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Document Version

Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Emery, SB 2014, Hard work, productivity and the management of the farmed environment in anthropological perspective. in L Hamilton, L Mitchell & A Mangan (eds), *Contemporary issues in management*. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 90-104. <http://www.e-elgar.com/shop/contemporary-issues-in-management?__website=us_warehouse>

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Hard Work, Productivity and the Management of the Farmed Environment in Anthropological Perspective

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This is a pre-print version of a book chapter published, and to be cited as: Emery, S.B. (2014), Hard work, productivity and the management of the farmed environment in anthropological perspective, in Hamilton, L., Mitchell, L. and Mangan, A. (eds), *Contemporary issues in management*, pp 90-104, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, which can be found here: http://www.elgar.co.uk/bookentry_main.lasso?currency=US&id=15551

1. Introduction

Studies in organisational management have predominantly focussed on urban workplaces, with very little attention given to rural businesses, or to agriculture in particular. And whilst the concept of the 'organisation' might seem somewhat removed from 'the farm', the vicissitudes of agriculture and the many internal and external variables that must be responded to necessitate continuous management and adaptation of the farming business. Moreover, the concept of work and its relationship to identification processes is acutely evident amongst farming communities and studies of agriculture thus offer important insights on the role of work as a virtue that shapes and is shaped by approaches to management in a broader range of organisational settings.

This Chapter sets out to understand how farm work and a cultural value in the work ethic influences farmers' responses to new political and societal incentives to adopt environmental behaviours. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork with farmers in the North York Moors (UK) which was conducted within the context of changing expectations on the role and function of farming. In particular, new agri-environmental policies offer financial incentives to farmers to act as 'land managers' or 'environmental stewards' in order to protect, maintain and enhance the environmental quality of agricultural landscapes. The North York Moors is characterised by livestock farming with enclosed pasture at lower altitudes and open common moorland on higher ground. It is designated a National Park and the moorland is protected for its conservation value. The grazing of sheep on the moorland is integral to its favourable conservation management, and a considerable focus of agri-environment schemes during my fieldwork, therefore, was to encourage farmers to keep grazing their sheep on the moor, and to do so in an environmentally sensitive way. My fieldwork was informed by participant observation on three farms and forty semi-structured interviews with farmers in an area defined by the catchment of the River Esk (for full details and an extended presentation of the argument made here see Emery, 2010).

The Chapter demonstrates how environmental schemes lay challenge to farmers' personhoods¹, since they seek to alter both the practices (the types of work undertaken) and the means of expression (the physical appearance of the farm) through which farmers uphold their virtue in the work ethic. I show that the work ethic has often been associated with ideals of productivism and economic benefits but ask and seek to explain, therefore, why is it that farmers continue to farm, and to value the work ethic when their financial returns continue to fall? During fieldwork I also found that the work ethic was often expressed in multiple, complex and counter-intuitive ways. I seek to explain this through recourse to rhetoric culture theory from anthropology, and to consider its implications for our understanding of the relationship between cultural values and workplace practices. In other words, I ask what can be learnt about workplace behaviours when the values that influence behaviour are seen as multiple and changing rather than singular and fixed.

2. Theorising Work and the Work Ethic

To foreground the ethnographic material that follows this Section explores the relationship between i) farm work; ii) a virtue in the work ethic, or being hard-working; iii) farmers' processes of identification or personhood, and iv) the physical appearance of the farm. These relationships are then reflected upon in terms of religious and capitalist ideology and consideration is given to how they come to bear on farmers' responses to environmental initiatives that alter the type of work they are expected to do and the physical appearance of the farm.

The anthropological literature has demonstrated the cultural rather than purely utilitarian economic value associated with work. Wallman (1979: 7) defined work as "the production, management or the conversion of the resources necessary to livelihood", and in doing so recognised that "the task of meeting obligations, securing identity, status and structure, are as fundamental to livelihood as bread and shelter". In this sense work can be considered not only as an economic investment, but as an 'identity investment', and broadens the concept of work to include the "processes through which cultural and ideological values are achieved and maintained" (Cohen, 1979: 264). Equally, cultural geographers have demonstrated the cultural significance of places for identification and personhood (e.g. Penrose, 1993). For farmers, however, there is a particularly strong and intimate relationship between their daily practices (work) and place; the place is the medium on and through which the work is performed (Wallman, 1979: 12). Consequently, personhood is extended to the landscape (Ravetz, 2001) as family biography and farm-as-place become inter-twined (Gray, 1998); and the materiality of the farm comes to serve as "an evolving testimony to the life's work of those who have left their mark on [it]" (Ingold, 1984: 116).

It is not only work but a particular *type* of work that has been shown to be important for farmers' personhoods and collective identities; *hard work*. The work ethic is something so commonly associated with farming that its significance often passes by unnoticed. Yet a relationship between agriculture and *hard work* as a virtue can be

¹ Personhood(s) is used broadly here to refer to a sense of self and worth that is not fixed but relatively and subjectively mediated through interaction in changing sociocultural settings.

found as far back as classical Greece and Rome (Duckworth, 1959; Schwimmer, 1979; Wolf, 1987; Rosivach, 2001) and as existing in various contemporary forms from Europe (Newby, 1977; Abrahams, 1991), the United States (Walter, 1995; Osthaus, 2004), Africa (Long, 1984; Davidson, 2009) and the Philippines (Borchgrevink, 2002). The importance of *hard work* for gaining moral respect within British farming communities has been demonstrated by Rapport (1993) and Cohen (1979). Cohen shows however, that rather than something that is measured quantitatively with moral worth ascribed in equal measure, the hardworking referent “expresses the proximity to a symbolic ideal rather than an actual record of effort” (1979: 250). The symbolism and virtuosity of the work ethic means that it is central to cultural conceptions of ‘the good farmer’ (Silvasti, 2003; Burton, 2004) and that it finds expression in the landscape. Since it is symbolic, however, it does not necessarily follow that the symbol must represent the quantity of work done, but instead somehow represents proximity to the community ideal of the good farmer. Hard work is thus often symbolised by a neat and tidy farm, the absence of weeds and the uniform and well-ordered appearance of boundaries and other physical features (McEachern, 1992; Egoz et al., 2001; Silvasti, 2003; Burton, 2004).² As something symbolic, however, I will go on to argue that the work ethic and its means of expression are open to interpretation and changes in meaning.

It is impossible to discuss the work ethic and religion without mention of Max Weber. To put it simply, Weber’s thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) is that the strong work ethic associated with puritanical Protestantism, was instrumental in the development of capitalism. In this guise hard work is valued as a means to creating wealth. This idea has been extended to agriculture by Paul Thompson (1995). Thompson argued that farmers were particularly suited to the work ethic and a belief in its religious foundation because, unlike wage labourers, they were not alienated from the product of their labour and industriousness was a very public virtue. For Thompson “good farming is associated with the production of more and larger” and “the linking of work and reward characterizes a work ethic that converts production into a sign of the farmers moral worth” (1995: 68).

Such an interpretation clearly links the value of work to its productive outputs. Burton (2004) has also made the link between the good farmer and production. However, since it might not always be straightforward to demonstrate the quantity of produce, good farming is instead symbolised by a farm that it is representative of the principles of productivism: in terms of its tidiness and uniformity and the carrying out of farm activities in pursuit of productivist ideals (such as hedgerow removal and farm expansion). This literature, and that that has demonstrated the work ethic as expressed through the physical appearance and tidiness of the farm have thus presented organic farming, or new forms of agri-environmental management as an interference with the symbolic acts (the type of farm work) and the aesthetics (the visual expression through the appearance of the farm) associated with the ideal of the good, hard-working farmer (Egoz et al., 2001; Silvasti, 2003). This interpretation is used to suggest that a fundamental reason that farmers do not want to engage in

² For livestock farmers it may also find expression in the appearance and quality of the stock (see Gray, 1999).

organic farming or agri-environmental schemes is because it contradicts their cultural ideal of the good farmer and lays challenge to their personhoods.

However, if the association between the work ethic and agriculture pre-dates both Christianity and capitalism, and if (as the anthropological literature has shown) work is valued for more than economic reasons, then can it be the case that the work ethic and farmers responses to their new role as environmental land managers proceed only on the basis of productivist interpretations of the work ethic? Why is it that hill farmers continue to farm despite falling financial returns? In the ethnographic material that follows I hope to show that there are a variety of different interpretations of the work ethic, in terms of what it means and how it is to be expressed that are evident amongst a community of hill farmers in the UK. In order to analyse and explain this variety I draw on rhetoric culture theory in anthropology (Carrithers, 2005; Strecker and Tyler, 2009). This approach recognises that cultural components (such as a value in the work ethic) are versatile and that alternative interpretations arise as groups and individuals deploy those components persuasively to pursue or defend a range of different interests.

3. Work, Hard Work and their Rhetorical Deployment

Personhood and the virtue of work

I begin my presentation of ethnographic material with two very small, subtle, but nevertheless telling examples of the virtue of the work ethic to farmers; its centrality to farming personhoods, and; its rhetorical potential as a persuasive device. In short, the importance of 'work' in both self-definition and how it gets deployed in argumentative strategies. Both examples present the responses of two elderly farmers whose work ethic was accidentally challenged by the naïve questions of the anthropologist.

Fred Atliss³ is 72 and although his neighbour told me he was too old to be farming Fred values the unremitting toil of hill farming which he stresses can only be sustained by treating it as a 365-days a year job and as a lifetime's work. In light of his age I asked Fred whether he was starting to "wind down" and he was quick to correct me "slowing down, not winding down ... slowing down's the word, you get slow". Reflecting on this I realised that Fred took this as an affront to his work ethic since 'winding down' could be associated with relaxation, leisure, and freeing up time for the 'good life'. It might also be taken to mean "scaling down", which would also cast judgement upon his farming achievement, or as having a more terminal outcome than simply slowing down which is an uncontrollable — and hence forgivable — consequence of the aging process.

In a similarly succinct but evocative example I was struck by the response of Ernest Mullaney, 81, when I asked him at the end of an interview if he felt he'd had a good life. In response to my question Ernest looked at me, contemplated for a moment and replied "well, I've had a hard life". He offered no more direct clues as to what he meant by this. Instead of beginning his response with "well" he could have used

³ All names are pseudonyms.

either “no” or “yes”. However, to say “no” would imply that he hadn’t enjoyed his life, which, through his nostalgic recollections, he had already let me know that he had. On the other hand, if he had replied “yes” to my question this could have implied that he’d had an easy life. And in line with Fred’s thinking an easy life would not be considered virtuous. By using “well” Ernest was able to imply synonymy between a good life and a hard life without implying that it had been easy.

Because the work ethic is considered virtuous and is tied to farmers’ conceptions of themselves – to their personhoods – laying challenge to that work ethic can be seen to bring about a response and demonstrates its rhetorical potential. I will later explore further examples of the work ethic’s rhetorical potential in terms of farmers’ responses to new environmental initiatives. First there is something else to draw out from the examples of Fred and Ernest, and that is that hard work and the suffering with which it is associated appear to be valued in their own right.

In my discussions with farmers I was offered many such examples of what seemed to be a genuine relationship between a hard life and a satisfying life. Arthur Livingstone for instance, recalled an anecdote of a particularly strenuous day’s work in the 1950s and concluded his story by reminding me that “they were good days”. As what might be an extension of what Carro-Ripalda (n.d.) has referred to as “making oneself through suffering” hard work is so integral to farming personhoods that it is presented as inseparable from happiness and its recollections are drenched in nostalgia. Cockcroft, writing about the Esk Valley in North Yorkshire in the 1970s illustrates this value in contrast with those who moved away from farming:

Certainly the Sunleys, the Welfords and their kind, those whose forbears did not flee the land for the loom, do not have their emotions mauled every fine weekend. They know a serenity which is special to those who stayed and suffered with the land. And a few fortunate people have reaped such a reward from this loyalty and their happiness is so complete, that it hurts the soul (Cockcroft, 1974: 121).

Good Farming, the Land and Management for the Environment

Time and time again in my discussions with farmers, labelling someone as hardworking was used to endorse their credentials as a good farmer. The following extract — from Tom and Lynn Richie — is a typical example and demonstrates that hard work’s reward is not always financial, that profit alone does not serve as a symbolic referent and that hard work finds expression in the land:

TR: The Burmans are good farmers

SE: What do you mean by good farmers?

TR: Puts the farm before everything else ... will stay home and look after the land before going out for dinner

LR: Real hard workers

TR: The best farms aren’t always the most profitable, we don’t do ourselves any favours if we don’t look after the land.

Here, the appearance and condition of the land, above all else, symbolises the synonymic good and hardworking farmer. Alternative approaches to farming, or environmental schemes that alter the appearance of the land, are thus presented as unable to uphold the aesthetic ideal of the good hardworking farmer. Ernest Mullaney indicted hobby farmers⁴ on such grounds; stating that they were unable to keep their farms tidy because farming is a lifetime's work. Similarly the Spencers (three brothers in their twenties) indicted conservation management with an example from an article they had read in the Farmers Weekly. The story told of a farmer creating a new wetland on his farm for the purpose of habitat creation:

There was a bloke in t'Farmers Weekly once and he was digging all these stone drains out to make his field a marshland and he said his forefather's 'd be turning in their graves, they'd be stood in a hole, digging all these drains in by hand, and he's there with a big digger ripping them all out to make it a bog, just so he can make more money by not doing anything, by having a mess.

In this example again, the aesthetic critique (making a 'mess') is tied to the work ethic ('by not doing anything') and is framed in opposition to its economic benefits ('just so he can make more money'). In addition, it is set apart from the honourable work of the ancestors who had industriously and enduringly dug the original drains by hand, only to have them ripped out in a matter of minutes by a mechanical excavator. This demonstrates that for work to be valued, and for it to achieve the moral approval of being 'hard work', it must also be part of a long-term process of engagement with the land; it must be tied to a process of betterment that is seen as long-term and steady, as part of a 'lifetimes work' with a central objective of passing on the farm to the next generation 'in better fettle' than when it was found (Emery, 2010).

These examples show that hard work is considered virtuous, that it is commonly upheld through recourse to the land but that it is often disassociated with any financial connotations. It may not be so straightforward, therefore, to suggest that good farming and the work ethic is merely an expression of productivity (Thompson, 1995). Instead, there is an associated value in a type of work that is enduring and persistent. As a symbolic ideal, however, it also holds true that hard work can be interpreted differently by different people and in different situations.

Alternative interpretations and uses of the work ethic

In spite of the above examples, it would be incorrect to suggest that earning a living is not important, or to suggest that being able to earn a living is not considered constitutive of the good farmer. Indeed, as Fred Atliss put it, there is a dual imperative on the farmer to keep the farm 'in good heart' and to produce a product that meets the requirements of the market. Clive Fisk demonstrated that this can cause something of a dilemma in terms of how one spends one's time. Symbolically important work such as tidying and attending to the appearance of one's stock, Clive told me, has to be balanced with work that is aimed at achieving efficiency and hence the profitability of the farming operation. For, as he told me, 'you don't get paid for tidying the farm do you?' Again therefore, there is evidence that work considered an

⁴ Hobby farmers are those that farm as a lifestyle choice and do not farm for a living. They are typically considered to be wealthy incomers to the area.

‘identity investment’ does not correlate to productive economic output. In fact, it might well stand in direct opposition to it. This distinction might be not so straightforward however, because the reputation of being a good farmer achieved through symbolic work on the appearance of the farm can lead to a greater price being achieved at market. This would be particularly the case when one is selling livestock to another farmer, but where livestock is being sold for slaughter its quality is more likely to be judged on its own merits (size, leanness) (see Gray 1999).

We saw in the previous section that the appearance of the farm and the work ethic can be used to indict alternative systems of farming (especially environmental approaches). However, I want to elaborate an example between two sets of neighbours – the Spuhlers and the Colleys – which demonstrates the versatility of the work ethic as a value, and how it can be alternatively interpreted and expressed. Whereas the Colleys were one of the few farms that I visited that had not joined any of the agri-environmental schemes on offer, their neighbours the Spuhlers had joined the highest tier agri-environment scheme and were also farming organically. In spite of this, both used the work ethic and symbols expressing it to cast aspersions against one another. This was only possible on account of the utility of the work ethic to be interpreted differently.

The Colleys criticise the appearance of the Spuhlers’ farm by referring to what they do as ‘growing a field full of thistles’ (or ‘a Jungle’ as another neighbour put it). Furthermore, they link this criticism to the work ethic (or lack thereof) by complaining that the Spuhlers probably earn more than they do ‘for doing nothing’, for leaving the fields to grow wild and taking payments from the agri-environment scheme. The Spuhlers, on the other hand, do not buy-into the association between work and suffering. Mr Spuhler, a recent incomer, said that he could not understand why the local farmers trudge about in the wet and the cold to earn just a few thousand pounds a year. He said the other farmers probably ‘think we play at it [farming]’ but because they don’t have all the specialist equipment ‘we probably work a lot harder than they do’. He was not particularly interested in farming, but had bought the place for his wife, and was investing his time and money on renovating the farmhouse into four luxury holiday apartments. He had no long term plans to stay on the farm, but planned to sell it on for a large profit, to buy another house in a ‘nice part of the country’ and a yacht to sail around the world on. Aesthetically, he preferred the appearance of buttercups and hayfields as opposed to the blue-green fields of his neighbours.⁵ And he cast aspersions against the success of his neighbours not in terms of the visual appearance of the land, but on account of their decrepit machinery; describing their farm as ‘a wreck’.

Although Mr Spuhler might not be casting aspersions on whether the Colleys are good or bad farmers, his pointing to the appearance of the machinery as opposed to the appearance of the land suggests that he judges success in terms of wealth, rather than the keeping of the land in good condition. So, the Colleys think that Mr Spuhler can’t be working hard because it is not expressed in the appearance of the land; he’s getting paid for doing nothing, for growing a "jungle". Alan Spuhler, on the other hand, suggests that he works a lot harder than other farmers (though he doesn’t directly point to his neighbours) and is able to demonstrate this by the amount of

⁵ Heavily fertilised pasture is often said to take on a bluish hue.

money he is likely to make on the sale of the farm once the renovations have been completed. Capital assets (such as property, machines, yachts), then are the signs of *work's reward*, of wealth, whereas the land is just the sign of work. For one party capital assets are demonstrative of the *outcome* of work, while for the other party the land is demonstrative of the *process* of work.

This example shows that the work ethic is used by both parties to indict one another, which represents its rhetorical utility in trying to convince their audience (on these occasions the anthropologist posing the questions) that their approach was best. I now want to briefly present three additional examples of how farmers employ the work ethic rhetorically in varied and, at first glance, counter-intuitive or contradictory ways. The reason for the different deployments, I suggest, is because rhetoric needs to be tailored to its situation, the audience at which it is targeted and the particular argument being pursued at any one moment in time (Emery, 2010; Emery et al., 2013). The work ethic nevertheless remains effective on account of its morally virtuous associations.

i. Using hard work negatively

Given that hard work is upheld as virtuous it is quite rare amongst farmers for it to be referred to with negative connotations. It would be quite unexpected, for instance, for a farmer to say 'I'm not doing that it's too much like hard work'. This is because if hard work is virtuous, then this is precisely the sort of activity that they should want to engage in. Re-instating flocks of sheep on the open moorland⁶ was one activity in which the farmers did refer to the work associated with it in a negative light. Re-instating grazing sheep on the moors was being encouraged by conservation bodies and the government since the grazing by sheep is essential to maintaining the protected wildlife habitat on the moors. Tom Hasling had previously kept sheep on the moor but said the conservation bodies would have to pay him a lot of money to re-instate them. Similarly his neighbour Graham Wilson stated that it's a major operation and he doesn't want to 'tramp about on the moor' as he gets older.

The reason for deploying the work ethic negatively, I suggest, is because their audience has changed: they are not demonstrating the value of their work to other farmers, who judge them on the appearance of their farm, but to policy-makers with the financial means available to increase the support available for upland farmers. Because this different audience, one that has the power to affect the farmers' situation, does not uphold the same moral value (or does not uphold it through the same means of expression), the farmer must translate his own moral value in work into an economic one. In such a guise it is acceptable to talk of work negatively, because work's only reward is monetary and not moral. Or, it could be that monetary success and reward is deemed to be morally endorsed but it is endorsed through the symbols of wealth, rather than the symbols of the landscape.

ii. Environmental payments as 'money for old rope'

When I asked farmers about the payments they received as part of agri-environment schemes I was quite surprised that many of them said it did not require them to do

⁶ Many were lost to the culls of the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 and never re-instated.

anything differently to what they had already been doing, and that it was ‘money for old rope’. I wondered why they did not take the opportunity to uphold the value of the work (I certainly knew that many of them didn’t think that the payments amounted to much) they did as part of these schemes. Surely they would want to demonstrate to the UK or European taxpayer (the ultimate source of the subsidy payments) that their money was being well-spent. Instead of downplaying the value of their work, however, I suggest this strategy is aimed at upholding it. Farmers used this opportunity to uphold the value of their work symbolically, as the creator of all that is good in the first place; that it is their work that created the valued landscape that the policy-makers want to protect and they don’t need to justify their work, in this instance, in terms of monetary reward (in contrast to the example above). The situation, and the strategy, has changed. In this instance the farmers want to take the opportunity to make an indictment on the policy itself, to demonstrate that the policy is ineffectual and to make one of the commonest arguments of all: that farmers are in the best position to look after the environment as demonstrated by the results of their previous (unpaid) landscape management.

iii. Hard work and environmental benefits go hand in glove

In contrast to the arguments made between different farmers about the relative merits of ‘conventional’ vis-à-vis ‘organic’ or environmental approaches to farming, there was one arena where environmental aesthetics were presented as a sign of hard work, rather than as a sign of laziness. That was in the use of the work ethic in the marketing of farm produce. During my fieldwork a campaign was launched to market locally reared lamb from the moors. This marketing was based on the environmental benefits to the landscape that the purchaser would be supporting, and also deployed the work ethic to uphold the value of the farmer in maintaining the valued moorland environment.

The argument is that losing the animals means losing much more. Without grazing of the hills, walkers and hunters would be fighting through bramble, blackthorn and bracken. It has already happened on some Lakeland fells.

Without the need to keep livestock from wandering, there would be no incentive to keep up the stone barns and walls which complete the pattern on the picture postcards.

The whole of our "traditional" landscape, we are reminded, has been created over the past 900 years, since Cistercian monks demonstrated what could be achieved with organised hard work (Benfield, 2007: *The Yorkshire Post*).

The initiative has been given strong support by the *Yorkshire Post* through its *Save Our Uplands* campaign. Interestingly, the campaign ties environmental/landscape values with values in hardship and suffering for particular rhetorical effect. Articles under headings such as *Beauty and Hardship go Hand in Hand up on the Moors* and *Hidden Hardships of Heartbeat Country’s Farmers* (Hickling, 2008a; 2008b) infer an inherent value amongst the readership of the *Yorkshire Post* in both environmental protection and the *hard work* and struggles of the upland farmer. There are two implications of this. The first is that work, in this instance, seems to be valued and expressed in relation to the landscape. The second implication is that this suggests that the *work ethic* is still valued as important to a broader general public compared to

a more economic value in work that is directed towards the policy-makers. The reason, again, is that the audience has changed. So whilst the environmental and landscape values of farmers' work are aimed at the public, arguments made using the economic value of farmers' work are directed at the policy-makers: at those with the direct ability to control farm support. This suggests that the work ethic is of wider societal appeal (one only has to listen to a politician talking about the need to deliver policies that help 'hardworking families'), and that farming and farmed landscapes remain associative with those values (for another example see Hinrichs, 1996).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This Chapter has demonstrated the importance of the work ethic for farmers' personhoods and how that work ethic is upheld through particular practices and farmland aesthetics. A Weberian interpretation of this work ethic has been linked to outputs that provide income; it links the value in hard work squarely to productive capacity (Thompson, 1995). This interpretation has been used to argue that organic farming, or new agri-environmental schemes challenge the work ethic of the farmer because they affect the practices (the type of work undertaken) and their means of expression (the physical appearance of the farm) that are demonstrative of a productivist conception of the work ethic (Egoz et al., 2001; Silvasti, 2003; Burton, 2004). In this Chapter I have agreed that farming personhoods are challenged by alternative approaches to farming that alter both the practices and the farmland aesthetics that farmers subscribe to. The ethnographic material presented, however, has demonstrated that hard work is valued not only in terms of its economic and productive symbolism but is interpreted and expressed in a plurality of ways. Such alternatives, moreover, are often expressed in opposition to, rather than in support of, a financially motivated conception of the work ethic. Hence, it was shown that making the most money was not necessarily demonstrative of the good hardworking farmer, and that those farmers who follow the environmental route are not castigated because they are shunning productivist ideals but because, on the contrary, they are driven by financial motives. There is certainly an aesthetic associated with the work ethic, often expressed through the notion of the 'tidy farm'. However, it is important to point out that this is not a fixed interpretation and that it is as much about demonstrating the *process* of work as the *outputs* of work that is important. Thus, a dynamic and changing landscape is illustrative of the work ethic (Silvasti, 2003; Emery, 2010) and the emphasis is placed on being engaged in the activities that seek to better the farm over the long term and to leave it to the next generation in improved condition (Emery, 2010).

Those that have equated the work ethic to productivism have suggested that environmental schemes that are equally productive (focussed on the production of environmental outputs and accordingly weighted payments) may appeal more to farmers and lead to more effectual behaviour change (Burton et al., 2008). This is a sensible suggestion since farmers often complain that 'you can't see the benefits' of agri-environment schemes (Emery and Franks, 2012). However, if we accept that the work ethic, and farmers' cultural values more broadly, are influenced by more than productivism (see also Davidson, 2009) then we need to consider how a more complex set of values interacts with policy incentives and does or does not influence changes in behaviour. If work is valued as a process rather than in terms of its outputs, for instance, concentrating on types of activities required, rather than how their success is monitored might increase the acceptability of agri-environment schemes. This interpretation thus adds support to the need for caution in extending the use of results-based approaches to the management of the farmed environment (Burton and Schwarz, 2013) and to the use of target-based incentives in wider organisational settings.

The survival of a plurality of interpretations of the work ethic, despite the ingress of capitalist ideology, has been explained through recourse to rhetoric culture theory; whereby the variety of interpretations represents i) their continued salience to the

interests and argumentative strategies of groups and individuals as they seek to persuade others through social interaction, and; ii) the need to tailor those argumentative strategies to the changing situations in which interaction occurs (Emery, 2010; Emery et al., 2013). This helps us to understand the sometimes counter-intuitive and contradictory ways that values can get used in different argumentative strategies, but also the processes through which values are adapted to shifting external conditions. The chapter has emphasised that work is not just a practice creating value, but is itself a valued practice. Examining how and why it is valued, its diversity, and the means by which it is expressed, can help us to understand workplace behaviours and how, why and whether they change as a consequence of shifting social, economic, political and environmental conditions.

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