'partners' including other government departments. However this began to raise the issue of the separate identity of the Forestry Commission. If it was increasingly delivering to all these different policy agendas, and this was what it was about, what was the justification of the Forestry Commission as a separate entity, should it not be integrated with whichever part of public policy the objectives of which it was most aligned with? The drop in timber prices contributed to this development by undermining the productivist *raison d'être* of the Forestry Commission, thus reinforcing what might be called a 'qualitative' fragmentation process for which the seeds had been sown with the incorporation of access, recreation and environment and the development of multi-functional

forestry. The Forestry Commission now had less of a distinctive identity, 'forestry' was dissolving into other policy agendas. The government public sector reform agenda, in particular devolution and later regionalisation, as well as the emphasis on the separation of policy development and delivery functions contributed to the fragmentation the Forestry Commission.



**Figure 7. 7 The pulling apart of the Forestry Commission England**

Figure 7. 7 illustrates the way in which on the one hand devolution and regionalisation were pulling apart the Forestry Commission England vertically, while on the other hand the separation of policy and delivery was pulling it apart horizontally, and finally the way in which in the context of the collapse of timber prices the embrace of other policy agendas was qualitatively fragmenting the Forestry Commission further. It was in retrospect not surprising that the Commission was suffering from a crisis of identity.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

In the previous pages I have told a story about the Forestry Commission at a particularly turbulent time in its institutional life, rooted in a particular perspective which was grounded in my intellectual, institutional, emotional, etc. situatedness (Cook *et al* 2005). I have tried to ensure the rigour (Baxter and Eyles 1997) of this ‘inner narrative’ through embedding it in a reflexive ‘outer narrative’ about how this story came to be produced, and this has at the same time allowed me to draw out the more process oriented learning points relating to doing social scientific research in a policy setting.

Because it was an ESRC CASE studentship, the research process involved a substantial amount of work which was aimed at making the research mine, taking it over from being a project of my two supervisors, Professor Jacquie Burgess at the Department of Geography at UCL and Paul Tabbush at the Forest Research Agency. This meant carving out my meanings from their meanings embodied in the original research proposal through a process of negotiation, with the research proposal itself, and dialogue with Jacquie and Paul.

The research thus began life as a project about *Social Learning in Forestry Policy Networks*. At the outset of the research I, in essence, understood this to be a study of policy change, and in particular a study about how the Forestry Commission was grappling with something called ‘social forestry’ (especially participatory processes), and whether or not the Forestry Commission was ‘really’ changing as a result of this engagement. I then decided that it was not about learning. The meaning of social forestry did not seem to be sufficiently well defined for *it* to be the object of a learning process. Instead I began to see social forestry as symptomatic of a problematisation of what forestry was

normally considered to be about. I also identified that there was talk about a new forestry and a paradigm change. And that there were various processes underway in the context of the Forestry Commission which were aimed at producing institutional change. I then inferred that something must have caused this problematisation to occur. And that this could be either from inside or outside the policy subsystem.<sup>60</sup> Because of the participant observation I was doing in the first phase of fieldwork, my attention was drawn to the actual and potential consequences of an institutional change process for the people working in the Forestry Commission. I therefore became interested in their experience of such change as well as in a collective story about institutional change. In the thesis I have therefore tried to construct a narrative about how institutions respond to changes in their setting of action as well as a narrative about the experience of individuals caught up in such change, and how they respond to the changes in their setting of action. In these narratives I have sought to pay particular attention to issues of identity and knowledge. In this way the research is more about institutional (organisational) change and the experience of individuals in those organisations of that change, than it is about if and how policy change comes about. It is about how institutions set about reflexively (proactively) changing 'themselves' in response to a perceived mismatch between what they are and their setting of action. And it is about how the individuals who work in those organisations in turn respond to the challenges and opportunities which such institutional change set for them through changing their setting of action in turn.

Of course when I read the proposal now, it is so much more meaningful than it was when I began the research, or at least I invest it with a different set of meanings than I did when I began the research in 2001. This is because of the learning process which I have been through in the course of the research. My understanding of the proposal has changed, because I have changed. It is as Wenger (1998) puts it, through learning that we become who we are. And it is because of (the essential situatedness of) who we are that we carve up the world in particular ways, and thus see it in particular ways. But this also meant that if I was really going to make the research mine, it had to be *different* from what

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<sup>60</sup> The policy studies literature refer to endogenous and exogenous learning (Howlett and Ramesh 1995)

Jacquie and Paul had in mind. And so it has become, although looking back at the project objectives they do weave in and out, not only of the outer narrative, but also of the inner narrative, and this is because, in making the research mine, I was always relating back to the original proposal, negotiating, conversing with it.

I now want to draw out some of the findings of the research which I came to conduct in more detail, reflecting on them in relation to the conceptual framework.

## **8.1 Reflections on the conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework, which is set out in Chapter 3, and summarised in Figure 3. 1, grew out of the first phase of the research. It was therefore, when I took it out into the field again during the second phase of fieldwork, already an empirically *grounded* conceptual framework (Henwood and Pidgeon in press; Pidgeon and Henwood in Press; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbyn 1998). This is not to say that it emerged through a purely Baconian inductive process. It is part of the situatedness of the research, that it was situated in the structures of meaning which I brought to the research, including existing intellectual tastes. Moreover, in the course of the first phase of the research I was purposively sampling the literature to enhance the interpretative resources with which I was 'confronting' the field. Therefore a more deductive approach, also played a role in the process, as existing structures of meaning shaped my interpretations of the field. Experience (in the field) and the creation of meaning on the basis of that experience were intimately connected. And this worked like a hologram, where, I was on the one hand simultaneously involved in experience and meaning making in the context of particular encounters, but where taking the research process as a whole, it could also be considered in terms of four broad phases of experience (Phase I fieldwork), focused reflection and meaning making (conceptual framework), more narrowly directed experience (Phase II fieldwork) to see if the structures of meaning which I had created following the first phase of the research held, followed by a final intensive attempt at reflection and meaning making embodied in the thesis itself.

### 8.1.1 Three tensions

There were three tensions which had a substantial impact on my research and which animated (and to some extent were animated by) my theoretical engagements. Firstly, in the account of the change process I wanted to strike a balance between an account of the collectivity and an account of the individual. I wanted to tell the story of the group as well as the story of the individual. Secondly, I also wanted to strike a balance between structure and agency, between determinism and free will. As Marx said, people make history, but not in circumstances of their own making. Finally I was concerned to strike a balance between performance (or instrumentalism) and meaning.

These theoretical concerns had a substantial impact on the way in which the research evolved and on the writing up process.

Having identified that 'what was going on here', to paraphrase Strauss and Corbyn (1998, p. 114), as essentially a process of institutional change, I needed a way to think about processes of social of change.<sup>61</sup> This led me to engage with Giddens (1984) structuration theory since he explicitly tries to strike a balance between structure and agency in his approach. The ethnographic fieldwork in combination with Goffman (1959) suggested that changes in the Forestry Commission required changes in the Forestry Commission's co-actors, both those on the outside and those on the inside. Goffman showed how identity is a collaborative construction between co-actors, audiences and props. Moreover he showed that the definition of the social situation and the relative casting of actors is negotiated. Each actor projects his definition of the situation. But although Goffman talked about interactants trying to influence each other he did not pay much attention to power. Giddens and Foucault (1990, 1992, 1998) were more helpful here. ANT (Law 1992) has developed Goffman's conception of the networked self, further dissolving the (analytical) distinction between actors and props. The symbolic interactionists drew attention to the continual achievedness of social formation, but paid less attention to the structural aspects of it, however, areas of order which endure in time and space also develops, what Law (1992)

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<sup>61</sup> I do not wish to suggest that this was the *only* thing that was going on, only that it was important to the people I encountered in the fieldwork and interesting to me.

refers to as punctuation. It follows (from Goffman 1959) that if an actor wants to change, casting has to be renegotiated with existing co-actors, audiences and props, and new co-actors, audiences and props may be needed. This is the situation which the Forestry Commission found itself in. As the Forestry Commission sought to change itself, it required change in the network which it normally mobilised to 'perform' its self. The Forestry Commission thus engaged in work on its institutional self as well as its institutional and individual others. Such work is mediated by power. The Forestry Commission had different capacities to make its projected definition of the situation count in different relationships with different co-actors. Externally, there was a difference between engaging with a community group and engaging with the Department of Health, internally staff is dependent on the Forestry Commission for work, although their investment in the Forestry Commission goes beyond the instrumental. While the institutional actor may be seen through the instrumental lens of performance, negotiations over the definition of the situation, and institutional survival, this becomes more difficult when we are talking about the individual actor. The attempts to change the institutional actor lead to changes in the setting of action (Goffman 1959) of the individual, in particular in terms of the kinds of actions, bodies and meanings which were seen to belong to forestry. Goffman's conception of self also paid insufficient attention to the meaning of action for individuals. Burton has used a combination of Stryker's (1968; 1994) interpretation of Mead's (1934) and Goffman (1959) to illuminate the meaning attributed to productivist farming practices by farmers. However, to illuminate the predicament of the individual it was necessary to go beyond the dramaturgical metaphors of Goffman, which give to much weight to instrumentalism (working on the symbol formation of others through performance) in interaction and too little weight to meaning (the relation of action to the actor's own symbols, structures of meaning created through past experience). There has been some work from a symbolic interactionist perspective on subjectivity and identity at work. But this work suffers from lack of attention to the context of action (du Gay 1996). I have used Foucault to balance the instrumentalism of Goffman's performance metaphor. Tsouvalis (2000), Braun (2002) and Hager (1995) have also used Foucault in similar but different ways).

While the second phase of the fieldwork showed that the conceptual framework held, the writing up process, the final phase of reflection and meaning making, showed that in practice it was difficult to hold together within the same narrative structure, the three tensions which I had wanted to hold together in the course of the research.

### **8.1.1.1 The individual and the group**

While the conceptual framework in terms of the ideas which informs it leans more to the individual actors, the empirical account, set out in Chapter 5-7, in the end privileges the institutional actor more than I intended it to. The symbolic interactionist ideas of the self of Goffman, which also informs Giddens, were however productive in the institutional analysis in that they capture important aspects of what was going on in the Forestry Commission while I was doing fieldwork and suggested new lines of enquiry. Giddens concept of the fateful moment captured the significance of the combination of the continued threat of privatisation in the 1980s and conflict over upland afforestation brought to a head in the Flow Country episode in the sense that it brought some actors to see that it was not a question of conservation *or* forestry but conservation *and* forestry, and moreover, in the context of the continued threat of privatisation, environment, like recreation, could be incorporated and used to justify the continued existence of the Forestry Commission. The question arises whether the drop in timber prices from the mid-1990s can be seen as another fateful moment. At the institutional level, at least as far as England is concerned, I think the answer is no. Since the acceptance of multi-functional forestry a series of mutually reinforcing events have served to move the Forestry Commission towards a greater emphasis on what used to be considered the positive externalities to the main business of timber production whether in its role as regulatory or through direct intervention in its role as state forester. At the institutional level the recent drop in timber prices has (simply) reinforced this shift. However I think that it is likely that for some individuals the recent drop in timber prices *has* led to a fateful moment. Most of the Forestry Commission's practice is still concerned with production and investment forestry, and more and more areas of planting are reaching what should have been (economic) maturity. However the drop in

timber prices has undermined the dominant social value of the Forestry Commission's work, established in the context of the social practices of the market. Perhaps this is comparable to the food mountains in the 1980s. How did it feel for farmers to see tonnes of their products destroyed? It begs the question how did foresters who were still substantially involved in productivist forestry position themselves in response to the dropping timber prices. In particular, what other sources of value did they have recourse to in the *private life* of their work which allowed them to withstand the destruction of such a key constituent of the *socially attributed value* of their work. It might be argued that in such a context even foresters who have remained substantially committed to the productivist view of forestry would, for their own sakes, be looking around for other meanings, and therefore other sources of value, for the forest and for their work. And here, the (new) narratives being created in the context of the new forestry were of course *also* available to them as resources for making meaning.

### **8.1.1.2 Structure and agency**

It was also difficult to give due weight both to structure *as well as* agency, and to group *as well as* individual in the account of what was going on in the Forestry Commission. It was difficult to tell the same actor both as actor and as resource (for other actors). From an institutional point of view staff could be seen as a resource which was being mobilised in the reinvention of the 'punctualisation' (Law 1992) also known as the Forestry Commission. 'Docile bodies' as Tsouvalis, drawing on Foucault, refers to them. However while staff *were* a resource for institutional reinvention and *were* on the receiving end of various institutional techniques of self to enable the Forestry Commission to perform new roles sometimes in more democratic ways, sometimes less so, it was also the case that staff *were* knowledgeable and creative actors (Giddens 1984) who *were* actively positioning themselves in relation to institutional techniques of self such as the promotion of a set of explicit organisational values in the context of the culture change programme, and who moreover sometimes had unacknowledged existing experience of the new forestry based on learning by doing. And of course, the new forestry itself was *also* the product of knowledgeable and creative actors responding to changes in the setting of action of the Forestry Commission and using internal as well as external resources in negotiating such

(evolving) changes. Moreover the institutional actor, so dominant (and structuring) in relation to its staff, was, as someone put it, 'a side show' in relation to wider Whitehall processes and could be, as someone else put it, 'wiped out by the flick of the tail' in the context of Cabinet re-shuffling. In other words the 'punctualisation' known as the Forestry Commission, could also be told as a resource. There was no easy way to answer to the question 'What is going on here'.

It is in part a literary decision, a feature of the point we want to make as author. In the same way that ANT 'talks up' agency in things we don't normally think of as having agency, it is possible to 'talk down' agency in actors which we normally think off as having agency and this is arguably what Foucault does in Discipline and Punish when he evokes a relatively passive subject in contrast with a more active (a more actor like) subject in the History of Sexuality. Arguably both Callon and Foucault use a style/narrative device to make/evoke their point. It is in fact difficult to tell both a and b as actors (or resources) at the same time, in the same narrative. The allocation of agency in the narrative is a feature of the subject matter. Discipline and Punish is about how the individual is trapped in structure. The History of Sexuality tells a story about how the discourses which the individual draws on to constitute his identity become problematised and how individuals struggle with contradictions which appear in or between such discourses.

### **8.1.1.3 Performance and meaning**

The concern with striking a balance between performance (or instrumentalism) and meaning arose out of an early sense that although a distinction was now being created (discursively) between old (bad) and new (good) forestry, 'old' forestry had been meaningful at the time (and people had been encouraged to find it meaningful) and that redrawing the boundaries around what did and did not belong to (good) forestry in the collective narrative of self would mean that some people who thought that they have been 'doing the right thing', would now find that what they had been doing had been (discursively) excluded from 'good' forestry, and therefore in a sense from counting as forestry at all, at least as practiced by the Forestry Commission. And moreover that this was happening in

the context of a power relation between the individual and the institution where, drawing on Giddens (1984) idea of power as resources, the institution had the resources to affect the choices of individuals through giving them access to employment but also through various institutional techniques of self. In this context I wondered the extent to which the changes which individuals were required to make went all the way in or whether they were able to retain some kind of critical distance (performance) and whether over time such performance would not in any case be internalised as meaning. This now seems similar to Butler's argument, drawing on Foucault, about gender being an effect produced for the internal audience through a process of re-iteration (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000).

However, reading Foucault (1990; 1991; 1992; 1998), I became concerned about the individualising effects of such research in the context of precisely the relations of power I referred to above. Individual attachments to traditional forestry could be cast as barriers to change, this put me as a researcher on the side of those who wanted to change. This was an impossible situation to be in since (being new to forestry policy and to the Forestry Commission) I did not feel that I could position myself in terms of the politics of the Forestry Commission. I therefore pulled back from this more intimate research direction. As the research progressed I felt acutely aware that in producing the thesis I was also producing something, a structure, which could be used in ways which I could guess at and to a limited extent foresee, but certainly not control.

The tension between performance and meaning therefore transformed itself in different ways away from the initial intimate concern with the individual to a concern with the institutional actor. How could I strike a balance between the instrumental narrative of some staff and the ethical narratives of other staff. To say that the new forestry was simply the latest round of rhetorical devices to justify the Forestry Commission would marginalise the latter, to foreground the ethical narrative would obscure the importance of the former. My solution has been to say that some roles are more concerned with institutional survival (policy) than others which are more concerned with expressing institutional identity as it is (practitioners). Of course practitioners reflect on and are

concerned with the continued existence of the organisation, *its* relation to *its* setting of action, but this is not the main substance of their practice. Reflections on practice and its relation to the institutional setting of action is however the substance of the practice of policy staff. This means that policy roles are more likely to produce such instrumental narratives.

## 8.2 Reflections on the fieldwork

In Chapter 5 I set out the empirical starting point of the thesis which grew out of the first phase of fieldwork. I argued that the existing identity of the Forestry Commission had become problematised and that this was indicated by a debate within the institution about what forestry is for in the context of the practices of the Forestry Commission. The debate was about the kinds of actions, meanings and bodies which could belong to forestry to the point of leading some to question the appropriateness of the term 'forestry.' A key point on which the debate turned was to do with the *value* of forestry, meaning the work of the Forestry Commission. This was articulated in different ways such as *legitimacy* and *relevance*. The important dimensions of the debate was to do with what kind of value, for whom, how to create it, and how to demonstrate it (or measure it/account for it/make it visible). The main narrative, the story-line (Hajer 1995), in this context, was that it was *social* value which had to be created. The relationship between the setting of action (Goffman 1959) and the self of the Forestry Commission had become destabilised. This had led the Forestry Commission to problematise its self-identity. In response the Forestry Commission sought to repair this relationship by working on its self and (the selves of) institutional and individual others. This process was conceived of as essentially *experimental* as the Forestry Commission *improvised*, making use of structures (understood as rules and resources (Giddens 1984)) 'at hand.'

The key issue for the Forestry Commission was to identify (new sources of) social values, based on forestry, and get paid for delivering them. The Forestry Commission sought to engage other institutional actors on the basis of its perceptions about who might be able to attribute new value to/(re-)confer legitimacy on its work. The engagement with new co-actors involved the

Forestry Commission in seeking to understand the forest in different ways from those which dominated its own practices so that it would be able to interest co-actors which were perceived to have the power to attribute (social) value to its work. This was indicated by a concern with understanding what other actors might be able to use the forest for. The Forestry Commission had to engage in an iterative process of trial and error to find out what actors could be interested in the forest and on the basis of what values. A symbolic interactionist approach to identity suggested that narratives of self were situated in particular interactional contexts. It was therefore not surprising that this process involved the Forestry Commission in drawing attention to aspects of itself which used to be considered as less important because the interactive context was different. Irrespective of whether self changes, the telling of self does. The Forestry Commission not only had to draw attention to aspects of its self which were so far considered less important, but it also had to use new 'narrative techniques' of self, because some of the values it now wanted to draw attention to were not necessarily illuminated by the same narrative techniques as those used to establish the economic value of the forests. The Forestry Commission also used different 'techniques of (institutional) self' aimed at changing the organisation internally both at the level of meaning and the level of action. It increased the number of posts in the 'new' areas. Moreover, existing posts also changed, so that existing posts had more to do with the 'new' areas than in the past. The components of the research and training programmes told their own story about the kinds of knowledges which the practices of the Forestry Commission have required over time.

In the not so distant past HQ decided the kind of forestry which had to be implemented across Great Britain and communicated this to those who were further down the administrative hierarchy through guidelines and other forms of communication. However, during the 1990s, and increasingly so from the mid-1990s, the hierarchical and centralised guideline culture associated with this aspect of the Forestry Commission's personality was increasingly coming under pressure. This was related to a complex set of developments. Firstly, the reduction in staff numbers had meant that the Forestry Commission had less contact with the community in which it was working. There was a time when the Forestry Commission was much closer to the community, and in the forest

villages, even constituted the community. However the staff reductions during the 1980s and 1990s substantially reduced the presence of the Forestry Commission in the community. Contracting out also changed the relationship of the Forestry Commission with the population of the areas in which it was working in as much as contractors tended to come from further away and have less to do with the local population and its economy. Secondly, the new outward oriented stance from the late 1990s onwards meant that there were more agendas more actors to interact with, more relationships to establish and maintain. Thirdly, the devolution agenda and later the English regionalisation agenda of the New Labour government meant that an increasing number of spatial scales were becoming relevant to the Forestry Commission to participate in, and it brought the multiplying agendas, actors and relationships to the national offices, conservancies and forest districts. Fourthly, there was a group of changes which were associated with the funding arrangements of the Forestry Commission. Timber prices dropped from the mid-1990s onwards. At the same time the New Labour government had a penchant for partnership, including partnership funding, which it saw as an essential part of its way of governing (Fairclough 2000, p. 128). With devolution and regionalisation, there was also a shift downwards in the spatial scales at which funding was available. The Forestry Commission was pushed towards seeking new sources of funding in different ways. Another way of putting this would be to say that that the site for entrepreneurialism in the Forestry Commission was migrating from H&M to gaining access to these new sources of funding. Put together these changes to the setting of action of the Forestry Commission spelled the need for more initiative by staff at regional and local spatial scales and this put pressure on the hierarchical, centralised culture of the Forestry Commission. There was therefore a self-conscious approach to working on both the structural and the cultural aspects of the organisation.

In Chapter 6 I put together a ‘re-constituted’ narrative of self based mainly on the interview data from the second phase of the fieldwork in order to try and understand the institutional self which had become problematised and the events through which it had been shaped. The Forestry Commission was created to establish a strategic reserve of timber and to a lesser extent, to create rural

employment. This, and the contemporary importance of agricultural expansion, meant that the Forestry Commission's plantations were often located in remote rural locations. Forestry belonged to a collection of *rural* economic practices. Working for the Forestry Commission was a firmly rural occupation. Its structure and culture was influenced by the *colonial and/or military* experiences of the people who worked for the Forestry Commission in the early years. An important part of the Forestry Commission's identity thus came from being part of the public sector, a state actor, with a public service ideal to 'do the right thing.' The experience of colonial and/or military practices meant that the Forestry Commission was endowed with a strongly hierarchical culture, with a strong set of rules about 'correct' and 'disciplined' behaviour. The aesthetic norms associated with the production of early plantations were regularity and efficiency.

Concerns about access to the countryside in areas being managed by the Forestry Commission drew attention to some *negative* externalities of its activities in the 1960s. The Forestry Commission was able to turn this concern around by drawing attention to the positive externalities of its forests through emphasising the *recreational* opportunities which it was providing. The environmental agenda, in the shape of concerns over the visual impact of the Forestry Commission's plantations and then about nature conservation and biodiversity again in the 1980s also drew attention to how the activities of the Forestry Commission were creating negative externalities, affecting things that other people valued. Again the Forestry Commission was able to turn this around by improving the aesthetics of its plantations in terms of its impact on the *landscape*.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Conservative public sector reforms encouraged the Forestry Commission to remake itself in the image of the *entrepreneur*. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the urban forestry movement drew attention to the potential *positive* externalities of the activities of the Forestry Commission, but suggested that the Forestry Commission took its skills of growing trees elsewhere, to urban settings, and employed those skills for other reasons than production and investment forestry. The Forestry Commission, as an institutional

actor, was not yet ready to see that trees could be grown for other reasons than profit, perhaps in part because it was under such pressure from the Conservative government. However, it had also been marked by experiences in the Flow Country, and had begun to see that timber production and nature conservation were perhaps not incompatible and in response to political pressure from the environmentalists, and with an eye to new alliances accepted that forestry could be run for multiple benefits in 1991, in other words, that there were certain positive externalities to the main business of timber production. Figure 6. 2 showed the multiple sources of identity of the Forestry Commission by the mid-1990s.

Chapter 7 showed that the relationality of identity is also about *difference*. The first phase of research had identified an identity crisis in the Forestry Commission which could be summarised as , ‘if we are not about timber production, what are we about?’ The response of the England Forestry Strategy was that the Forestry Commission was about using forestry to meet other government objectives. This answer was reinforced by the continued drop in timber prices and in developments in the reform of the CAP. But at the same time, the devolution agenda which had allowed England to break free to some extent from productivist forestry by allowing differentiation of forestry policy, was now undermining the case for the continued separate existence of the Forestry Commission England. Because the more the Forestry Commission England became about something other than productivist forestry, which could be uniformly expressed across Great Britain either as the creation of a strategic reserve or as a production and investment business producing timber for a market, the more it became about contributing to meeting other policy goals which had to be subtly articulated at the national, regional and local level, the more vulnerable it became to the idea that it should be part of a rural delivery agency, because it now lacked a clear distinctive role. Hence the question, if we are not about timber production, what are we about? It was not easy to find an answer to this question which would not, in the context of a reform of rural delivery, bring into question the Forestry Commission as a separate entity. It was the geographic uniformity of purpose, and the lack of a suitable UK wide government department which had led to the creation of a UK wide non-

departmental body in 1919. Multi-purpose forestry articulated the acceptance that forestry could be about other things as well as about timber production, but it was still timber production which was the central purpose. From 1999, devolution meant that forestry policy began to become increasingly geographically differentiated. Timber prices meant that the investment and production view of forestry which gave the Forestry Commission a distinctive identity in relation to other rural institutional actors became weakened. If policy objectives were increasingly differentiated at different spatial scales, why was there a need for a separate Forestry Commission even at the England level. But now of course it *did* exist and there was forests and a lot of land, and an organisation with a culture and a structure and competent and committed staff, it was rule and resource, and it seemed that in spite of the Haskins review, the Government could not quite bring itself to destroy what had been created over the previous 80 years.

### **8.3 Reflections on doing a policy related CASE studentship**

This research has, like all research, been *situated*. Situated in me, with the resources I could draw on (or ‘mobilise’ as the actor-network that the process has made it so clear to me that I am) in the production of the thesis and situated in my motivations for doing the thesis. But situated, also because it was based on an ESRC CASE studentship. The thesis was therefore not only based in a particular *academic* institutional context, but also situated in the institutional context of the Forestry Commission. As the Forestry Commission was also the subject of the research, the thesis was in this way *doubly situated in its subject matter*, as field and as part of the institutional context for the research in the same way as the Department of Geography was at UCL.

Early on I concluded, not unreasonably, that my Forestry Commission supervisor was more field than non-field. The fact that the research was based on a CASE studentship also meant that field and non-field were entangled from the very beginning. The relationship between my academic and my non-academic preceded, in the nature of things, my relationship with either of them. The

original research proposal included a concern with the uptake of social scientific knowledges by the forestry policy network, of which the relationship between the two supervisors could be considered to be an instance leading to my Forestry Commission supervisor doing an MSc at the Department, and to the two of them putting together the research proposal to the ESRC which formed the point of departure for my research. Without wishing *in anyway whatsoever* to put a question mark over the integrity of either of my two supervisors, it nevertheless meant that to some extent there was no truly neutral base for me to venture into the field, and more importantly, to come back to. This raises several issues to do with confidentiality, and to do with supervision as the student needs a neutral place to help her digest her material both in substance and in process terms. It was a matter of trust, and I chose to trust my academic supervisor, and treat her as if she was entirely non-field. However in cases where this is not possible, it is difficult to see where the student can go. This can be problematic in a study such as my own, given the very considerable extent to which the researcher uses herself in participant observation. Conceived as a process of reflexively 'controlled' socialisation, participant observation is emotional as well as intellectual work. It is not reasonable to expect relatively inexperienced researchers to carry the whole process alone, and probably not reasonable to expect experienced researchers to do so either. Importantly, I make these observations on the basis of, as should be clear from the account in Chapter 2 and 4, a research process which has been, I would guess, particularly unproblematic in terms of issues of access and relations with the field.

As noted in Chapter 4 there has, in recent years, been some debate about the policy relevance of geography (Demeritt and Dyer 2002). The issue of the 'usefulness' of the research was one which was present from the beginning. One strategy would have been 'simply' to carry out the research outlined in the research proposal, on the basis that this was what my Forestry Commission supervisor and my academic supervisor judged to be useful. This was however in tension with my own desire to take ownership of the research, which was also supported by the advice of my academic supervisor on the grounds that if I treated the research as a piece of consultancy it would be difficult to sustain the work to its conclusion.

There was also an issue of *who* exactly the research should be useful to. In the process of taking ownership of the research, the 'forestry policy network' began to fragment in my mind and I began to see instead different parts of it, and in particular of the Forestry Commission, as the research came to be about the Forestry Commission. While at different points in the research I felt the pull of the group, in different contexts, and the pull of different groups, I felt that it was not possible to situate myself in a particular group and its perspective and from there produce a 'useful' piece of research with this group in mind, in other words, for them. I therefore felt that my role was to try and *understand* rather than to judge what was 'going on.' This might well have been different had I not been new to forestry policy. Had the research been about energy policy, I might have more readily positioned myself. And yet, in retrospect, from the point of view of the narrative I have produced, I feel that the issues of institutional change, let us just call it social change, and individual identity would have been relevant irrespective of my normative judgement about the wider field. And I think therefore, that this research has been as much about the relationship between institutional identity and change on the one hand and individual identity and change on the other (with the Forestry Commission as the case), as it has been about forestry policy.

The studentship has been useful in different ways, to different people. Leaving those aside, has, or will, the knowledge which I have produced be useful? Perhaps it is a matter of different kinds of research, the old distinction between 'fundamental' and 'applied' research. It might be argued that the distinction between the two lies in the extent to which (some of) the uses that the knowledge so produced might be put to are defined *ex ante*. In this sense this research has leaned more towards the fundamental than towards the applied, in spite of being so deeply embedded in a policy context.

This research has been about opening up boxes. The policy community, and indeed practitioners, as we have seen in Chapter 4, are often, but not always, concerned with closing down boxes, with access to knowledge resources with which they can *do* things in the present which they are negotiating. This can lead

to what might be called a game of ‘passing the ambiguity’ between policy actors and/or practitioners and researchers. I was concerned not only whether or not the research would be useful, but also the uses it might be put to subsequently. I hope therefore that my research *will* be useful, but also, that it will be useful in ways which I can feel comfortable with.

## Appendix 2.1 Participation events

EVENT NO.	DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
1	22.10.02	Supervision with FC supervisor.	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England
2	20.11.02	Supervision with FC supervisor.	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England
3	13.12.02	Supervision with FC supervisor.	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England
4	10.01.02	Supervision with FC supervisor.	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England
5	18-19.02.02	Interviews at Forestry Commission HQ	FC HQ, Edinburgh
6	22.02.02	Interview with Social Research Unit researcher. Presentation by FC supervisor on MSc Dissertation research.	FR NRS, Roslin near Edinburgh, Scotland
7	28.02.02	Joint supervision	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England
8	03-05.04.02	Institute of Chartered Foresters Annual Conference. 'ICF messages for the Earth Summit: UK forestry and rural development'. Speakers organised by The FC supervisor.	RGS, London, England.
9	07.05.02	Visit to Forest of Dean with FC supervisor. Meeting with , Deputy Surveyor of the Forest of Dean offices, Coleford, England.	
10	21-24.05.02	Forestry for Non-Foresters Course. Involved both class room sessions and sessions in the forest surrounding Alice Holt Research Station.	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England.
11	12.07.02	Visit to New Forest with trainer developing FTS training on social forestry. Observed meeting between trainer and the New Forest Recreation Manager.	New Forest offices, Lyndhurst, England.
12	16.07.02	Visit to Peninsula Forest District with trainer developing FTS training on social forestry. Observed meeting between trainer and designer working on a package of graphical representation to facilitate engagement with people who don't know anything about forestry. Had experience from Thames Chase, Red Rose and Mersey community forests.	Peninsula Forest District offices, Kennford, near Exeter, England.

EVENT NO.	DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
13	12-13.09.02	Social forestry networking event. Staff development in social forestry. A networking event for staff working on social forestry. Organised by the Policy and Practice Division of Forestry Commission HQ and FTS.	Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries, Scotland.
14	02.10.02	Small Woods Association Annual Conference: 'Rediscovering Woodlands – helping local communities reconnect'	Wolverhampton, England
15	28-31.10.02	Forestry Training Services course on social forestry for Local Area Managers.	Rheidol Study Centre, near Aberystwyth, Wales.
16	01.11.02	Visit to Tir Coed and Cydcoed.	Tir Coed offices, Aberystwyth, Wales.
17	19-21.11.02	Planning for Public Involvement. Team building event for Inverness Forest District facilitated by Forest Research.	Loch Maree Hotel, Achmashieen, Highlands, Scotland.
18	15-16.01.03	Module 1a of FTS course on social forestry at Kielder Forest District.	Kielder Forest District offices, Bellingham, England.
19	27-29.04.03	Course on public involvement at Highland Conservancy. This was the practical module of the course and was structured around the development of a Long Term Forest Plan by Kingairloch estate. The course was delivered by an external consultant. Time spent both at Highland Conservancy Offices, Dingwall, and at scoping meeting for the Long Term Forest Plan at Kingairloch estate.	Highland Conservancy Offices, Dingwall and Kingairloch estate. Highlands, Scotland.
20	10.07.03	Supervision with FC supervisor.	FR Alice Holt Research Station, Farnham, England.
21	29-30.04.04	Approches participatives de la gestion forestière. Journée technique de l'aménagement forestier. Arranged by ECOFOR and Cemagref.	Paris, France.
22	23-27.05.04	'The Urban Woods – To be used by everyone.' Conference combining the concluding conference on the Swedish-French LIFE Environment Project Urban Woods for People and the 7 <sup>th</sup> IUFRO European Forum on Urban Forestry, Stockholm.	Stockholm, Sweden.
23	24.06.04	Sén Art en forêt. Vernissage of art exhibition in Sénart forest.	Étoiles, France

## Appendix 2.2. Conversations

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
1	Interview at UCL	04.01	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
2	Participation event 1	22.10.01	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	2	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
3	Joint supervision, UCL	12.11.01	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	3	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
4	Participation event 2	20.11.01	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	4	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
5		20.11.01	Social Forestry Project Leader	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
6	Participation event 3	13.12.01	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	5	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
7	Participation event 4	10.01.02	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	6	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
8		10.01.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	2	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
9		10.01.02	PhD student studying weevils	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
10	Participation event 6	22.02.02	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	7	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
11		22.02.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	2	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
12		22.02.02	Chief Executive	1	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
13		22.02.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	1	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
14	Participation event 7	28.02.02	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	8	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
15	Participation event 8	3-5.04.02	Project Officer	1	Mersey Community Forest	
16		3-5.04.02	Director Tir Coed	1	Tir Coed	Wales
17		3-5.04.02	PhD student working on visualisation	2	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
18		3-5.04.02	Operations Manager	1	Forestry Commission	Scotland
19	Participation event 9	07.05.02	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	9	Forest Research	Great Britain
20		07.05.02	Deputy Surveyor	1	Forestry Commission	Forest of Dean
21		07.05.02	Head of Public Affairs	1	Forestry Commission	Forest of Dean
22	Participation event 10	21-24.05.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	3	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
23		21-24.05.02	Team leader; trainer	1	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
24		21-24.05.02	Trainer	1	Forest Training Services	Great Britain
25		21-24.05.02	Business Development and Marketing Manager	1	Forest Research	Great Britain
26		21-24.05.02	Researcher. Small mammals.	1	Forest Research	
27		21-24.05.02	Researcher	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
28		21-24.05.02	Researcher	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
29		21-24.05.02	Researcher with an interest in soil compaction	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
30		21-24.05.02	Forest Ranger in charge of New Forest volunteer rangers.	1	Forest Enterprise	New Forest
31		21-24.05.02	Wildlife Ranger	1	Forest Enterprise, South East England Forest District	

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
32		21-24.05.02	Trainer developing FTS' work on social forestry.	1	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
33		21-24.05.02	Researcher. GIS.	1	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
34		21-24.05.02	Researcher. GIS.	1	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
35	Participation event 11	12.07.02	Trainer responsible for developing FTS' work on social forestry.	2	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
36		12.07.02	Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	New Forest
37		12.07.02	Forest Ranger in charge of New Forest volunteer rangers.	2	Forest Enterprise	New Forest
38	Participation event 12	16.07.02	Trainer developing FTS' work on social forestry.	4	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
39		16.07.02	Designer working on representations of the forest to facilitate public engagement	1	Forest Enterprise	Peninsula Forest District
40	Participation event 13	12-13.09.02	Recreation, Access and Tourism Advisor	1	Forestry Commission	England
41		12-13.09.02	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	10	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
42		12-13.09.02	Cydcoed Project Officer for North Wales	1	Cydcoed	Wales
43		12-13.09.02	Project Officer	1	Cydcoed	Wales
44		12-13.09.02	Community Ranger, Thames Chase,	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
45		12-13.09.02	Principal Advisor on Social Benefits, Policy and Practice Division	2	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
46		12-13.09.02	Forest Recreation, Communities, Partnerships, Conservation operations and Forest operations, Lochaber Forest District	1	Forest Enterprise	Scotland
47		12-13.09.02	Forestry Commissioner	1	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
48		12-13.09.02	Trainer developing social forestry course	5	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
49		12-13.09.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
50		12-13.09.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
51		12-13.09.02	Environmental Education Advisor	1	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
52		12-13.09.02	District Forester Planning and Environment	1	Forest Enterprise	South East England Forest District
53		12-13.09.02	Community Ranger	1	Forest Enterprise	Northants Forest District
54		12-13.09.02	Consultant facilitating Dumfries event.	1		
			Member of Forest Enterprise Scotland Forestry for People Advisory Panel			
55		12-13.09.02	Community forester	1	Forest Enterprise	West Midlands Forest District
56	Participation event 13 contd.	12-13.09.02	Community Engagement Advisor, Social Forestry Team	1	Forest Enterprise	Wales
57		12-13.09.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	3	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
58		12-13.09.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	2	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
59		12-13.09.02	Forester	2	Forest Enterprise	New Forest
60		12-13.09.02	Forest District Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
61		12-13.09.02	Forest District Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Tay Forest District
62		12-13.09.02	Recreation Co-ordinator, Environment and Communications	1	Forest Enterprise	Great Britain
63		12-13.09.02	Head of Forest Training Services	1	Forest Training Services	Great Britain
64		12-13.09.02	Training Manager, Forest Training Services	1	Forest Training Services	Great Britain

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO.	INSTITUTION	AREA
65	Research subject passing through London	27.09.02	Consultant facilitating Dumfries event. Member of FE (S) Forestry for People Advisory Panel	2		
66	Participation event 15	28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
67		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	2	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
68		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
69		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Llanymddyfri Forest District
70		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
71		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
72		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Mynydd Forest District
73		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Gororau Forest District
74		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Gororau Forest District
75		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Comoedd Forest District
76		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Comoedd Forest District

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
77		28-30.10.02	Local Area Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Coed y Comoedd Forest District
78		28-30.10.02	Community Engagement Advisor, Social Forestry Team	2	Forest Enterprise	Wales
79		28-30.10.02	Trainer working with David Thorp on FTS social forestry course	1	Forest Training Services	Dumfries
80		28-30.10.02	Trainer responsible for developing social forestry course	6	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
81	Participation event 16	30-31.10.02	Director of Tir Coed	2	Tir Coed	Wales
82		30- 31.10.02	Project officer	2	Cyddcoed	Wales
83		30- 31.10.02	Assistant to Director	1	Tir Coed	Wales
84	Participation event 17	19-21.11.02	Beat Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
85		19-21.11.02	District Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
86		19-21.11.02	Forest District Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
87		19-21.11.02	Planning Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
88		19-21.11.02	Social Forestry Project Leader	4	Forest Research	Northern Research Station
89		19-21.11.02	FM forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
90		19-21.11.02	Wildlife Ranger Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
91		19-21.11.02	District Forester Planning	1	Forest Enterprise	Inverness Forest District
92	Participation event 18	15-16.01.03	Trainer responsible for developing social forestry course	7	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
93		15-16.01.03	Recreation and Community Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	England
94		15-16.01.03	Trainer	1	Forest Training Services	
95		15-16.01.03	Administrative Officer	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
96		15-16.01.03	Forest District Manager	2	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
97	Joint supervision at UCL	24.04.03	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	11	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
98	Participation event 19	28-29.04.03	Consultant.	3	Forestry Commission	Great Britain; Highland Conservancy
99		28-29.04.03	Rural Development advisor to FC (half time) and advisor to the Highland Conservancy (half-time)	1	Forestry Commission	Highland Conservancy
100		28-29.04.03	Operations Manager	1	Forestry Commission	Highland Conservancy
101		28-29.04.03	Tree planter	1	Kingairloch Estate	
102		28-29.04.03	Forester	1	Forestry Commission	Highland Conservancy
103		28-29.04.03	Development Officer	1	Forestry Commission	Highland Conservancy
104	Upgrading Workshop	20.06.03	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research Unit	12	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
105	Participation event 20	10.07.03	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research	13	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
106	Participation event 21	29-30.04.04	Researcher	1	INRA	France
107		29-30.04.04	Charge de mission - Projets territoriaux	1	ENGREF	France
108		29-30.04.04	Ingénieur Territoire	1	AFOCEL	France
109	Participation event 22	23-27.05.04	Chargée de Mission - Fonctions sociales de la forêt	1	Office National des forêts	Département Aménagement, Sylvicultures, Espaces Naturels, Fountainbleau.
110		23-27.05.04	Community Forest Team Leader	2	Forest Enterprise	North West England Forest District
111		23-27.05.04	Organising 8th IUFRO conference on Urban Forestry	1	Slovenia Forest Service	Ljubljanska, Slovenia

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
112		23-27.05.04	Project leader 'Urban Woods for Urban People' LIFE Environment Project	1	Skogsåvardsstyrelsen	Mälardalen, Sweden
113		23-27.05.04	Sénart Forest Co-ordinator. 'Urban Woods for People' LIFE Environment Project.	1	Office National des forêts	Sénart Forest, Étoilles, France
114		23-27.05.04	Regional Director	1	North East Community Forests	North East England
115		23-27.05.04	French Co-ordinator. 'Urban Woods for People' LIFE Environment Project.	1	Office National des forêts	Direction Régionale Ile-de-France, Fountainbleau
116		23-27.05.04	Landscape Architech	1	Office National des forêts	France
117		23-27.05.04	Forester	1	Bezirkforstinspectio n	Austria
118		23-27.05.04	Forester	1	Pilis Park Forestry Company	Hungary
119		23-27.05.04	Inventerare	1	Skogsällskabet	Kyrkhult, Sweden
120		23-27.05.04	Community Development Officer	1	The Mersey Forest	Warrington, England
121		23-27.05.04	Researcher forestry and rural development. In rural aread. Organised participation event 20.	1	Cemagref	Grenoble, France
122		23-27.05.04	PhD student working on French forestry	1	UMR 6042	Department of Geography, University of Limoges, France
123		23-27.05.04	PhD Student working on Danish forestry	1	Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University	Copenhagen, Denmark
124		23-27.05.04	Conservator	1	Forestry Commission	Central Scotland Conservancy

CONV. NO.	OCCATION	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG. NO	INSTITUTION	AREA
125		23-27.05.04	Responsible for afforestation programme	1	Danish Forest and Nature Agency	Copenhagen, Denmark
126		23-27.05.04	Researcher	1	Institute for Forest and Environmental Policy, University of Freiburg	Germany
127		23-27.05.04	Forester	1	Institut Bruxellois pour la gestion de l'environnement	Belgium
128	Participation event 23	24.06.04	French Co-ordinator. 'Urban Woods for People' LIFE Environment Project.	2	Office National des forêts	Direction Régionale Ile-de-France, Fountainbleau
129		24.06.04	Sénart Forest Co-ordinator. 'Urban Woods for People' LIFE Environment Project.	2	Office National des forêts	Sénart Forest, Etoilles, France
130		24.06.04	Landscape Architect	2	Office National des forêts	France
131		24.06.04	Chargee de Mission - Fonctions sociales de la forêt	2	Office National des forêts	Département Aménagement, Sylvicultures, Espaces Naturels, Fountainbleau.
132		24.06.04	Project leader 'Urban Woods for Urban People' LIFE Environment Project	2	Skogsverdsstyrelsen	Mälardalen, Sweden

## Appendix 2.3 Taped interviews

INTERVIEW NO.	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG NO.	INSTITUTION	AREA
1	18.02.02	Principal Advisor on Social Benefits, Policy and Practice Division	1	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
2	19.02.02	Head of Environment and Communication	1	Forest Enterprise	Great Britain
3	19.02.02	Head of Policy and Practice Division	1	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
4	22.02.02	Project leader, Social Research Unit	1	Forest Research Station	Northern Research Station
5	15.07.02	Team leader; Trainer	2	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
6	15.07.02	Trainer responsible for developing social forestry course	3	Forest Training Services	Forest of Dean
7	10.07.03	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research Group	13	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
8	26.08.03	Director General	1	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
9	27.08.03	Forestry Commissioner	2	Forestry Commission	Great Britain
10	29.08.03	Economic Regeneration Advisor, England	1	Forestry Commission	England
11	01.09.03	Head of Sustainable Forestry	1	Forest Enterprise	England
12	10.09.03	Rural Development Advisor	1	Forestry Commission	England
13	10.09.03	Recreation, Access and Tourism Advisor	2	Forestry Commission	England
14	11.09.03	Head of Silviculture and Seed; Head of Social Research Unit	14	Forest Research	Alice Holt Research Station
15	15.09.03	Chief Executive	1	Forest Enterprise	England
16	15.09.03	Recreation and Community Manager	2	Forest Enterprise	England
17	16.09.03	Planning Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District

INTERVIEW NO.	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG NO.	INSTITUTION	AREA
18	16.09.03	Community engagement and environment forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
19	17.09.03	Beat Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
20	17.09.03	Forest Craftsman	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
21	18.09.03	Beat Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
22	18.09.03	Forest Craftsman	1	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
23	19.09.03	Administrative Officer	2	Forest Enterprise	Kielder Forest District
24	24.09.03	Conservator	1	Forestry Commission	North East England Conservancy
25	24.09.03	Acting Operations Manager; Woodland Officer	1	Forestry Commission	North East England Conservancy
26	25.09.03	Office Manager	1	Forestry Commission	North East England Conservancy
27	25.09.03	Woodland Officer	1	Forestry Commission	North East England Conservancy
28	29.09.03	Community Ranger	2	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
29	29.09.03	Acting Team Leader, CMF project	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
30	30.09.03	Forest District Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District

INTERVIEW NO.	DATE	FUNCTIONALITY	MTG NO.	INSTITUTION	AREA
31	30.09.03	Environment Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
32	30.09.03	Operations Manager	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
33	01.10.03	Operations Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
34	01.10.03	Harvesting Forester	1	Forest Enterprise	East Anglia Forest District
35	08.10.03	Conservator	1	Forestry Commission	East England Conservancy
36	08.10.03	Regional Development Advisor	1	Forestry Commission	East England Conservancy
37	09.10.03	Administrative Officer	1	Forestry Commission	East England Conservancy
38	09.10.03	Woodland Officer	1	Forestry Commission	East England Conservancy
39	06.11.03	Woodland Officer	1	Forestry Commission	East England Conservancy
40	06.11.03	Director	1	Forestry Commission	England

## Appendix 2.4 CASE studentship proposal to the ESRC

### Context for the research

Forestry in the UK has developed from an economic focus in the 1960s, through recognition of wider objectives in the 1970s, which embraced wildlife and landscape. During the 1990s there was an increasing awareness of international obligations following the Earth Summit in 1992. After the 1998 Lisbon conference, the FC appointed a Project Officer for Social Forestry and began to encourage FR to develop a Social Forestry programme. This recognised principles of sustainable development in that Sustainable Forest Management requires a fusion of economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Devolution has resulted in a country focus, and the Forestry Commission (England) is responsible for the delivery of forestry, including administration of grant aid to landowners, forest design plans, and oversight of Forest Enterprise (England). FE (E) is responsible for the management of the woodlands it controls under a tightly drawn Framework Document including multiple objectives within an overall economic mandate. The Government's forestry policy in England was presented in the 1999 "England Forestry Strategy" (EFS), with 4 major objectives: rural development; rural regeneration; recreation access and tourism; conservation of wildlife and the environment. *The proposed research fits particularly well in support of the EFS.* The new Social Forestry programme has a focus on the benefits of trees and woodlands in quality of life. Forestry is in part publicly funded, and seeks to maximise return of public benefit for investment. It seeks to identify and develop these benefits, particularly in terms of strategies to enhance benefits for socially excluded groups.

## The intellectual context for the project

Understanding of environmental decision-making has been dramatically reshaped in recent years, partly in response to the sustainability imperative; partly in response to the changing nature of state-civil society relations in the UK. Two themes are relevant to this proposal.

- (i) The notion of value neutral expertise is no longer widely accepted. Whilst this does not make expert knowledge marginal, it does mean that the knowledges and understandings of experts do not necessarily engage with the concerns and experiences of lay publics or local circumstances. This recognition has led to increasing emphasis on deliberative and inclusive approaches to governance which may build trust, encourage consensus, enhance representative democracy and promote debate alongside bargaining in policy development. (Dryzek 1997; Bloomfield et al. 2001).
- (ii) Policy development is dependent upon the experience of its implementation, and such feedback processes are central to current notions of social learning among actors. Social learning is conceived as a discursive process embedded in social relations and concerned with the formation and re-formation of meanings and practices. Through social learning it is argued that local institutional capacity can be increased, a productive outcome of the range and forms of knowledges used by local actors; the dynamics between actors; and the processes through which they mobilise resources (Healey, 1999).

## Project objectives

- identify the policy networks of forestry in England, and establish the flows of knowledge, information, resources and power through them.
- explore the development of concepts of 'social forestry' within the FC and the FE.
- analyse the take-up of social scientific knowledge within forestry policy networks.
- Through detailed case work, establish the extent to which deliberative and inclusive processes of engagement with stakeholders and wider lay publics, are contributing to institutional change within forestry policy networks.

## **Project outcomes**

In intellectual terms, the research will complement Knoepfel and Kissling-Nafs' (1998) important study of social learning in environmental policy networks, in which it was argued that inter-organisational engagement leads to cognitive and behavioural changes in the individual. The research project will develop a social-cultural perspective to address the role of dialogue/discourse and social practices in shaping actors' engagements within forest policy networks, and within the organisation. In practical terms, the research will provide insights into the effectiveness of administrative processes in engaging the public in decision-making, and in securing the relevance of new woodlands to local communities in a socially inclusive way, will be of direct benefit to FC(E).

## **Appendix 2.5 Interview schedule, February 2002**

1. Introduction (5 min)
2. Your and your job (10 min)
3. Identification of policy networks: England forestry plan (10 min)
4. Social forestry (20 min)
5. Take up of social scientific knowledge (10 min)
6. Symbolic resource management, devolution and the politics of national identity (20 min)
7. Deliberative and inclusive processes (10 min)
8. Good stories (10 min)

### **Introduction (5 minutes)**

- Thank you.
- I am in the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the PhD so there is a lot I don't know about forestry policy.
- Previously I worked for five years in energy conservation policy at the Environmental Change Institute at Oxford University.
- The purpose of the interview is to explore ideas so that I can further develop the research problem.

### **You and your job (10 minutes)**

- What are the main responsibilities of your job?
- How long have you been working for the Forestry Commission?

- What other posts have you held here?

### **Identification of policy networks (10 minutes)**

- Can you tell me about the process through which the national forestry strategies are developed and how they relate to forestry practice?
- What are the most influential actors in the development of the strategies? Or if this is too big a question, the English Forestry Strategy?
- What are the relationships between central forestry commission functions and national functions?

### **Social forestry (20 minutes)**

- Tell me about the development of the concept of social forestry in the UK.
- I am interested in the circulation of international policy ideas and the way they get translated in particular institutional contexts. For example the translation of German ideas of forestry in Britain at the turn of the last century. Can you tell me something about social forestry from this perspective?
- Where has the push for social forestry come from?
- If you were going to point to some more general factors which have contributed to the move towards social forestry what would they be? [i.e. structural rather than individual].

### **Take up of social scientific knowledge (10 minutes)**

- Can you tell me about the role of social scientific knowledge in forestry?
- What kinds of social scientific research has been commissioned and how has it been used in policy development and in forestry practice?
- What was the background to the setting up of the Social Forestry Unit at Forest Research?
- What is the relationship between the Social Forestry Unit at Forest Research and the People, Trees and Woods programme?

### **Symbolic resource management, devolution and the politics of national identity [20 minutes]**

- How are the different historical trajectories of forestry in England, Scotland and Wales influencing post devolution forestry policy and practice?
- Do the differences between the countries in terms of a transition to post-productive landscapes affect post devolution policy and practice?
- Devolution appears to have energised the discussion of national identity within Britain. At the same time there appears to be an increasing recognition of nature as a symbolic resource e.g. in forestry and in agricultural policy. I am interested in exploring how ideas about forestry, sustainable development, devolution and national identity interact. An example is the way Welsh, Scottish and English national identities are being talked about in the context of cultural meaning of forests. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on this theme. [try and change this question].

### **Deliberative and inclusive processes (10 minutes)**

- What kinds of participatory processes does the Forestry Commission use and in which areas of its work?
- What has been the impact of participatory processes on forestry policy development and practice?
- Where has the push for using participatory processes come from?
- Who are the principal stakeholders that the Commission communicates with?
- How do the communication strategies differ?
- In what ways have you had to change your communication strategies while you have been at the Forestry Commission?

### **Good stories (10 minutes)**

- What are the 2-3 most important issues in forestry today?

- What are the 2-3 most important changes in forestry while you have been working for the Forestry Commission?
- The research problem is still relatively open – and I am still in the process of identifying interesting ideas - is there anything you would like to add?
- Can I come back?

## Appendix 2.6 Interview schedules, July 2002

### Interview schedule: trainer A

- I would like to start by getting a better idea of the main responsibilities of your job.
- I am interested in the experience that you are bringing into the FC....we had a long conversation about that in May...but I would like to make sure that I have got the formal things right, as in where you worked and what post you held.
- What do you think was particularly attractive to the FC in the experience you have to offer?
- Tell me about your impressions so far of the meaning(s) of social forestry in the FC?
- What do you think the relationship is between the social forestry and social inclusion in terms of the way those ideas are used in the FC?
- What about the relationship between social forestry and public involvement...I am a bit puzzled by the relationship between the terms social forestry, social inclusion and public involvement
- Who have you spoken to?
- Who are you still planning to see?
- Did you come across anything that surprised you?
- What do you think is the relationship between terms social forestry, social inclusion, social exclusion and public involvement?
- Is it just X who seems to prefer the term social inclusion (or at least did in May) or have you come across this elsewhere....? If so what do you think that is about?
- How has the social forestry agenda in FTS involved now that you have been in post for nearly two months?

- How do you see the role of FTS in relation to the FC's social forestry agenda?
- Do you think there has been a development in what FTS thinks social forestry is about as a result of the discussions that you are having with various people and just the mere fact of you being here as a person with a new perspective on things?
- Why are you focussing on the revision of the Involving the Public in Forestry Course?
- How do you now think that FTS might go about facilitating the wider organisational learning for the FC in this area?
- Do you get the impression that social forestry is something that is taken seriously in the FC?
- Where do you think the push for social forestry in the FC is coming from?
- Do you think they have a clear vision of what social forestry is about?
- Public involvement – what does he make of public participation in the FC?
- Why is everybody so concerned about public involvement? How is it different from social forestry?
- Are you going to capture/have you tried to capture lessons from things that did not go so well?
- Is there a sort of taxonomy of participation emerging?
- Has your brief changed over the last two months and/or in relation to what you thought it was going to be?
- Social science?

Interview schedule, trainer B (trainer A's line manager)

(I would like to start by getting a better idea about your professional background)

- Tell me about the main responsibilities of your job.
- How long have you been working for the Forestry Commission?
- What other posts have you held here?
- How did you get into training?
- Did you have to do any training yourself to take on that new role?

(I am interested in the birth and death of different courses)

- How does it generally get decided to put new courses on and to end other courses? What bits of the FC/FTC, who is involved?
- What about the decision to revise the Involving People in Forestry Course?
- How do you see the role of the FTS in the learning processes of the FC? I painted a particular picture of how I understand it particularly in the context of the relationship between FTS and FR...what do you think about that?
- I imagine that it is not only FR that you get knowledge from...I imagine that you also develop some in house and that you work together with other organisations too. Can you tell me about that...?
- What resources did you draw on to develop the old Involving People in Forestry?...How old is that course....? How often are courses revised?
- What about the learning process itself...what I mean is...facilitating other people's learning process is a learnt skill as well what resources do you draw on in this respect? ....courses, academic and applied literature...social science..
- I get the impression that your relationship to the rest of the FC is a commercial one of supplier to customer....presumably it has not always been like this? Has that influenced the learning processes of the FC?

(I am interested in the background to the creation of the post that trainer A now holds and the thinking behind choosing someone with trainer A's skills profile)

- How did the decision to create the post that trainer A now holds come about?

- Is it a permanent post?
- What were the perceived issues that this was to address?
- How was it envisioned that the post would address these issues?
- Where in the organisation did the idea/steer come from?
- Who was involved in the selection process?
- What was it about trainer A's profile that appealed to you?

(How has the social forestry agenda in FTS evolved now that you have had someone in post for nearly two months?)

- How do you see the role of FTS in relation to the FC's social forestry agenda?
- You seemed to prefer the term social inclusion...what do you mean by social inclusion and how do you think it is different from social forestry?
- Has there been any development in what FTS thinks/you think social forestry is about as a result of the discussions that trainer A has had with various people and the presence of trainer A himself as someone with a new perspective on things?
- In May you said that social inclusion is going to be key in policy change...I did not have a chance to ask you about it then...could you tell me why you think that is?
- Where in the FC is the push for social forestry/social inclusion coming from?
- Do you think that the FC has a role in social exclusion?
- In May you said that you thought that social inclusion is driving continuous cover forestry, could you elaborate on that?
- How do you now think that the wider organisational learning process might be taken forward in the context of social forestry?

(In May, you mentioned a blame culture in the FC a few times which inhibits experimentation).

- Is this something that comes into play in the context of the social forestry agenda? Are you trying to learn from things that did not go so well as well as from examples of best practice?

## **Appendix 4.1 Indicative interview schedule, Phase II fieldwork**

### **Introduction**

- Thanks for the article you sent me.
- Explanation of how I would like to use the interview.

### **1. Unique to interviewee**

- Tell me a bit about your background prior to joining the FC
- What attracted you to join the FC (and the post)?
- What are the main responsibilities of your job?
- What was it like to come into the Forestry Commission in 1995? (from Australia, from the private sector).
- What did you see as your mission when you joined, has this changed?

### **2. Changes to context in which forestry is practiced**

- What are the main changes which have affected forestry in recent years?
- How does the Forestry Commission generally go about identifying changes in its environment which require it to change?
- How do you decide what should be done?
- Could you tell me a bit more about the process that led to seeing those particular changes in the context in which forestry is practiced as a challenge to existing practices of forestry and how you went about developing a response to those changes? (what happened, who was involved, how did you decide, what did you decide?)
- You took over as Director General just before Labour won the elections in 1997. What difference do you think that made?

- Is there a legacy of enterprise culture in the organisation, e.g. in Forest Enterprise? (public service or private enterprise?).

### **3. Challenges to organisational identity**

- In what ways did those changes challenge the existing organisational identity (in terms of the kinds of ideas of forestry and actions which were seen to belong to forestry, in terms of the material characteristics of the land covered in forestry policy).
- In historical terms (i.e. since the creation of the FC), how big are the changes to the context in which forestry is practiced and how big is the challenge to existing organisational identity?
- Is there some kind of overview information on this somewhere?

### **4. Work on organisational self**

- Is social forestry the new forestry?
- What is the relationship between the change from timber oriented to social forestry (as community development; participation; inclusion) and the culture change programme?
- What are the main changes you are trying to achieve? (by when?)
- How are you going about achieving those changes? (e.g. Social Forestry Course; Dumfries Social Forestry Networking Event; Staff Unification; Connect Leadership Programme; balance between hiring new staff and retraining existing staff).
- Why did you decide to do it in this way?
- How do they address the changes in the organisational context?
- Who are they mainly directed at?
- What are the implications for those people's jobs?
- It seems that the objectives of forestry are now articulated in a different way and come from a different direction, that an important part of the substance of work has become about finding out what the goals should be and then relating them back to the technical and scientific knowledge of the forester. How does this interact with the traditional guideline culture of the Forestry Commission?

- In historical terms, how big are the changes which you are trying to implement? (compared to other periods of change in FC history – suggests more fundamental in paper).
- Is there an overview somewhere of changes to the kinds of post that are found in forestry? And the kinds of skills that people bring in?
- You mention that change is afoot in forestry globally. Which examples would you compare and contrast the British case with?
- What kinds of models of organisational change do you work with?
- What do you see as the role of social science in forestry? Tell me a bit about the setting up of the Social Research Unit.

## **5. Changes in organisational self (results of work on self/what forestry is becoming)**

- What are the things in the existing identity/culture of the Forestry Commission which aids change?
- What are the things in the existing identity/culture of the Forestry Commission which make change more difficult?

## **6. Experience of work on institutional self by people inside the organisation**

- What is your perception about the way the changes in forestry have been experienced by different staff groups? I am thinking both about the experience of living in a changed forestry and the experience of being at the receiving end of various change processes.
- Do changes in the setting of action challenges the sense of competence of actors? (i.e. we deliver/task oriented culture – but now it seems that part of the task is to find out what the task should be – and this also in a top down, guideline culture where goals could perhaps be quite precisely articulated).
- Are there changes to the kinds of people who are attracted to forestry?
- Are some people leaving because of the changes?
- Does engagement with lay knowledges in the context of public involvement and other expert knowledges through social science challenge to existing knowledge culture and professional identity?

- Do changes conform to the aspirations of individuals?

### **Snowballing**

- If I have more time, who else do you think I should talk to.

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