

Towards an Eco-Economy? Rural Development and Farm Tourism in Devon (UK)

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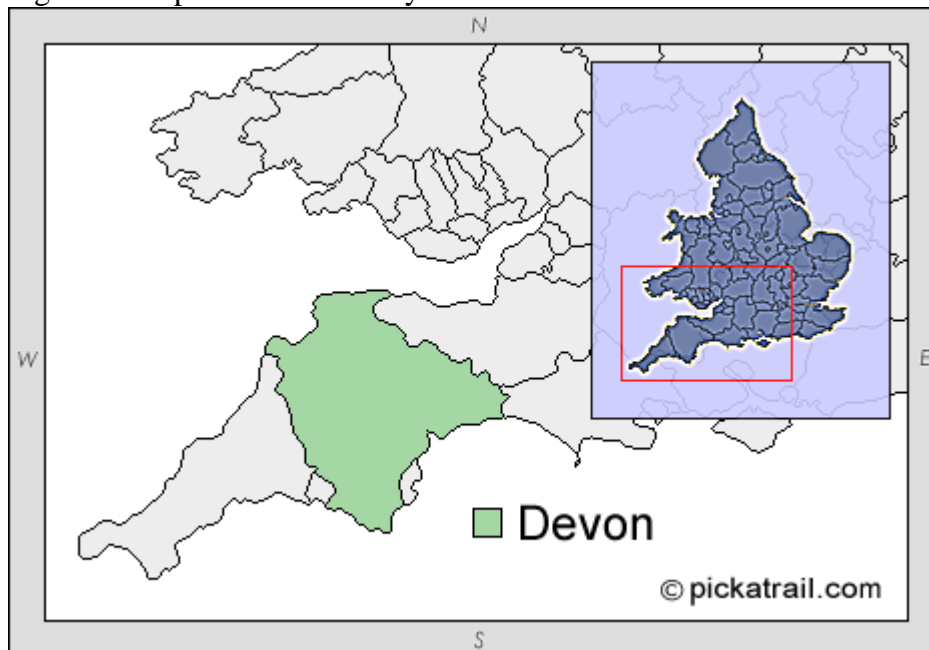
1. Introduction

Description of the county

The County of Devon is located in the South West region (see Figure 1), on the divide between the prosperous south of England and the poorer western periphery (i.e. Cornwall and North and West Devon) (Murdoch et al 2003: 97). It is today the UK's leading county in alternative food networks and green/farm tourism.

The first Etude report on Devon was an extensive case-study of the County's rural development trajectory (Kanemasu et al, 2008). Faced with physical peripherality, and still reeling from the impact of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease (henceforth FMD) crisis, Devon has chosen the path of “deepening” activity (Ploeg *et al.*, 2002) – such as organic farming, high quality food production and the creation of short food supply chains – as well as “broadening” activity (Ibid.) – such as sustainable/farm tourism, nature and landscape management, and leisure and recreation. Taken together, these developments signify that Devon is following a multifunctional course of rural development with a primary emphasis on sustainable reconfiguration of rural resources (Kanemasu et al, 2008).

Figure 1. Map of Devon County



Agriculture plays a central role in rural Devon, where 14.4% of the population is employed in the sector, compared to the EU average of 5.3% (Community Council for Devon 2006/2007). Rural areas contribute significantly to the regional economy. As one of the respondents of the present study points out: “*Until the FMS, until the rural areas were closed down it wasn't clear how much income the countryside brought in. It was a big eye-opener that the countryside earned an enormous amount of money. No one ever quantified it before*”.

Devon's steep valleys and rolling hills make it generally less suitable for intensive agriculture. The high quality of the natural environment that Devon enjoys today –

evidenced by a series of landscape conservation designations such as the North Devon Biosphere Reserve, two World Heritage Sites, five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, two National Parks (Dartmoor and Exmoor) and 210 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, as well as the UK's highest concentration of hedgerows –provides a particularly high level of resident satisfaction, local distinctiveness and a sense of place, as well as valuable assets for rural tourism and leisure/recreational sectors (see Figure 2 and 3).

Figure 2 North Devon

Figure 3: Devonshire banks in south Devon

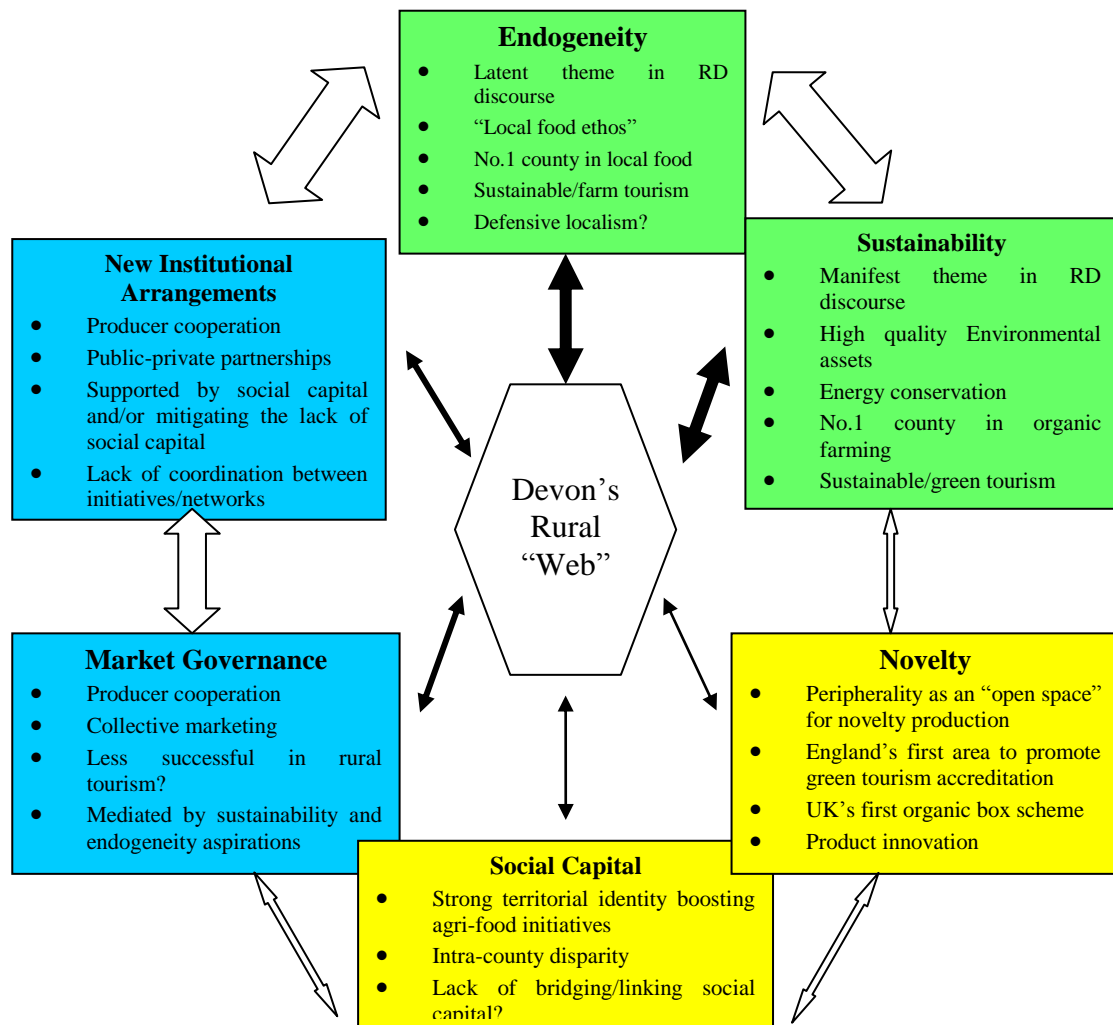


Summary of the first Etude case-study report

Devon's rural development trajectory was analysed in the first Etude case-study report by using the theoretical model of 'the rural web' (Van der Ploeg and Marsden, 2008). The concept of the web examines the interrelations, exchanges and positive mutual externalities that shape the relative attractiveness and competitiveness of rural spaces. Theoretically it captures the interrelations between six conceptual domains: endogeneity, novelty, production, social capital, market governance, new institutional arrangements and sustainability. In this model, sustainability is territorially grounded and rural development is viewed as a dynamic web of linkages that responds to the 'squeeze' on rural economics and reshapes the rural whilst enlarging competitiveness and enhancing the quality of life.

The conclusion from the first study was that the unfolding of this development trajectory has been driven by two particular dimensions of rural development, *endogeneity* and *sustainability*, as well as a possible synergy between them (see Figure 4). The rise of sustainable food culture and green/farm tourism in Devon is indicative of scope for linking local economic growth, territorial resource mobilisation and valorisation, and sociocultural and socioenvironmental sustainability – which is expressed in the farming community as increasingly multifunctional farms with economic, sociocultural and socioenvironmental roles and functions not only for individual farm households but also for the rural community and society as a whole. In other words, Devon's possible emergence as a "new rural area" with renewed linkages with the wider region and society is concomitant to the articulation of endogenous development and sustainability in the context of multifunctionality (Kanemasu et al. 2008).

Figure 4. The rural web in Devon (Kanemasu et al, 2008)



The research showed that *new institutional arrangements* play a key role in Devon. Most rural development initiatives involve a degree of vertical/horizontal networking and necessarily rely on the creation of new institutional constellations to fulfil coordination needs and requirements. Producer groups (most evidently in the agri-food sector) and public-private partnerships have flourished in Devon and have played a supplementary yet significant role of enhancing the synergy between the key domains by translating sustainability/endogeneity aims and visions into concrete and coordinated actions.

Social capital similarly enhances positive domain interrelations. Devon enjoys a strong territorial identity, a relatively high level of civic participation and a quality of life favourably perceived by its residents (Community Council for Devon 2007; DCC 2004, 2007).

Devon's recent rural development history also indicates some qualitative change in the domain of *market governance*. Aspirations for market/employment opportunity creation have always been a key development driver closely associated with the

endogenous development agenda; yet this domain, like that of endogenous development, appears to be increasingly mediated by a broader notion of sustainability. In this context rural development is not only about pursuing narrowly economic benefits but about doing so in a manner that reconstructs and revalorises agriculture and the countryside as well as their interrelationship with wider society.

Finally, the relevance of the domain of *novelty* is in the shaping of Devon's rural development context. The county's major development constraint, its physical and economic peripherality, has paradoxically provided an "open space" for the experimentation of innovative ideas and practices such as GTBS accreditation and the organic vegetable box scheme in the early 1990s. These seeds of novelty were further nurtured by the post-FMD shift in the county's rural development discourse, culminating in Devon's pioneering status in sustainable tourism and local/organic food.

Goals of the follow-up research

The present study builds upon on the findings of the first Etude case study report. The goal of this follow-up research is four-folded:

First we intend to *adapt* the theoretical model of the rural web, especially by examining the influence of wider socio-economical conditions and trends on the unfolding of the rural web as well as the role of leadership nested in social capital (Section 2.2).

Second, we propose to *widen* the research by locating Devon's development trends and experiences within the context of regional development discourses. We will refer to the "contested countryside" thesis and the tension between post-productive environmentalism and agrarian-centred endogenous development (Section 3.1); the difference between the bio- and eco-economy (Section 3.2) and the intertwinement between regional story-lines and branding strategies (Section 3.3).

Third, we are going to *update* the results of the previous study by tracing the recent developments in the last three years and how these may have affected Devon's rural web. We will describe the domains of the rural web and show how links between them may have been weakened or strengthened in the recent years. This section involves an in-depth analysis of one initiative in Devon, Devon Farms, a farm tourism marketing group (Section 5). We will also attempt to relate this initiative to the issues of entrepreneurial co-operation and local policy in Devon (Section 4).

Finally, our intention is to *deepen* our insights by focusing on the specific role of the domain of social capital and leadership in regional networks. The case of Devon Farms is particularly illustrative in this regard (Sections 5.2 and 5.3). We will conclude our study with recommendations and reference images to suggest how new product-market combinations related to farm tourism may be developed in Devon in the future (Section 5.10).

2. Problem analysis and framework

2.1 Problem analysis

Identification of rural development strategies: eco-economy vs. bio-economy

Further analysis following the initial research (see Marsden 2010) has indicated that an important outcome of the unfolding of rural webs is the emergence of a rural and regional “eco-economy,” defined as: “[t]he effective social management and reproduction of ecological resources (as combinations of natural, social, economic and territorial capital) in ways designed to mesh with and enhance the local and regional eco-system rather than disrupting and destroying it” (Kitchen and Marsden 2009: 294). This is distinguished from what is referred to in some policy and academic circles as a “bio-economy” (see Marsden 2010; Juma and Konde 2001; Anex 2004; Wang 2004; Mol 2007, McMichael 2009). Central to a bio-economy is the (largely corporate-controlled) production of bio-mass and bio-fuels, along with other related strands (e.g. bio-technology, genomics, chemical engineering, enzyme technology). A bio-economy is intricately linked with industrial ecology and operates at global corporate economic levels, in contrast to local and regional value adding phenomena characteristic of an eco-economy.

In our initial study, we observed that one of the key outcomes of the unfolding of the web in Devon was likely to be its successful transition to a *new rural area*, “where agriculture is developing along the lines of multi-functionality, is increasingly intertwined with the regional economy and society and thus contributes to regional qualities”. Whilst the 2001 FMD prompted a sense of urgency to develop new rural products and services a decade ago, currently, the recession, the election and the change in the government are amongst the key influencing factors in Devon’s rural development trajectory. One of our objectives in the present study is to expand on the earlier analysis and achieve a greater understanding of the dynamics and outcomes of the unfolding of the web. We intend to do this by introducing to our analysis the concept of “eco-/bio-economy.” Are the outcomes of the unfolding of the web implicated in any way in the development of an eco- or bio-economy? In other words: *Can we witness the emergence of eco-economical clusters in Devon?*

Regional branding and story-lines

In the years following the FMD crisis, which brought the former development strategy under pressure, rural Devon has become increasingly characterised by initiatives such as renewable energy promotion, nature and landscape conservation, leisure/recreational services and equine tourism. In view of several regional economic challenges such as a struggling agricultural sector and low regional earnings (which are 19% below the national average), Devon has shifted its development direction towards alternative food networks and green/farm tourism, which link endogeneity with sustainability. In addition, by developing a branding strategy Devon has sought to market itself as an important holiday destination especially for visitors from the UK. Whilst the emerging trajectory may redefine the countryside as a multifunctional space for both production (agrarian-centres endogeneity) and consumption (aesthetic and socioenvironmental sustainability), will this lead to a coherent ‘story-line’ for Devon, an overarching agenda for the future development of the area? In other words, the key question is: *Which factors constrain or stimulate a regional story-line and the economic potential of the region?*

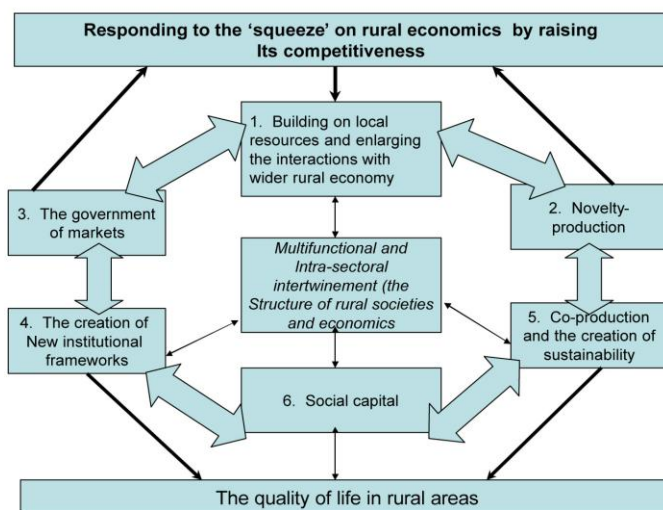
Social capital and leadership

New institutional arrangements, in the form of public-private partnerships/networking grounded in (bonding) social capital (e.g. civic participation), have played a key role in Devon. Social capital often takes the form of cooperation between entrepreneurs and is nested in the wider domains of the web and in the role of leadership therein. In the former Etude report the role of individual leadership was not fully explored. Our hypothesis in the present study is that in Devon, leadership contributes to the cultivation and mobilisation of bonding and linking social capital (as is the case in Devon Farms); and that private leadership rooted in social capital plays an important role in Devon's wider development trajectory, establishing rural-urban links and contributing to an eco-economical development pathway. We will explore this by analysing the role of leadership in Devon Farms, a farm tourism marketing initiative. The key question here is: *What is the role and dynamics of leadership in Devon Farms?*

2.2 Framework

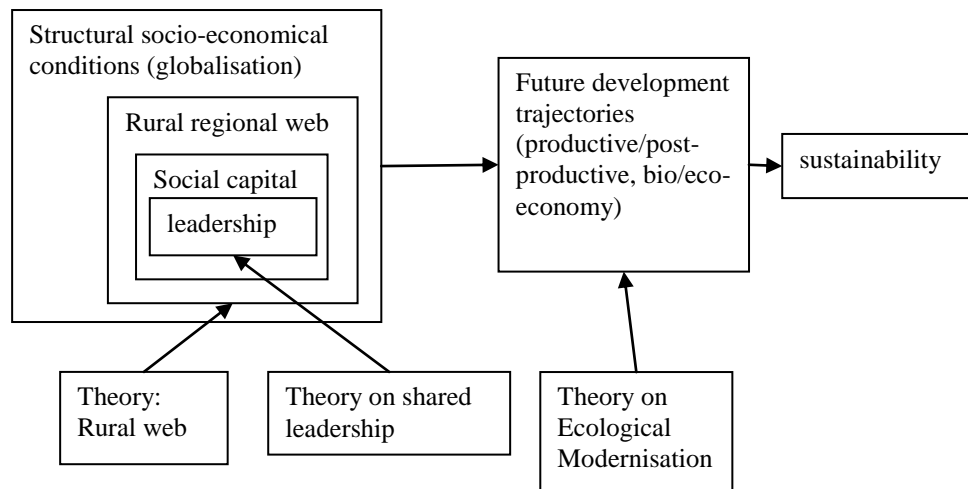
This study employs the theory of the rural web as a primary analytical schema (see Figure 5). *'Webs are not seamless constellations but 'characterized by multiple frictions, contradictions, delicate interfaces and sometimes overt, sometimes covert, social struggles'*. (Van der Ploeg and Marsden, 2008: 226). The theory of the rural web is also informed by a number of other interrelated rural/regional development theories and concepts (e.g. ecological modernisation, productivism/post-productivism). But amongst them, we make particular use of the concepts of eco- and bio-economy discussed above for further refinement of the rural web theory. Figure 6 shows how these conceptual tools are drawn upon to form an analytical framework for the study.

Figure 5. The rural web



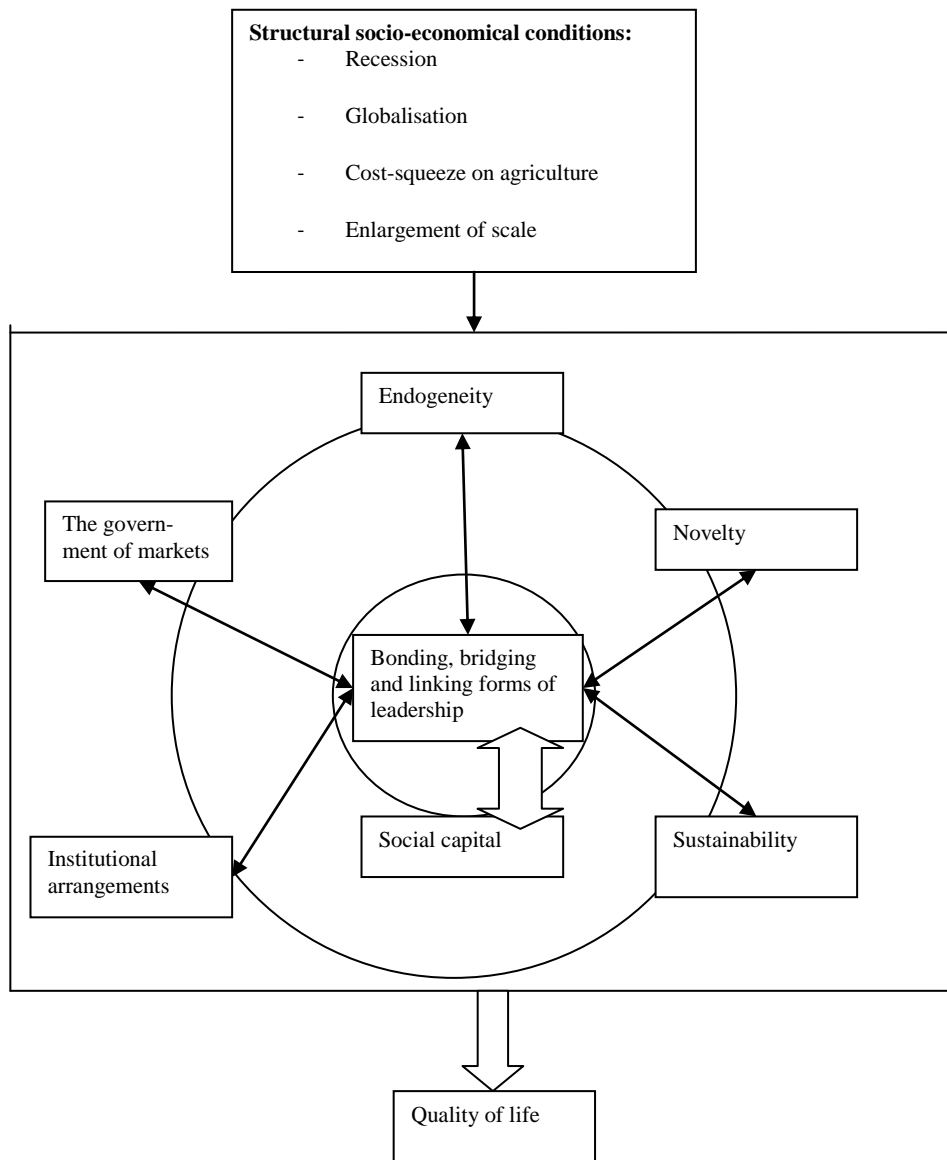
(Source: Van der Ploeg and Marsden 2008)

Figure 6. Analytical framework



In this report we use an adapted version of the Etude model of ‘the rural web’ in order to highlight the role of social capital and the place of leadership therein. We have placed these domains in the middle (based on Horlings and Marsden, 2010) nested in the other domains of rural development. The updated model also captures the structural socio-economical conditions that influence rural development (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. An adapted model of ‘the rural web’.



Leadership in regional development entails working in networks, collaborating and crossing boundaries of organisations, which can be described as ‘shared leadership’ (Sotarauta, 2002; 2005). Leadership has an individual and collective dimension, as well as an inner and outer dimension. It is about personal qualities and inner motivations (the ‘X-factor’); it involves behavior in the outer world aimed at creating a space for action (‘vital space’); it is based on shared values and working in networks (‘shared leadership’); and finally, it necessitates strategies to cope with institutional contexts, needs and circumstances (‘bricolage’) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. The dimensions of leadership in rural, regional development (Horlings and Padt, 2009; Horlings 2010).

	Inner World	Outer World
Individual	<p>‘The X-factor’</p> <p>Personal qualities and skills Value-oriented motivation and passion for sustainable development</p>	<p>‘Vital space’</p> <p>Stimulating favorable behaviour towards sustainable development anticipating the governance context (hierarchy, competition, self-governance, autonomy)</p>
Collective	<p>‘Shared leadership’</p> <p>Working across organizational boundaries and beyond ego-driven goals. Leadership tasks include awareness raising, mobilization, framing, coordination, and visioning between visions</p>	<p>‘Bricolage’</p> <p>Connecting networks and arrangements to cope with new challenges affecting sustainable development (e.g. metropolitan landscapes, new functions, climate change)</p>

2.3 Methodology

In this study, semi-structured interviews with a total of 12 key development actors (see Figure 9) were undertaken in May 2010. Our methodological approach is a qualitative one that pursues an in-depth understanding of development processes rather than statistical inferences and measurements. Our goal is not to achieve a statistically accurate description or explanation of development processes in Devon but to arrive at a greater understanding of their complexities. An important part of this pursuit is an ongoing refinement of theoretical devices such as that of the rural web. Quantitative methods such as a questionnaire survey were deemed unsuitable for these purposes. This however does not preclude the potential benefit of more statistically oriented approaches in future research.

In the interviews, an interview guide was employed as a loose format to facilitate discussions, but with a considerable amount of freedom for the interviewees / interviewers to digress to capture new insights, issues and themes. All of the interviews were tape-recorded with the interviewees’ permission and later transcribed. A thematic approach was adopted in the analysis of the interview data with a focus on the key research questions identified above. To ensure accurate representation of the participants’ views and accounts, a form of “member check” (Guba and Lincoln 1981; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Lather 1991) was carried out, whereby the participants were invited to comment on, and correct if necessary, an earlier draft of this report.

Figure 9. List of interviewees

Name	Function
Robin Head	Press Officer, Devon Farms Harton Farm Oakford Tiverton
Jeremy Samsom	Relatively new “incomer” member Widmouth Farm Cottages Watermouth, Ilfracombe
Jackie Payne (and her husband).	Former chairperson, Devon Farms Huxtable Farm, West Buckland, Barnstaple
Linda Harvey	One of the founding members of Devon Farms Frost Farmhouse, Hennock, Nr Bovey Tracey
Heather Hillman and Sarah Woollacott	Devon County Council
Bridget Cole	Long-term member Greenwell Farm near Meavy, Yelverton
Mavis Bickle	Long-term member Knole Farm, Bridestowe, Okehampton
Gillian Gillbard	Long-term member Hele Barton Black Dog, Crediton
Maggie Todd	Long-term member, originally an ‘incomer,’ former chairperson Northleigh, Colyton
Sheila Rowland	Present Chairperson, Devon Farms Long-term members from old Devon farming families Traine Farm Cottages, Wembury, Plymouth
Richard Barker	Relatively new “incomer” member who runs Devon Farm’s IT training Fowlescombe Farm, Ugborough, Ivybridge

3. Rural strategies

3.1 The contested countryside?

Murdoch et al (2003) have previously described Devon as a ‘contested countryside’, where developmental and environmental networks come into conflict around rural economic development issues. The ‘contested countryside’ is located in areas where growing numbers of middle-class activists confront a well-entrenched set of developmental actors (who are still well represented in local political structures), thereby giving rise to increased conflict around land uses (Marsden et al, 1993). In Devon, the popularity of the county as a holiday destination is matched by its attractiveness to people moving from elsewhere in the UK. People move to Devon in order to live in a ‘green and pleasant environment and to enjoy a more rural pace of life (Murdoch et al, 2003: 99). As Murdoch et al described, the scale of population growth, economic re-structuring and the associated development pressures have all led to environmental issues becoming prominent in local politics. The combination of an attractive landscape, important environmental characteristics, and in-migration have stimulated the formation of local amenity groups, and the region has been an important location for the growth of environmentalism nationally within the UK. By and large, the carriers of environmental conventions have been ‘incomers’. In bringing the environmental repertoire into the region’s politics they have often found themselves challenging local interests. Many farmers now face neighbours –often retired migrants or well-to-do professional or business people with quite different perceptions of the function of rural areas (Murdoch et al, 2003, p.99-100).

This can potentially create a tension between agri-ruralist and post-productive views on Devon’s countryside. In the *agri-ruralist discourse* agricultural production is connected by the social dimensions in the context of family businesses. Farmers are considered to be the stewards of valuable agricultural landscapes and traditional production values. New agricultural products and services (farm tourism, nature management, care-farming) and multifunctional land-use fit within this discourse. The *post-productivist* model is based on the belief that the agricultural sector (in developed economies) is small and decreasing in economic relevance. The rural landscape becomes ‘a consumption good’ for the urban population, marginalising agriculture in the process (Hermans et al, 2009).

In this follow-up research we conducted only a limited number of interviews, mainly with farmers, but it is still possible to detect some tension between farmers and environmental & nature organisations. Nature organisations stimulate extensive agriculture, which has impacted on local vegetation, according to the criticism of some respondents: *“On the moors there is a lot of tension, because Natural England, they irritate the hell out of me, have very much tried to preserve [natural and environmental resources], without understanding why they exist here or how they would be preserved. They have stopped farmers grazing many animals, which has brought back a lot of scrub and has ruined grazing. Extension has been put forward to a point where it isn’t worth grazing any more. It hasn’t been understood that these are living landscapes. That impacts also on tourism, because you can’t so easily go on walks because it is full of brambles.”*

Tension also rose in the spring of 2010 during a debate over the TB infection among cattle. The question of whether badgers should be culled to stop the TB spread attracted much attention in the UK, as well as in Devon: *“And things like badgers. People think they are cuddly toy stuff things. But actually they smell awful and have such sharp teeth, and kill our livestock. They are running the farming industry at the moment. They quarantine the farm but forget that these badgers wander around from farm to farm. I don’t know what the answer is but doing nothing isn’t the answer. Doing nothing is not an answer. Slaughtering cows is not sorting it”*.

Furthermore, there is potential tension between incomers who start small-holdings and commercial and traditional farmers over land use. “These new residents will view the countryside through an aesthetic lens and will value it as a social and environmental good, one that should be maintained in an unspoilt fashion for future generations” (Murdoch et al, 2003: 108). However, as discussed more closely in Section 5, differences of opinion are rather successfully resolved by Devon Farms. Furthermore, our follow-up research suggests that traditional farmers may be increasingly attracted to agri-environmental schemes, which could possibly mitigate the tension between the two discourses. In addition, as the following quote shows, there has been a shift in the last decades from modernisation and rationalisation towards a more multi-functional approach: *“We created a new orchard, looked at the maps of 1880. Where there was small woodland, we cleared it and fenced it off, and replanted it (with 900 trees) and fenced some fields that have gone amalgamated and we have gone back to where they were in 1880 and put on fences. But it’s odd that we took out hedges before. Why did we do it? It was government-led so maybe we ought to have farmed a bit more religiously if you see what I mean. We used our intuition to farm with nature, but I think that’s also to do with age. What you do in your twenties you don’t do when you are in your fifties or sixties. [Interviewer: So you wouldn’t do it again?] No, I don’t think so. If you look back, you can’t put it back, once it is gone, it’s gone. We have all become aware of history and environment and all that sorts of things and think: look what we have lost”*.

In short, coalition-building and current subsidy schemes have the potential to stimulate an alignment of the aesthetic and environmental concerns held by new rural residents and the economical and social aspirations of traditional rural residents. In the long run this may overcome the long-standing contestation between agri-ruralism and post-productivism.

3.2 The bio- and eco-economy

As noted earlier, one of the key questions of this follow-up research is whether Devon’s rural development trajectory can be linked to an eco-economic paradigm. The eco-economic paradigm may be seen as an essentially socio-spatial understanding of both production and consumption spheres consisting of complex networks or ‘webs’ of new viable businesses and economic activities. These activities utilise varied and differentiated forms of environmental resources in more sustainable ways, which, rather than resulting in a net depletion of resources, provide cumulative net benefits that add value to the environment. While the bio-economic paradigm operates at more global, corporate economic levels, the eco-economical paradigm

potentially re-aligns production-consumption chains and captures local and regional value between rural and urban spaces (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009; Horlings et al, 2010).

To answer this question, we need to have a closer look at agriculture as the main land user in Devon. Agriculture is still a dominant sector in the county, with a workforce of approximately 25,000 and 11,000 farm holdings¹. Pastoral livestock farming (i.e. dairy, beef and sheep) dominates the landscape. Most of the farms are owner-occupied and rely wholly or mostly on family labour. Small-scale pastoral farming contributes to the distinctiveness and diversity of the Devon landscape. Much of the land has low fertility and can only support extensive grazing, but this in turn may help to maintain important habitats and wildlife. The pastoral character of the county, along with its coastal attractions and seaside, lies at the heart of Devon's touristic appeal (Murdoch et al, 2003: 98).

Devon was once the third most populated county in Britain but nineteenth-century urban-industrialisation largely passed it. Today Devon remains a strong livestock area, with almost three quarters of the holdings being cattle and sheep, or dairying. The size distribution of the county's holdings follows much in line with the regional and national picture, with an increase in the mid range units, and a decline in the smallest ones, whilst there is no change in the percentage of large holdings. The distribution of farm types within the districts also reflects the diversity of the farming environments of Devon. West Devon is dominated by lowland and LFA (cattle and sheep) and sheep farms, the LFA farms being absent from the eastern districts. Horticulture plays a more important role in the southern districts and those closer to the concentrations of population. Climatic and soil conditions favour arable systems in the same area. The cropping in the county has changed little over the last four years. Cereal areas are continuing to fall as the economies of scale favour the producers in the eastern counties, and the difficulties and costs of on-farm storage for farm assurance purposes discourage small-scale production. However, with a large number of farmers producing grain for on-farm consumption, cereal production is likely to continue. Additionally, two thirds of the land remains permanent pasture and rough grazing, and there has been a small increase in the areas of woodland as project such as the South West Forest and other agri-environment schemes encourage tree planting (Robbins et al, 2006).

Our observation is that Devon is more likely going down the route of eco-economic rural development than a bio-economical route, based on several indications. Although the size distribution of the county's holdings is much in line with the regional and national picture, with an increase in the midrange units and a decline in the smallest ones, the amount of farms over 100 ha (8%) is lower than in England (13%) and the South West (10%) (Robbins, 2006:4).

The trend towards the 'lotting' of farmland, whereby farms are offered for sale (with small plots being disposed of in conjunction with traditional farmhouses), and older farmers occupying 'retirement holdings,' has resulted in a significant increase in the number of holdings being classified as 'other' as they become too small for most forms of commercial agriculture (Robbins et al, 2006: 1). Commercial

¹ <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/economyenterprise/agriculture.htm>

farms tend to get bigger but also less capitalized, renting land and buildings, whilst many small holdings are owned by incomers or hobby-farmers: *“The average size of farms in Devon is shocking. The average dairy cow herd is 98 cows, the average sheep flock is between 48 and 51 sheep and the average beef cow herd is 28. I think it is 28. That’s the average, so there are a lot of smaller farms”* (DCC, pers.com. 2010).

The expectation is that the development of large intensive mega-farms is not likely to happen in Devon, because of the small-size of the current farms, the multi-functional land-use, the current method of agricultural production (mainly grass), the characteristics of the landscape, the location (not densely populated), and planning restrictions which protect a large part of Devon. These factors function as incentives to go down the eco-economical route. The local council believes that initiatives to start very large-scale dairy farms like those in Lancashire and elsewhere² would not be viable or be granted planning permissions. Notably, one of the entrepreneurs of the super dairy in Lancashire is from north Devon but decided to implement his plan outside the county.

The gap between small-holders and bigger farms in farm management could widen in the future. However, in terms of agricultural practices this gap tends to be decreasing, as European agri-environmental schemes and Council grants directed towards diversification stimulate more multi-functional land use, which may also bridge the gap between agri-ruralist and post-productive views: *“I think there was a tension, but farmers are getting used to it, because of the environmental stewardship scheme. Farmers are now used to farming in an environmentally sensitive way and just adapting their methods to help to improve the environment. In some ways it can improve the production as well”*.

Devon’s agriculture shows a strong link between the domains of *sustainability* and *endogeneity*. The more traditional farmers, who did not or only partly went down the route of intensification and still use few chemicals and fertilizers, are drawn to agri-environmental schemes. The link between endogeneity and sustainability is also strengthened by Devon’s strong position in *local food*, which was outlined in the last Etude report. Many farmers process their own products into juices and jams or meat boxes, and grow old varieties of fruit trees or rare species of animal husbandry. All Devon schools are encouraged to use local food and the council is involved in such events as the Exeter food festival (DCC personal comm., 2010). The situation can however be further improved: *“I think the target is to use 70% local food (in*

²During the past year, planning applications for two dairy and one pig mega-farms have been lodged. There are plans being considered for a giant pig farm in Foston, Derbyshire, housing 2,500 sows and up to 15,000 of their piglets. And in Lincolnshire, proposals for mega-dairy operations housing 3,000 cows in south Witham and 8,100 in Nocton have been made - then withdrawn. But, crucially, the Nocton scheme - the biggest ever in Western Europe - is expected to be re-submitted imminently, once final adjustments have been made. Nocton Dairies Ltd. planned to build eight 'cattle accommodation buildings', each housing around 1,000 cows that would rarely, if ever, get out (a practice called 'zerograzing'). (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1292011/The-truth-mega-farms-Chemical-fumes-distressed-animals-poisoned-locals.html#ixzz0u8SJW01W>)

schools), but in reality it is only 30%” (DCC, personal comm., 2010). There are plans to extend public procurement to other public institutions such as hospitals. However, due to the current recession, the local food staff member has recently been made redundant along with the Devon Rural Network co-ordinator.

The expectation is that *renewable energy* in the form of wind turbines and hydro-energy will become increasingly important in the future. There is also much interest in anaerobic digestion. The council is interested in the use of wood provided by local forest-owners for heating systems with a view to self-sufficiency (see Section 4.2). This may potentially favor the emergence of an eco-economy, although it is dependant on the scale and the implementation of the initiative.

The council is in search of new areas of wind-energy and there are plans to construct large wind turbines in North Devon. However, public opinion is deeply divided over this matter. One of our respondents argues, for instance, that wind turbines could cause ground vibration and consequently change the course of water. In Devon, this type of investment is likely to be smaller-scale than in other areas due to its protected landscape, which again favours the development of an eco-economy: “*There are real issues about anything that would spoil those landscapes and that includes growing any energy crops, fast track of short rotation crops, anything that changes the landscape significantly*” (DCC pers.com., 2010).

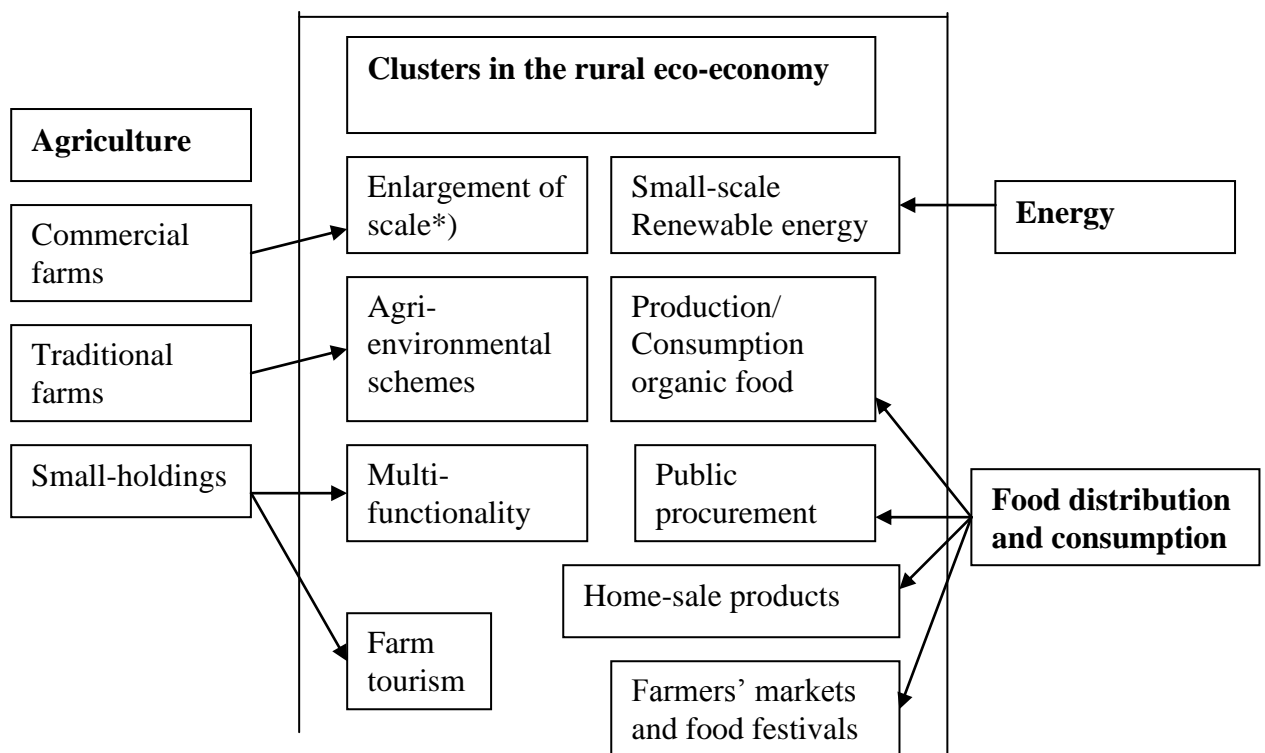
Hence our conclusion is that developments in agriculture, food and energy strengthen the link between *endogeneity* and *sustainability*. This synergy is lubricated by the domain of *institutional arrangements*, including planning mechanisms, EU-subsidiary schemes and public procurement. As a result, we can identify the emergence of eco-economical *clusters* in Devon in the form of farm tourism, local food, (more) sustainable agriculture and small-scale energy projects (see Figure 10).

This development trajectory is however threatened by developments in the domain of *governments of markets*. For instance, the upscaling of food processing and distribution infrastructure constrains the marketing of local food; processes of upscaling create a path of dependency which forces other initiatives to go down the same route. An example is the drastic decrease of local abattoirs in Devon. Some of these abattoirs have been sold to bigger ones, while new hygienic regulations have also played an important role in this. As the existing abattoir in Ashburton is too distant from some farmers, those seeking to sell locally consequently transport their meat to other counties such as Wales. Direct marketing to consumers is also restricted by the difficulty of selling whole carcasses: “*It is never that simple. It is fine with a commodity that has a longer shelf-life, and it’s fine when everybody wants all the lovely joints, but when it’s meat, what do you do with the other bits, the three quarters. You have to find a market for the remains of the carcass or turn it into something, to be profitable*”.

Besides institutional arrangements also *social capital* functions as a lubricating domain in the form of private co-operation within farmers’ co-operatives and incomers who buy small-holdings and often work more sustainably. An interesting question here is whether citizens contribute in any way to the cultivation and/or mobilisation of social capital. In the Netherlands, for instance, protest groups of

citizens and scientists have reacted against intensive animal husbandry³ (Horlings et al, 2010b). In Shetland, ‘Sustainable Shetland’, a local resident group has protested against a new large-scale wind-energy project (Kanemasu and Horlings, 2010). Devon does not seem to present such strong countervailing power, possibly due to an absence of a sense of urgency to date. On the other hand, there are a growing number of people who are interested in local food and a growing awareness of sustainable/ethical consumption: *“There are a lot of people who are educated and well-informed and don’t want intensive bred pigs but outdoor reared. It’s a growing group, that want to know where the food comes from, how it is produced, what additives and chemicals have been used in production. There are a growing number of people who want to know what they are eating. They want to feel good about what they are eating, which is increased by chefs on television”*. However, the recent recession has hampered the expansion of organic food consumption, according to our respondents.

Figure 10. Emerging eco-economical clusters in Devon



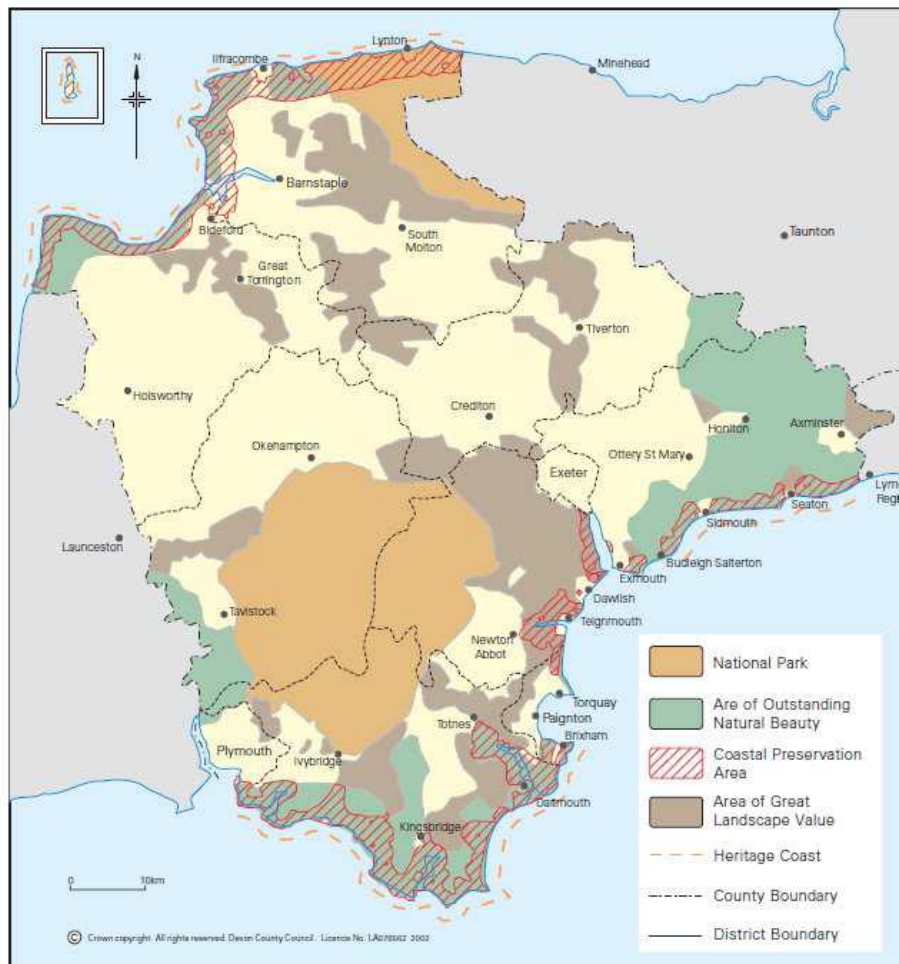
*) Some commercial farms will intensify or specialise, but enlargement of scale can also potentially lead to a more extensive land-use.

³ In the Netherlands there are citizens groups in different provinces who have successfully protested against plans for large ‘mega-farms’. In April 29th, 100 Dutch professors published a manifesto against intensive animal husbandry in the Netherlands.

3.3 Regional branding and story-lines

Given that Devon is the third largest administrative area in England, it does not have a unified territorial identity. In tourism, a distinction can be made between South Devon, which is more oriented towards commercial amusement, beaches etc. and North Devon, which is more oriented towards walkers, because of the Exmoor National Park (see figure 11).

Figure 11. Devon landscape policy areas



Rural regions around Europe are increasingly seeking to distinguish themselves by developing brands. A brand is ‘a consistent group of characters, images, or emotions that consumers recall or experience when they think of a specific symbol, product, service, organisation or location’ (Simeon, 2006: 464). It can refer to destinations, corporations, products and services (Balakrushnan, 2009). The goal of destination branding is ‘to attract and keep customers by promoting value, image, prestige or lifestyle’ (Rooney, 1995:48). Destination brands have some similarities with corporate brands in that they act as umbrella brands for a portfolio of leisure, investment, business tourism, and stakeholder and citizen welfare products (Trueman et al, 2004). There are also some similarities between destination brands and product/service brands. They have both tangible and intangible components, are mostly service dependent, and can be positioned through the use of slogans (Pike,

2005). Country of Origin (COO), for instance, applies in the destination service context (Javalgi et al., 2001).

Devon has a website dedicated to branding as well as a brand book and a toolkit⁴. The general slogan is '*Devon gives you a different perspective*'. As such, Devon combines destination branding and product branding. Visit Devon, the Destination Management Organisation for Devon, was launched in 2008, with a service agreement between Visit Devon and Devon County Council signed in March 2009. In terms of products Devon County Council supported the Celebration of Food and South West Festival of Food and Drink events in 2008/9 to help encourage the tourism industry to better engage with local food and drink producers, with both of the events adopting the Devon Brand throughout their marketing activities.

The goal of destination brand management is to reduce the gap between the communicated, conceived ideal and the desired identities, using market research (Rangen et al, 2006) to ensure that destinations are sold with correct information and not with "hype" (Palumbo and Herbig, 2000). In this context, Devon seems to present somewhat contradictory images. On the one hand, Country Life magazine announced that Devon is "officially England's best county": the county was rated by the magazine as the best county in England in the categories of green policy, landscape and wildlife, heritage, local food and pubs in February 2009. On the other hand, research conducted by the South West Regional Development Agency showed that those who had never visited the county regarded Devon as a place that is⁵:

- Staid and very traditional.
- Remote.
- A Pleasant place to live and visit but not to do business.
- Not innovative, dynamic or a vibrant
- Little to offer young people in terms of a career.
- A place where an image of thatched cottages, cream teas and rolling hills prevails.

The image of Devon as peaceful and traditional, but at the same time remote and not innovative/dynamic, seems to translate into the county being a popular retirement destination for older people and incomers in search of a rural way of life but not attracting enough (young) tourists. Both the business community and the public sector therefore saw the need to invest in a Devon Brand, which would challenge these perceptions and send out a consistent message about the county. Upon examining the contribution made by the branding strategy to Devon's rural development trajectory, we have identified several problems, which are discussed below.

1. Branding as a communication-style

Branding is much more than image building or logo design (Balakrishnan, 2009). The branding of Devon however seems to be mainly a communication-style to be used in advertising with guidelines for the use of colours and phrases (see figure 12: logo and figure 13: advertisement) rather than an overarching story-line for the county. This makes it difficult to use the brand as an instrument for the steering of rural development and to align businesses around a common agenda for the region.

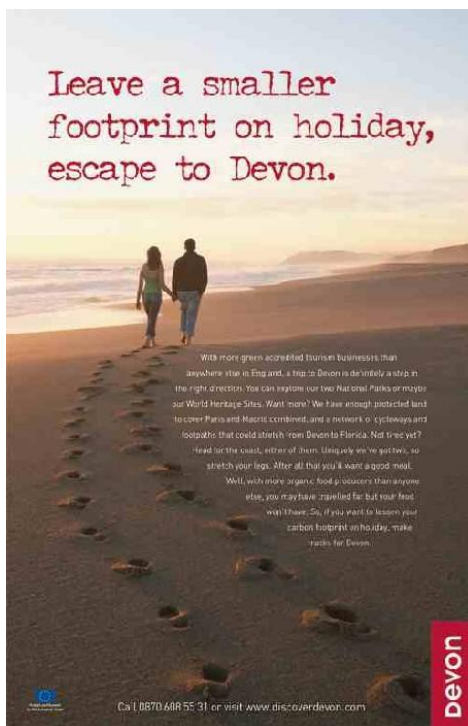
⁴ see: <http://www.devonbrand.co.uk/> .

⁵ <http://www.devonbrand.co.uk>

Figure 12. Devon brand logo



Figure 13. Advertisement for Devon



2. Lack of uniqueness

Branding requires thinking 'from the outside to the inside', analysing what makes the region unique for outsiders. It is not clear, however, what distinguishes Devon from counties such as Cornwall or Somerset (see Figure 14). The general marketing slogan for Devon does not appear to be sufficiently specific either.

Figure 14. Phrases about Devon.⁶

Subject	Phrases
General	Full of genuine community-minded people, rich and diverse environment, stunning landscapes, vibrant cities, creative and stimulating, restores and regenerates, anything feels possible, relaxing, easy-going, inspiring, new perspective, supportive, Devon let's you get what you really want out of life.
Live	More spare time, healthier, community, vibrant, freedom, living in beautiful surroundings, strong community, pride
Work	Relaxed, more productive, less commuting, creative, new and dynamic ways of working, creative decisions, better work/life balance, happier, rewarding, no 'Monday morning' feeling.
Invest	Productivity, resourcefulness, enterprise, excellent communications, superior workspaces, willingness to cooperate with others, diverse yet like-minded companies, growth and innovation.
Learn	Activities and sports, inspiring surroundings, room to think, clear-headed, huge range of opportunities, great mix of urban life and outdoor living, interests and activities you won't find anywhere else, great opportunities in graduate careers with continued growth of job prospects.
Visit	Invigorating, exciting, recharge your batteries, wholly relaxing, tonic for the soul, never get bored, clear your head of clutter.

3. Development potential and vision

Successful branding strategies not only entail economic benefits but also harmonise culture (i.e. who we are), the process (i.e. how we know), the content (i.e. what we know), infrastructure requirements (i.e. who, how and where) (Dana et al, 2005), the brand (i.e. promises to be communicated), image (i.e. the current perception) and reputation (i.e. distinctive attributes) (Balmer, 2001). For this purpose, the government needs to formulate and communicate a vision to all stakeholders, and to create a service-oriented culture that will give it a competitive advantage (Pike, 2005). The branding vision in Devon seems to be limited to the marketing of the existing qualities. However, a branding strategy can also include what a region wants to be, including quality guidelines and new product-market combinations (i.e. ambition) (Horlings et al, 2006). Such development potential of the region, a clear storyline to show what Devon wants to be in the future and which products can or should be developed, is not fully explored to date.

4. Fragmentation of tourism marketing

Tourism in Devon generates nearly £2 billion per year in related spending and employs 63,000 people, a vital sector in the local economy⁷. Destination Devon was set up to make the most of the unique areas of Devon with the aim *'to reduce duplication and enable local associations and tourism partnerships to work better together, make more efficient use of resources and improve the competitiveness of*

⁶ <http://www.devonbrand.co.uk/Words-and-Phrases.html>

⁷ http://www.drn.org.uk/destination_devon_sustainability_plan.pdf

Devon as a year-round tourist destination' (DCC, draft). The county council has developed a draft Tourism Action Plan 2009-2010 (DCC, draft) including sustainability actions, which is under consultation at the time of writing of this report. Branding does not seem to be very well integrated into tourism marketing (apart from the use of the branding colours in the Visit Devon website). Visit Devon “acts as the voice of tourism for Devon and seeks to add value and enhance the work and activities undertaken by Area Tourism Partnerships across Devon. Its board of directors (which includes members from Devon County Council) is committed to growing the tourism sector sustainably, increasing the skills within our industry and raising the quality of the visitor experience”⁸.

Devon Farms works independently from Visit Devon and does not use the branding tool kit to promote the members’ businesses. The cooperative instead uses a number of different farm tourism labels (see figure 15). The fragmentation of (tourism) marketing and governance structure hampers the marketing of Devon as a single unity, according to a respondent: “From a marketing point of view, these multiple unitary authorities should have a single tourism website, because the rest of the country doesn’t care about differences between them. Even Visit Devon has a compartmentalised website leading viewers to individual unitary authority websites. In this sense, it is the complete opposite of what Devon Farms is trying to achieve: promotion of farm tourism at a county level”.

Figure 15. Logo’s used by a Devon Farm B&B



5. Separate food branding

Food is marketed separately by Food and Drink Devon - 'Love the Flavour', which represents like-minded businesses dedicated to providing good quality local food & drink. The association is committed to continuously achieving its mission - 'To make

⁸ <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/cultureheritage/sustainabletourism.htm>

Love the Flavour a nationally recognised brand for outstanding sustainable food and drink.⁹

6. Profile

Devon seeks to attract diverse groups of tourists and visitors. This makes it difficult to specialise in specific niches or product-market combinations. North Devon for instance could potentially be marketed to families, adventurous experience seekers and/or hikers in search of tranquillity: *“The way Devon is marketed as a county effectively marginalises North Devon, although it is an ideal site for hiking, walking, boating, etc”*.

7. Foreign marketing

Devon relies mainly on UK visitors, but more visitors from outside the UK can be attracted. What Devon lacks is a major event or activity to attract international visitors: *“Cornwall has a higher prioritization or identification outside than Devon. We don’t have something like ‘Out of Eden’ (see www.edenproject.com) which has put Cornwall on the map. We don’t have such a product as marketing tool that can be identified around the world. In Devon we don’t have a ‘Wow’ factor in a sense.*

⁹ <http://www.lovetheflavour.co.uk/>.

4. Networks and governance

4.1 Entrepreneurial co-operation

The last Etude report provided an overview of the key rural development initiatives in Devon. Some new (branding) initiatives have since started. We will discuss some of these below, although it must be noted that this is not a comprehensive update.

Dartmoor Farmers Limited Company

A group of farmers in Dartmoor have started a branding initiative to market local produce, to “sell an environmental story” (how native animals manage the landscape) as well as the meat products. About 30 members are involved in this initiative of collective branding, quality control and marketing. The Prince’s Trust has assisted by providing expertise (a panel of experts to provide mentoring). The group is called “Dartmoor Farmers Limited Company,” and sells meat to upmarket butchers, pubs and hotels in the area.

Food and Drink Devon

Food & Drink Devon – 'Love the Flavour' a not-for-profit limited company that represents like-minded businesses dedicated to providing good quality local food & drink with a mission '[t]o make Love the Flavour a nationally recognised brand for outstanding sustainable food and drink.' To join the group, members must satisfy the qualifying criteria and go through an application process. The roots of Food & Drink Devon go back to the early 1990's, when South Hams District Council's economy and tourism team got together with leading businesses in the food and tourism sectors to create South Hams Food & Drink Association. Since 2005, the Association has taken a new direction. A new brand identity was launched and trademarked using "Love the Flavour" as the strap line. In January 2008 South Hams Food & Drink Association merged with The South Devon & Dartmoor Food Group to become Food & Drink Devon.

4.2 Policy and public-private co-operation

European policy

European policy has a large influence on rural Devon. The *Rural Development Plan* (RDP), the follow-up of the ERDP, provides pillar 2 funding from the EU. The system is implemented differently in the various EU countries. There is a statutory modulation of the Single Farm Payment in Europe. But in the UK there is a national modulation as well. This means that 19% of the money is taken off the Single Farm Payment and used for rural development pillar 2. This modulation money is matched by the national government. Most of it is used on agri-environmental schemes, but 20% goes to rural development, namely, improving the competitiveness of agriculture and helping rural communities to diversify. In the South West of England the Regional Development Agency is responsible for the implementation of the program. Apart from these agri-environmental schemes there is a *capital grant scheme* in Devon, for farmers wishing to diversify their businesses. This means that farmers can receive grants up to 50% of the project, depending on their financial situation. The three areas where they can apply for grants are; 1) farm diversification; 2) adding value to agricultural products (applicants do not have to be farmers, but have to prove

that they will add value, that there will be a benefit back to farmers); 3) rural micro-businesses (on the basis that there are strong links back to farming. If they can prove that it will generate extra income for farmers, they are potentially eligible). The grants are for capital demands; farmers' organisations are not funded. According to the County Council, 13 projects worth over £1 million have been approved in Devon to date, such as the conversion of farm buildings or equipment for the purpose of starting up new businesses. While there are many other farms interested in this scheme, the planning permission is restricted: *"I have got a list of 100 people who are interested in getting grants. Probably 1/3 if not 1/2 are waiting for planning permission. They need planning permission first before they can apply for grants"* (DCC, pers. com., 2010). Grants for tourism have recently been discontinued in Devon. The South West RDP states that there will no longer be any grant funding towards increasing bed-space for holiday lets, camping or caravanning, following a study that indicated an oversupply of accommodation space in the South West (DCC, pers. com., 2010).

Public administration

There are three notable recent developments in Devon's local public administration. First, the County Council has launched a new strategic plan, which indicates that there has been a re-orientation in the tasks and activities of the Council. As a consequence there is today a reduced emphasis on community development: *"We had to focus down the work of the economy unit and we don't undertake the breadth of the work we used to do. We used to do a lot of community development and projects through Devon Reinvestment Service...and a lot of this has gone,because we don't have the resources to do everything"* (DCC, pers. com., 2010).

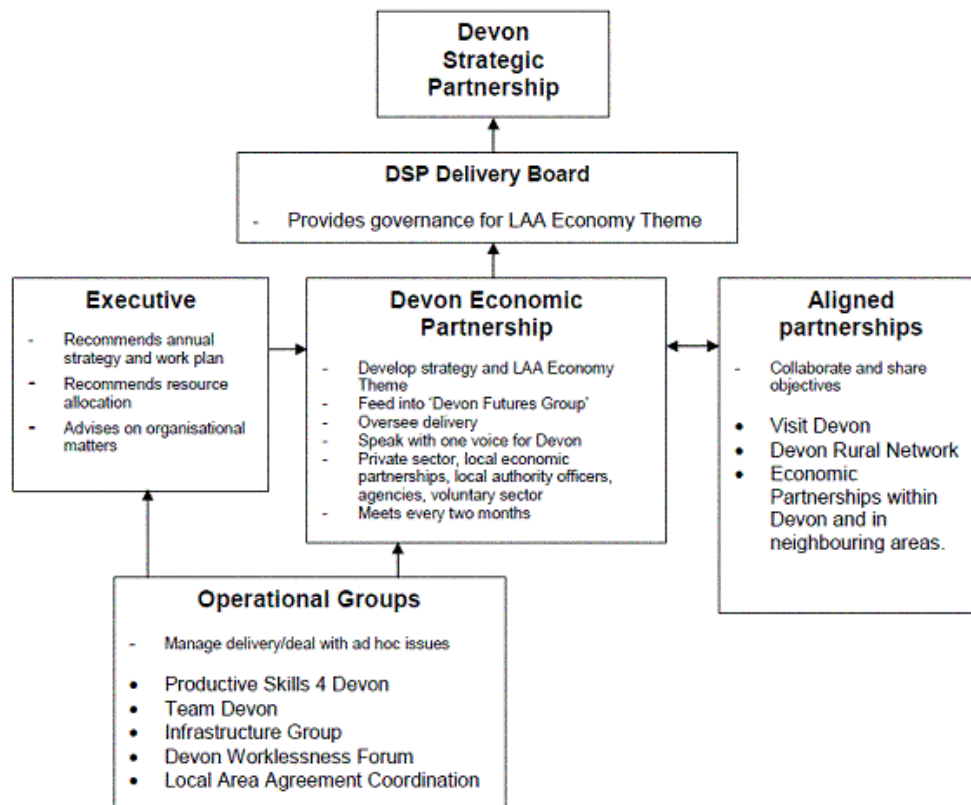
Second, the town of Exeter may potentially become independent from the Devon County Council, although this is subject to change, following the recent change in the national government. If this was to happen, the area under the Council's jurisdiction would be largely rural, without a large city. As a consequence a large amount of staff members would be transferred and some projects, networks and initiatives declined.

Third, a more general trend is that more responsibilities are likely to be transferred to the local level in the future. What is already apparent is that some districts are cutting costs, working more closely together and have the same chief-executives: *"It would probably be better to take the districts out and strengthen the towns and the parishes, that's what we talked about. So you have a strategic level and the lower level and having these communities' boards that would have a limited budget to spend"* (DCC, pers. com., 2010).

Public-private co-operation

In Devon the Economic Partnership functions as a co-ordinating partnership (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Devon Economic Partnership



The agreed purpose of the Devon Economic Partnership is ‘to provide leadership and to enable Devon to speak with one voice on key economic issues and priorities. The Devon Economic Strategy, produced and delivered by the partnership, sets the overall direction and provides a framework for the development of Devon's economy up to 2015’.¹⁰

The first Etude report described how the Devon Rural Network (DRN) functioned as an important mechanism for co-ordination and public-private co-operation. The DRN is officially still in existence, and working in partnership with the Devon Economic Partnership, but is now in ‘a state of flux’ and inactive. The primary reasons for this are political change and a lack of funding. The local conservative government is seeking to reduce staff, and the expectation is that a large budget deficit will result in job losses and reduced project funding: “*The DRN had a manager and an assistant and a project co-ordinator. Then that went down and down and down and now they support the Devon Economic Network and the Devon Rural Network but there would be 1 part-time placement to do just the very bare minimum*” (DCC, pers.com., 2010). There are a number of organisations that have spawned the DRN. An example is the Devon Farm and Food Board, set up in 2007.

There is also a change in the *governance style* at the local government level, a shift towards a less pro-active role in public-private co-operation, although there are differences in opinion within the Council over this: “*That’s exactly our thing, us taking a risk, testing our concept. And the county council is in a good position to do*

¹⁰ <http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/organisational-structure>.

so. There is another school of thought that says we shouldn't be doing that, taking those risks, so it will be interesting to see if this kind of activities will stop" (DCC, pers.com, 2010). The Council remains supportive of development projects, yet has recently become less keen on taking lead roles in such projects, which is likely to result in greater responsibilities being transferred to the private sector. The DRN partners, for example, are expected to take more initiative: "They will be calling on the partners to get more out of the organisation. If you want to keep it going you have to do something now. Now, the Council says, if you value it, if you want to continue this, you now have to start doing things. And it is easy for organisations to sit round the table but to actually do things is a different thing" (DCC, pers. com. 2010).

Green Tourism

The Tourism Action Plan 2009-2010 of the Devon County Council identifies several objectives in relation to sustainable tourism such as:

- Objective 2.1) Develop Sustainable Travel and Leisure Choices;
- Objective 2.2) Encourage Sustainable Business Practice;
- Objective 4.2) Conserve and Enhance Devon's Natural Resources and Culture; and
- Objective 4.3) Mitigate the Impact of Tourism on Climate Change and Adapt to the Future Climate.

The Council stimulates a Green Tourism Business Network in response to Objective 2.2. A group of Green Businesses Tourism Champions is sought to assist others in achieving this goal. The Green Tourism Business Awards Scheme (GTBS) started in 1997 and is the leading sustainable tourism certification scheme in the UK with over 1,400 members. Devon has over 160 businesses accredited under this scheme, more than in any other county in England. Businesses are assessed by a qualified grading advisor against a set of criteria, covering a range of areas such as energy, water, waste management, biodiversity etc.

Accreditation rewards tourism operators that demonstrate these environmental management practices and community support, with a gold, silver or bronze award. GTBS is a business tool in generating environmental benefits, operating efficiencies, quality assurance and customer satisfaction. It encourages closer links with local suppliers, community organisations, local artists and craftsmen.



Energy and forestry

The discontinuation of some Council projects has been followed by the emergence of some new forms of public-private partnerships, such as the ward forestry project. In the past, a forestry-based regeneration project with 8 staff members was in existence in Devon for over 10 years. The new ward forestry project is being undertaken in partnership with the Forestry Commission and it was jointly funded over 3 years¹¹. The Council has sought to enable private woodland owners to have their small (below 40 ha) woodland managed collectively by a ward forester (who could be an individual, a contractor or a consultant) in order to achieve economies of scale and to bring their woodland back under management, using the installation of new wood fuel boilers around Devon as a catalyst. There are large wood fuel installations in the South West, attached to schools, dairies and creameries. There is enough woodland in Devon to supply these installations. However, 80% of the forest is in private ownership, while 60% is undermanaged or not managed at all, for the reason that the

¹¹ See www.wardforester.co.uk

cost of wood management and extraction cannot be met by subsidies (DCC, pers. com. 2010). The Council is currently investigating if a contractor may be paid to manage a cluster of woodlands in the same area so the owners may make a profit from the value of the extracted wood. The Forestry Commission has shown much interest in the idea and requested the Council to take the lead, providing funding for three years. If the concept works and is financially viable, the Council will roll it out and involve the private sector, which can then encourage the clusters to do it themselves.

LEADER and quality of life

The local councils host one of the 4 Local Action Groups in Devon and also support the others indirectly. There is a new LEADER system in place, which however has proven to be more bureaucratic in nature. Projects are audited by the South West Rural Development Agency, the Rural Payment Agency, and the Council: *“It is a bureaucratic nightmare. Because they are delivering rather small sums of money locally, you can’t spend more than 20% on project management and administration costs. But the bureaucratic burden is so high that even 20% is not enough for all the staff for monitoring and checking”* (DCC, pers. com. 2010).

There are some interesting projects aimed at improving the quality of life in Devon. Local Action Groups¹² have provided funding for a project in Ruby County, 'Ride the Ruby Country', which tries to maximize the economic benefit of equine trails. These trails are put in place through the DCC 'Rights of Way' team.

Ruby Country, which covers 45 parishes around Holsworthy and Hatherleigh, has had a difficult history since the Foot and Mouth Disease, and it is the first time that the local communities formed their own company and took this project forward. Under this initiative, the community is taking over a Forestry Commission owned building, the aim of which is to organise events and use the building as a hub for orienteering and getting people out into the forest for riding, walking etc¹³.

There are some deprived areas in rural Devon, most of which are in market towns but also in rural areas. For example, older people in rural areas face difficulty in accessing services, doctors, shops, etc. due to a lack of transport. The Council is working on a *Green Transport Plan* and there are related services such as mint-buses. However it is not clear how much of this will continue in the future in light of the cuts in public spending (DCC, pers. com. 2010).

Rural Torridge is one of the areas where the Foot and Mouth Disease started and is also one of the prioritised deprived areas due to its remoteness, low wages and lack of employment opportunities. In this area a multi-stakeholder project '*Harvesting the Future*' is implemented. As part of its activities, the project facilitates farmers to develop practical skills by appointing an advisor who investigates their needs and ways of meeting these needs. On most courses arranged by the project farmers are required to gain a qualification as an output; however a group of farmers who wish to attend a course (such as in sheep shaving or renewable energy) may also arrange a practical short course without such requirements. There is an ongoing discussion over the possibility of establishing a network of skills co-ordinators along the South West.

¹² Ruby county sits between 2 LAG's- Greater Dartmoor and Leader 4North Devon.

¹³ See: <http://www.therubycountry.com/> for more information

The conclusion emerging from the foregoing discussion on entrepreneurial co-operation, policy, and public-private partnerships is that the domain of institutional arrangements presents a mixed picture. Some policy measures stimulate the relation between endogeneity and sustainability, as evident in the case of agri-environmental schemes, the forestry project and the Green Tourism Business Awards Scheme. The domain of markets of governance is strengthened by institutional arrangements such as the capital grant scheme for farmers but also weakened by the decreased funding support for tourism. The domain of social capital is under pressure as a result of the changing governance style with the implication that the local council is likely to invest less in community development in the future.

5. Domains of the rural web: the case of Devon Farms

This section outlines some of the recent changes in the configuration of Devon's rural web, based on a follow-up case study of Devon Farms, the farm tourism initiative reported in the first Etude study (see Kanemasu et al. 2008). We will examine the developments within each rural development domain (Sections 5.1-.9) and also make recommendations for the development of new product-market combinations (Section 5.10).

Devon Farms was established in 1989 when Devon's ten Farm Holiday Groups operating at the time under the umbrella organisation the Farm Holiday Bureau (now Farm Stay UK, a national consortium founded in 1983 by MAFF, now DEFRA) came together to form a county-wide cooperative. The initial moves by a small group of farmers' wives to establish the cooperative began in the late 1980s, followed by the formalisation of the group and the production of the first brochure in 1989. From around 1996 to 2000, the cooperative received a significant boost from a successful application to Objective 5b funding, which facilitated improved marketing, training, market research and an upgraded reservation/referral scheme. The primary objective of the cooperative is to achieve improved and more effective marketing through collective action. Other key objectives include representing and promoting the interests of Devon's farm tourism operators within wider political contexts and facilitating mutual support among the members.

The cooperative of around 130 members is managed by a steering committee that meets 5-6 times a year and consists of six office bearers (chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, secretary, press officer and marketing officer) and representatives (one per ten members) of the seven local groups (Exmoor, North Devon, Heart of Devon, East Devon, West Devon, Dartmoor & West Devon, Dartmoor & South Devon), who relay the views and opinions of the local members to the committee. Each local group in turn has its own committee and website, creating a two-tier structure. The annual general assembly functions as an open forum for all members. Much of Devon Farms' work is voluntary, with only an administrative staff employed full time.

5.1 Socio-economical conditions and trends

The current economic *recession* has had a negative impact on Devon Farms, although the cooperative has done relatively well within the tourism sector. The expectation was that the current economic climate would create a greater demand for domestic holidays, but some farmers have experienced a fall in bookings (though there seem to be considerable differences among the members). We can identify several general trends here, such as a 'triggering-down' effect of a shift towards cheaper accommodation, an increase in last-minute bookings (up to a few days ahead of the visit), and shorter stay (whereas visitors often booked for a week previously). The recession has also negatively affected the consumption of more sustainable, particularly organic, food, which is more expensive¹⁴.

¹⁴ Recent income statistics are difficult to find, the farm business survey only show figures till 2008.

Globalisation has had a double-edged effect on Devon's tourism. Changing international market conditions have forced some farmers to close their business, while other commercial farms have increased the scale of their business, buying the land of their neighbours. The decrease in farm businesses creates room for new, sometimes urban, incomers, who start small-holdings, in some cases combined with farm tourism. These incomers often do not require all the land that comes with the farm and consequently sell or rent a part of it to commercial farmers who can then follow the up-scaling trend. In this sense urban newcomers may be said to facilitate agricultural growth.

As has been mentioned before, the *up-scaling* of food processing and distribution infrastructure constraints the marketing of local food. As a consequence of the drastic decrease in local abattoirs, some farmers transport their meat to other counties such as Wales. Thus the processes of up-scaling create a certain dependency which forces other initiatives to go down this route as well.

Devon like other agricultural areas faces *the cost-squeeze of agriculture*. Agricultural farms are struggling to earn a living in Devon, especially in the uplands where farm income has been eroded significantly: *"We live on poor land. We can't do dairy; we can't do cereals. All we can grow is grass"*. Between 2006 and 2007 the average farm income in the South West increased from £30,987 to £50,414, but in 2008 it decreased to £47,323. While the cash income increased, the Management Investment Income decreased in the last period¹⁵. Twenty years ago Devon was a dairy area with a lot of creameries, which produced their own butter, cheese, and cream; however, only a few remain today.

Agriculture in Devon, like the rest of the UK, also faces the problem of an aging population. According to one of our respondents, many new farm businesses are "lifestyle choices" and have only been in business for 2-5 years. There is a high turnover rate in the sector. Supermarkets have become increasingly powerful in controlling prices, while land prices have not decreased. However, farmers do not easily give up farming, because it is seen as 'a way of life', where connection to land is valued: *"People go into farming not to earn a lot of money but because it is a way of life. Usually from one generation to the next, they are in charge of the land"*. Smaller farm businesses often generate insufficient or no income at all, and tourism provides a much-needed supplementary income. As the first Etude study noted, Foot and Mouth Disease was a 'wake-up call' in showing the amount of money tourism brought in. On bigger farms, on the other hand, agriculture still seems to be the main source of income.

There has been an increase in live-stock prices in the last two years, caused by the changing exchange rate. *"Farming in England is very much linked to the exchange rate. The Single Farm Payment went up, because of the exchange rate. Farmers got more money this year than last year. And a lot of lambs and beef get exported to Europe"*. According to some respondents, this has led to a growth in farming in the last two years, and in turn, to fewer farms turning to B&B for a supplementary income. The membership of Devon Farms has remained constant in the last few years.

¹⁵ <http://www.farmbusinesssurvey.co.uk>

The general societal trend towards the greater use of *ICT* has also influenced Devon Farms. Today more farms undertake administrative tasks electronically, and the cooperative is currently in the process of introducing on-line booking. There is general agreement among the members that such a transition is inevitable as more, particularly young, people will use the internet for booking purposes. To respond to such needs, a Devon Farms member who previously ran a software business on an international scale provides the members with a training course on e-booking. Many members, especially B&B's, who are used to telephone booking will need to adjust to the new system in order to prevent double bookings (i.e. they have to check the electronic system first before accepting a booking by telephone).

New rural-urban relations affect Devon Farms in three ways. First, ex-urban incomers starting farm tourism businesses have played a notable role in sustaining the Devon Farms' membership over the last two decades (although they are still a minority within the group). These incomers also tend to develop new products and services for visitors. Second, Devon Farms relies on the flow of visitors from urban areas. The South West remains the most important holiday destination for UK travellers (although Devon Farms also receives visitors from other parts of Europe, the US and occasionally other parts of the world). Third, the children of some farmers have returned to their farm after working in urban areas for some years, seeking a better quality of life for their own children. These young farmers have brought with them new ideas and approaches: *"It is not the financial side. They can be home with their families, they can run a business from home, they can use the assets of the farm and they can live and be in the countryside and there is also a demand from the public"*.

5.2 'Shared' woman leadership

As in most voluntary organizations, Devon Farms relies on only a small number of members who undertake most activities, for example, by taking part in the Marketing Committee. Leadership is one of the major strengths of Devon Farms as the following quote indicates: Interviewer: *"What is the secret of success?"* Respondent: *"Leadership. It's pretty good for a cooperative. We've had very good chairmen, very good office members, who are very proactive. They hold meetings very regularly, they are action-orientated, they are very inclusive, they try to get people involved. Because of the way they work, they encourage people to become involved. If you don't work and help, then you are out of the cooperative. ... In return, they've done a superb job at leadership."*

Shared leadership

Leadership in the case of Devon Farms is a form of *'shared' leadership*: it has a collective nature. The executive committee consists of a small group of strong individuals who drive Devon Farms forward, overseen by the chairperson, although it must also be noted that not every committee member is equally active. Shared leadership is also shown in the role of the chairperson. The role revolves around effective co-ordination, and is aimed at 'visioning between visions', taking all views on board, without putting their own views to the forefront, and balancing this with time efficiency: *"You need to be time-oriented. We are only going to discuss things for so long and I want a result after that time. Otherwise we will be there forever. You know you have to get through and get things sorted. We have to get a decision. You*

also give things a change so members can go back to their groups to discuss it and come back”.

Indications of shared leadership are also found in leadership *skills*: the leader’s ability to communicate with everyone, maintain the respect of the group, manage the day-to-day running of the organisation, liaise with the secretariat, organise and chair meetings, etc. Central to such skills is the leader’s competence to bring everyone on board: *“What kind of skills did I use? I made sure I kept in touch with all the committee members and found out what they were doing. I talked to them before I had a committee meeting, so I knew what was coming up”.*

Division of labour is another aspect of shared leadership. Devon Farms’ chairpersons previously held three-year terms, but the current chairpersonship is for two years, which has resulted in more people taking turns in the role. For instance, the member who is in charge of PR is also involved actively in regional co-operation, keeping in contact with organisations such as Visit Devon and taking part in networks like the Devon Rural Network.

Leadership qualities

The unique quality of Devon Farms’ leadership is summed up by a member’s comment: *“They don’t want someone who actually wants the job”.* The type of leadership characteristic of Devon Farms can be best explained by listing what it is *not* (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Leadership within Devon Farms

- A Devon Farms leader is not someone:

 - who wants to do everything
 - who takes their position too seriously
 - who won’t consider others’ views
 - who becomes upset when things are not done
 - who will use their title as a leverage in other things
 - who actually wants the job
 - who does not refuse to do ‘little silly things which have to be done and which take a lot of work.’

Tasks of leaders

The tasks of Devon Farms’ chairperson is to *‘to keep ahead of the game in terms of what is happening in tourism’*, to be enthusiastic about expanding the market and to pass that attitude to the others. It is about *“positivity”* and a *“can-do attitude”*. And a chairperson should be able to communicate with the media: *“In other professions, leaders may have strengths in one particular area and buy in skills in other areas. But in Devon Farms, abilities to design, to be artistic, to sell, to market, to network, to manage finance, etc. – All are needed”.*

Gender plays an important role in Devon Farms' leadership. Women leaders tend to be more consensus-seeking and skilled in networking. According to a (male) respondent referring to the networking role of the chairperson: *"It's always useful to have women for that. Men have all the wrong qualities to do something like that"*. Devon Farms' chairpersons have been strong women. It should be noted that many farmers' wives are (or have to be) strong personalities, as they undertake a large variety of tasks, are flexible, work long hours and are responsible for managing the tourism business: *"They might serve breakfast and in half hour may be pulling out a tractor. It is such a varied job. They take on responsibilities they are not even aware of; it is just day-to-day life. So they can switch on to this job [of chairpersonship], and then they can switch off..."*. This may derive from the fact that farmers' wives must "do everything" themselves and be "multi-skilled": *"That's what farmers have got and no one else have got. We are multi-skilled. – Our downfall is that we don't realise that we have these abilities."* Hence leadership in the context of Devon Farms is about being able to mobilise these skills in individuals.

Leadership types

Devon Farms chairpersons are group-orientated and tend to be skilled networkers and consensus-seekers. The chairperson has to be someone with whom the members can identify with, and is open to take on everyone's views and ideas. More important issues – for instance, whether or not to continue with paper brochures – are circulated via email to all members and discussed at AGMs. Minor issues are discussed by separate committees. Our respondents report that they have rarely experienced difficulty making collective decisions. Discussions are largely informal and often do not involve voting. Occasionally, they decide to return matters to local groups, to be deliberated on again at group meetings or via email: *"It is very unusual. As a matter of fact our meetings are all very calm. Once or twice we would have somebody saying 'Wait a minute, my group doesn't agree with that. We have to have a discussion,' and I might say, 'Think about it at lunch time and have a chat,' and we'd come back to it again. It is amazing. When members come back after lunchtime, there is usually consensus."* Another example of informal decision making can be found in the fact that the members often have in-depth discussions of agenda items on their way to meetings (as they normally give each other lifts). Much decision-making is thus facilitated informally 'behind the scenes'.

Leadership roles

In terms of leadership roles, we can make a distinction between: Prophet (visionary), Clown, Warrior, Mediator, Inspirer, Regulator, Strategist, Negotiator, Pioneer, Inventor (Wielinga, 2007). While the former and current chairpersons of Devon Farms described their roles differently, many agreed that mediating and regulating roles were particularly important. This seems to be appropriate in a context where the ability to build bridges between different interests and views is vital. However, the ability to develop marketing visions is equally important: *"That vision hasn't really stopped. There have been members with that same kind of vision. It wouldn't have survived without the visionary concepts that arose in the organisation... You need a vision to see what is happening in the industry, the country, where you put your advertising. You have to be alert all the time"*.

Figure 18 provides an overview of the leadership within Devon Farms, based on the framework introduced earlier in Section 2.2. The ITS/THEY dimension seems to be less developed in the case of Devon Farms. The cooperative could potentially strengthen this dimension with greater public-private co-operation (with the Devon County Council) and cross-sector co-operation (with other entrepreneurial initiatives in Devon).

Figure 18. Dimensions of leadership within Devon Farms

<p>I-dimension</p> <p>Not ego-centred or status-oriented</p> <p>‘Not wanting the job’</p> <p>Enthusiastic</p>	<p>IT-dimension</p> <p>Stimulating behavior</p> <p>Mediating and regulating role</p>
<p>WE-dimension</p> <p>Visioning between visions</p> <p>Networking</p> <p>Division of tasks</p> <p>Group-orientated</p> <p>Consensus-based decision-making</p>	<p>ITS/THEY-dimension</p> <p>Co-creation of strategies on marketing farm-tourism in Devon</p>

5.3 Social capital

Participation

Devon Farms adopts a notably participatory approach to decision-making. As noted above, the cooperative consists of seven local groups, each of which represents the views and interests of the individual members of the area. All local group representatives inform their members of the main committee meeting agendas and collect their views prior to the meetings. All decisions must be unanimous. For instance, one local group recently decided against organising the Open Day, an event held for the purpose of attracting new members; and this decision was accepted by the main committee. As for co-operation between individual members, sharing of knowledge and ideas often takes place, while the members also keep marketing channels to themselves due to competition.

Commitment

Devon Farms’ ability to mobilise social capital is demonstrated by its members’ strong commitment to collective goals despite their diversity and differences: *“I think Devon Farms has worked because of the people, and the commitment of the people.”*

There is a great diversity of farm sizes, types, etc., but the very reason for Devon Farms' existence overcomes that, which is to allow members to work together to market their businesses as a whole. And in doing that, it doesn't matter where you are coming from. What you are trying to do is to achieve that goal."

Human resources

Almost all of Devon Farms' work is carried out voluntarily. There is only one paid secretary, with the committee members paid only to cover their expenses. Consequently Devon Farms struggles to secure adequate human resources. The current chairperson has accepted the position for the reason that no one else would; the members have less time to devote to the cooperative's tasks. Devon Farms has been driven until today by a number of committed individuals willing to sacrifice their own time, but this seems to be beginning to present a challenge.

Whilst establishing a full-time staff position may be a possibility, the membership is not large enough to cover such costs at present. In addition, our respondents observed that such a move may lead to a division between paid and unpaid members, leading to a loss of the sense of collective ownership: *"Then it would lose the input of its members; that is how Devon Farms has developed. It is always listening to its members. If you have someone who is in control, who is paid, they are going to make the decisions. The Devon Farms members think they are the bosses"*.

Social networks and support

Devon Farms does not only function as a marketing tool but also strengthens social capital, as noted in the last report. A purely rational, economic motive is balanced by a willingness to sacrifice time and to give each other social, not just economic, help: *"Some local groups have a lot of social activities. For instance, one member has lamas on her farms, and the others are visiting her to see her farm. There are such events once or twice a year. This helps to get to know new members. Some groups do Christmas meals, summer outings, etc"*.

Devon Farms' function as a social network benefits not only the cooperative as a whole but also the individual businesses: *"You do networking, you share your problems, especially during the FMD. You can come and talk to other people, find out what others' experiences are. It is a social network as well as a financial one. You are talking to people with a similar background, you have the same objectives, so you share your experiences. If you can't help someone with a booking you pass it on to another member."* The members visit each other's farms, share their challenges, exchange new ideas and support each other, based on trust. As noted earlier, Devon Farms organises events/training for members (cooking, writing adverts, web training, etc.) and organises social events, all of which facilitates such bonding between the members.

There also seems to be a link with community support. Those who are active in Devon Farms tend to be active members of their local community as well. Social networks become more important when viable farming has become more difficult and farmers have fewer opportunities to interact with each other: *"We have a decline of markets in this country, so people don't take their livestock to meet people. You don't have the social network that you did 25-30 years ago. It is important that you hold on*

to some of these organisations because of the support it gives to people, when times are bad”.

What was not identified in our previous study is the differences among Devon Farms’ local groups. Some play more significant social roles than others. There are also individual differences: to some members Devon Farms is a social space where friendships as well as professional contacts are cultivated, while others see it merely as a business relation: *“For some members, joining Devon Farms is purely for advertising and they don’t gain much. However, for others, it is also about networking and development. If one member encounters a bad customer, their experience can help the others who might have similar situations in the future”.*

Gender

Devon Farms was originally run almost entirely by women. However, as tourism has become economically more viable, more men have become involved in the cooperative. About a third of the main committee is now male: *“There are quite a few men involved now, originally it was all women. Tourism was thought of as a bit of pin-money for the wife. It wasn’t considered as important, but now it has become really important. A lot of farms are actually running because they get the extra money from tourism. Tourism on the farm has expanded a lot, and men are accepting that and are becoming more involved.”* Yet women remain in charge of Devon Farms. The co-operation between members has a gender-related aspect in that women are generally considered to be better skilled at co-operation. According to some respondents: *“Women will work often closely together to achieve this sort of objectives. Males are somewhat insular and don’t have that type of social networking. It is not in their make-up, being a man. Whereas the female side has more flexibility; it is in the nature of their person to work together.”* The social aspect of networking is also more important for women than for men. A respondent observed that women share business information with others more willingly: *“Women share more easily than men. NFU, in comparison, is dominated by men. They are very reluctant to share where they sell their beef cattle, milk, whatever, which in Devon Farms, we don’t find.”*

Skills development

Another notable characteristic of Devon Farms is the manner in which the committee members and particularly the chairperson have cultivated necessary skills. Building up confidence, empowerment, developing skills such as public speaking are all benefits of being part of Devon Farms. This was especially important in the early days when farmers’ wives had less formal education and training than today. The group has been able to ‘nurture’ members with lower-standard accommodation, stimulating them to become more professional.

Integration of ‘incomers’

Amongst Devon Farms’ strengths is their ability to encompass and integrate a diversity of members in a pragmatic way: *“They are going to be there anyway, operating. It’s better to have these people join your group and channel them to the way of thinking and bring their ideas into the group and share business than be in competition”.* There is great diversity among the members, in terms of the size of their tourism businesses, the nature of the tourism activities they provide and the scale of their farms. However, any potential tension caused by such differences is overcome

by the collective marketing goals: *“We have the whole range from 5 acres till 600 acres. But they don’t have different interests in terms of tourism. They get together and do what it takes. The chairman with more 60 acres is keen on getting tourists, as someone with 5 acres would. It doesn’t matter, the objectives are the same”*. Over the last 10 years, the number of “incomer” members has increased, resulting in a greater mix of farmers from different backgrounds. The tension between “traditional” farmer and ex-urban “incomers,” which had been reported in the last report, seems to be more or less overcome in the last few years: *“People coming in from other professions, which is what brings us up to speed, because they know what is going to be the next thing. Like, we’re doing on-line booking. That’s going to be quite exciting.”* Some traditional farmers seem to be somewhat cynical about the farming skills and experience of the incomers and feel that they should not take over Devon Farms. But they also realise that these members have more time to commit to Devon Farms, which is beneficial to the cooperative. The general feeling is that incomers contribute to the variety of services and offer new useful skills, such as internet skills: *“You need ‘outside blood’ so you know what the visitors want. Farmers’ wives have always lived on the farm, so they see things from the farmers’ perspectives and don’t necessarily know what visitors want. That’s where incomers really help us”*. In a broader sense, as noted in Section 3.1, the integration of incomers into Devon Farms contributes to an amalgam of agri-ruralist views of traditional farmers and more post-productive views of incomers.

A challenge to the future cohesion of the cooperative is the question of working farms. There is ongoing discussion as to whether businesses without a “real” working farm should become members of Devon Farms. The current situation is that the cooperative devolves the decision to individual local groups, but this could change in the future when Devon Farmers needs more members to cover their costs: *“We have had a few people who wanted to join Devon Farms but who were not really farming. They might have a country house, with 2 acres and a few chickens, but then you have to decide they can’t join, because we are selling our organisation as a stay on a farm, these are our criteria. It is up to the local groups to decide.”*

5.4 Governance of markets

The history of Devon Farms indicates positive developments in the domain of governance markets. The cooperative initially developed out of the ten Farm Holiday Groups which were operating under the umbrella organisation Farm Holiday Bureau, now Farm Stay UK. The members at the time felt that county-level marketing was the most appropriate approach, as visitors were usually not able to distinguish between parts of Devon but would know where Devon was. Added to this was the need to achieve economies of scale. With a collective pool of money the members were able to produce a better-quality, more professional and colored brochure to be provided to tourist information centers. The members also wanted to produce a free tourist brochure to replace the ‘Stay on a Farm’ booklet which was sold for £6 and was perceived to be out-dated. The neighbouring county of Cornwall, with access to much European funding, was producing brochure in color, and the members felt that Devon needed to keep up. The formation of Devon Farms also helped spread bookings, which shows a sense of solidarity between the members. *“Some areas were getting a lot of bookings and others hardly any. It helped to spread that trade to areas which weren’t that well positioned in the county. It became a marketing tool”*.

In Devon as a whole, farm tourism is of great economic importance today (see the figures in the first Etude report). For instance, one of the member farms has 120 acres, yet would not survive without the B&B business. For others, agriculture remains the most important source of income, but in general, the two businesses are economically intertwined: *“One sits on the other really. One without the other wouldn’t work. People are interested in the animals. Without that we would have to market the accommodation in a different way. One rides on the other. And also without tourism we couldn’t cope with another family here, with only agriculture”*.

There are large differences among the individual farms. Some attract a lot of repeating visitors, while others *“who started farm tourism years ago, now face more difficulties in tourism but have to keep doing it”*. Some incomers seem to be doing very well in attracting visitors by offering “farm experiences,” such as hands-on experiences with a variety of rare animals, farm education and workshops. Farm tourism is a durable economic strategy in Devon which is, together with Cornwall, the most important holiday destination for UK visitors. Farm tourism is also a unique product; individual farms can distinguish themselves from others and offer a large variety of products and services. Some Devon Farms members use the services of booking agencies, but most undertake all work themselves: *“We left English Country Cottages, a big farm tourism company, as soon as we could because they charged a 25% commission on the deals plus other costs. We were also not allowed to turn down bookings”*.

Devon Farms is not the only farm tourism organisation in Devon, but it displays some unique characteristics such as low costs, co-operation, individual freedom and voluntary work. Its marketing strategy is to attract a large variety of visitors. Some members also try to extend the season by attracting couples outside the traditional holiday-period. There is however scope for improving the existing marketing strategy. One respondent observed, for instance, that B&B businesses should charge more at peak times: *“They now have fixed prices throughout the year. They need to market themselves better”*. One of the questions that Devon Farms is currently trying to resolve is the type of marketing tool to be employed by the members; for example whether the cooperative should concentrate on printed brochures, online marketing, or both. While its website is operating successfully, Devon Farms faces the challenge of improving the quality of its brochures.

There is also an ongoing debate over the new online booking system. Many members feel that it is important for them to be “in charge” of their bookings, and not hand them over to an electronic system or an agency. Upon the introduction of the online system, however, many B&B’s accustomed to telephone bookings will need to adjust their routines. Online booking is expected to present some challenges as it will take away some of the personal contact associated with more traditional booking methods, such as opportunities to inform visitors in advance of what may be expected from a stay on a farm: *“You have to give visitors information: farms smell, its noisy etc. You have to get across that it is a working farm”*. Participation in online booking is Entirely voluntary. Members can choose whether to use the facility or not.

5.5 Endogeneity

Farm tourism is in itself an endogenous development initiative insofar as it mobilises, redefines and reconfigures local resources in ways that enhance the livelihoods of participating farms and their control of these resources. Farm tourism, as developed by Devon Farms, also indicates another defining characteristic of endogeneity: it is organised according to local models of resource combination. The cooperative has embraced and incorporated Devon's long-established local/organic food culture. For many B&Bs members, for instance, farmhouse breakfast (and occasionally evening meals), alongside the physical/environmental assets of the farm and the locale, is the crucial selling point.

To many Devon Farms members, farm tourism also crystallises their sense of connectedness with the land. Some traditional farmers have lived on their farms for decades and generations. At times religious feelings may also play a part: *"You farm with nature and you treat everything as you want to be treated. I am not a religious fanatic, but it is just part of my life.... If I get out for a walk and see all God's wonderful creatures, there has got to be a purpose. I have often said, when I come here, I leave my mark. You can leave it better, you look after it as well as possible and perhaps leave it for the next generation...."*

There is also a new trend of visitors showing interest in experiencing traditional skills connected to the land, such as making home-made products, gardening, cooking with local products etc. At a time when more people face uncertainties, economic crises and fast (technological) development, there is a need for a sense of belonging. As one respondent pointed out: *"Maybe technology is too fast, and they don't have their roots, but they want to come back and find their roots again. They want stability and comfort and maybe it is the feeling that we are in this economic recession; people want to have 'the food that granny used to make', it is comfort, things that make you feel good and warm and secure, all these factors. [Contemporary life] is an emotional rollercoaster. ... The world is so fast that we don't belong any more."*

Agri-environmental subsidies have allowed some farmers to re-convert some parts of their farm assets to the late nineteenth-century structures, which strengthens the link between endogeneity and sustainability: *"We created a new orchard, looked at the maps of 1880. Where there was small woodland, we cleared it and fenced it off, replanted it and fenced some fields that have gone amalgamated; we have gone back to where they were in 1880 and put on fences. Those areas we graze with native breeds"*.

5.6 Sustainability

The success of Devon Farms represents intertwining of sustainable and economic motives. Promotion of renewable energy, for example, is encouraged by public relations related motivations and used as a marketing tool. Devon Farms "gently" encourages the members to work more sustainably, by giving tips on such initiatives as the use of photovoltaic cells, which also provides a financial pay-back: *"We don't push it. There is nothing more irritating as to tell a farmer he should be green,*

because he is as green as you can get. He recycles everything. But what we do is e.g. Green Tips”.

The more traditional farmers, who did not go the route of intensification and specialisation, tend to shift towards more sustainable agriculture, encouraged by agri-environmental schemes, which also has the effect of decreasing potential differences between them and incomers: *“Even the most traditional farmers appreciate how important the landscape is. They have been attracted to an entry level scheme, payments you get for basic things for the environment. Farmers have joined that as a bit of extra income. So this has slowly brought things around to a fairly common view point as well”.*

Incomers seem to have a special interest in sustainable agriculture by, for example, contributing to biodiversity, using less inputs, restoring the landscape or producing special breeds or varieties. One respondent describes it as: *“farming the land that is available to you in such a way that you are able to continue to undertake farming without resources being drained so that your inputs and outputs are equal.”*

5.7 Novelty

Devon Farms tries to keep abreast of the latest developments in tourism by using a website for marketing, developing an on-line booking system, and updating its brochures. The novelties focus more on collective aspects, which means improvement of the joint marketing strategy, than on tourism innovation on the level of individual businesses, which is considered the responsibility of the entrepreneurs themselves.

As discussed earlier, many new (and some old) members have developed new *experiences* for guests, and there are ample examples to attest to this. One incomer has developed a visitor centre that facilitates educational visits (such as school visits by children with learning disabilities). Another tries to educate visitors by taking them out to the farm and talking to them about the *“realities of farming, sheep breeds, government agricultural policy, how to cook meat,”* as part of their effort to re-establish the connection between people and farms. One of the old members turned a part of their land into woodland and developed a farm walk. A young member intends to provide nature education for children, give bird-fly demonstrations in co-operation with a Faulkner, courses for pig keepers, knitting and natural dying workshops, etc.

There is further scope for novelty production, such as the development of new activity packages, and especially cross-sector activities that respond to the retro trend where (young urban) visitors may learn traditional farm related skills such as making jam and cream making, bread baking, knitting, traditional cooking, and gardening. Traditional farmers’ wives in particular possess many of such skills, which they are not often aware of, yet which can be marketed and packaged into new tourist products. *“We could do workshops, we could extend our seasons, get more people. I had a group of ladies in their thirties in my self-catering; they just wanted to knit in the weekend. They love the wool shop here. They got inspiration from colors of the countryside. We could do more, we are missing something here.”*

Novelty production is thus linked to endogeneity, in that both involve a creative recombination of territorial resources, farm activities and land use. However, the potential of these new packages has not been fully developed to date. While a lack of

labour seems to be the most important constraint, cooperation and collective pooling of skills and resources may facilitate this process (see also Section 5.10).

5.8 Institutional arrangements

Devon Farms does not have a consistent working relationship with Visit Devon or the Devon County Council, and has little contact with unions, although individual members may be actively involved with organisations such as the National Farmers Union (NFU). This is partly explained by the fact that the cooperative does not aim to become a political organisation. Its prime objective is for farmers to get together to market their businesses and to influence legislation, regulations, grant schemes, etc. which impact on the members' businesses (such as the EU tax legislation that treats cottages as taxable investments). Individual members participate in different networks; for example one member participates in the Council of Rare Breeds Survival Trust; another is actively involved in Uplands Farming Group of Dartmoor NFU and in the Moor Skills Project whose aim is to educate the next generation of farmers about the skills of Dartmoor farming.

Several members expressed concern over the bureaucracy of the public sector and the amount of 'red tape' that interferes with their businesses. Examples include the requirement for sheep tagging, which could cause infection when the tags are ripped off by bushes, and the increasing hygienic and safety regulation, which restricts on-farm activities such as the production of home-made cream: *"25 years ago, all the farms made their own cream and sell it to the neighbors in the village. But you are not allowed to do that unless it is all tested and inspected. It makes it hard, it is overregulated and then it dies"*. The planning restrictions for new rural development are also perceived to be too strict: *"The restrictions on land and building use have been tough really. It is very restrictive. It needs to be reviewed in some ways to help the sustainability of the countryside"*.

Devon Farms has received minimal assistance, financial or otherwise, from outside bodies to date. Grants for new tourism activities have recently been discontinued in Devon, and consequently there is no public funding to assist organisations such as Devon Farms. Individual members may receive assistance from different farming organisations such as the NFU, but this has not happened at the cooperative level. Our respondents observed that tourism is not a priority on the Devon County Council's current development agenda. Visit Devon, for instance, encountered a number of operational and organisational problems, which eventually saw the departure of the former chief executive. Devon Farms members feel "let down" by such lack of public/statutory support in Devon, especially in comparison to other rural areas such as Cornwall and Wales where greater support for farm tourism initiatives is available: *"Devon seems to miss out. I don't know why. We've had Foot and Mouth; we've had all sorts of problems. We just seem to miss out on a lot of funding. ... We try, but we don't seem to get support from the public sector at all."*

5.9 Devon Farms and the rural web

The rural web

In this follow-up research it has become apparent that in the last few years Devon Farms has experienced a number of developments which has led to strengthening of some rural development dimensions and weakening of the others. This has caused some change to the dynamics of the emerging rural web, as explained below.

The relationship between endogeneity and sustainability

As noted in the previous study, farm tourism as operated and envisioned by Devon Farms is not only a market governance initiative but an endogenous development strategy for farmers to counter external forces and to achieve greater control of their resources and circumstances (Kanemasu et al, 2008). In this context, the relationship between endogeneity and sustainability has been strengthened by European agri-environmental schemes, an increased focus on local food, the existence of planning regulations which protect the landscape, and a variety of measures to promote green tourism. The branding communication strategy discussed earlier is, though not sufficiently specific, coherent with this development trajectory.

Rural-urban relationships

Devon's many and diverse "deepening" activities (to enlarge value added through alternative food networks etc.) and "broadening" activities (to pursue multifunctional rural enterprises through farm tourism etc.) present significant scope for re-shaping rural-urban relationships (see Kanemasu et al. 2008). This follow-up has found that the continuing influx of incomers (especially from urban areas) as well as the return of farmers' children with experience of working and living in urban areas, presents a notable potential for the development of innovative services and products to meet urban demands such as education, workshops or nature walks, which potentially strengthen rural-urban relations.

The relationship between social capital and institutional arrangements

There have been a number of developments in the recent years that have impacted on the scope and effectiveness of public-private cooperation. As a result of the recent change in the local authority's approach towards development initiatives and a large budget deficit, policy support for rural networks such as the Devon Rural Network and the Devon Food and Drink group has been considerably down-sized. This seems to have undermined the possibilities for public-private coordination, and it has become more difficult for development actors to influence policy through such networks. Cross-sectoral cooperation, which could potentially benefit from regional networks of entrepreneurs, is also hampered by these recent developments. In addition, public grants for new tourism activities have been recently discontinued in Devon. Consequently, farm tourism initiatives like Devon Farms face a difficult situation where no substantial public/statutory support is available to them.

The relationship between socio-economical conditions, eco-economical developments, institutional arrangements and competitiveness

As a result of the changing international market conditions, the cost-price squeeze on agriculture and the up-scaling trend in farming, food processing and distribution, Devon Farms members face some challenges in maintaining their competitiveness. On the one hand, the current socio-economic conditions favour large-scale

commercial farming, and as noted above, the arrival of newcomers also contribute to the up-scaling trend through selling or letting of parts of their farmland to commercial farmers. On the other hand, the development of rural services, multi-functional land use and small-scale sustainable investments may favour a more eco-economical trajectory. Such a development trajectory is strengthened in Devon by institutional arrangements such as agri-environmental schemes and grants for diversification and green tourism promotion. Increasing urban demands for recreation, local food and organic products may also reinforce this trajectory, although the current economical crisis has negatively impacted on these demands.

The relationship between social capital, leadership, novelty and market governance

As we have seen, the active and ongoing cooperation among Devon Farms members has stimulated the development of new marketing tools such as online booking. Whilst the scope for novelty production has not been fully explored to date due to a lack of labour, Devon Farms may mobilise its wealth of social capital to stimulate the exchange of ideas among members and to facilitate cooperation and training, which could in turn strengthen the cooperative's capacity for novelty production. Opportunities lie in the development of new 'farm experience packages' and cross-sectoral product-market combinations which can add value to farms, such as craftsmanship workshops, nature & landscape exploration, and activities in health and well-being. Devon Farms enjoys effective leadership, which may be usefully employed to accelerate this process through agenda-setting, development of new skills (with provision of specific training) or promotion of study visits to innovative farms.

5.10. Future challenges and new product-market combinations

Future threats and challenges

Devon Farms faces some future threats and challenges:

- Maximising the use of IT and related *technology* is a key challenge to some Devon Farms members who are accustomed to more traditional methods of communication and administration. Devon Farms has begun to address this with the development of the online booking system.
- *Animal diseases and infections* may undermine farm tourism. One respondent mentioned, for instance, that educational activities for children had been put on hold because of an e-coli outbreak. The issue of TB spread via wandering badgers has also caused some tension between environmental organisations and some farmers.
- *Membership maintenance* may present a challenge in the coming years, given that not many young people are coming into the business while many current operators are expected to retire in the next 10-20 years. This creates problems of securing successors, despite some cases of farmers' children returning to and taking over their parents' businesses after working in a professional field for a number of years. Devon Farms could provide "mentoring" to these young people where skills and experiences can be shared. Given the financial implications of membership, the cooperative may also need to explore a way

of reconsidering the membership criteria without losing its unique identity.

- *Labour shortage* is a significant challenge which could have a large impact on the future of farm tourism. Most Devon Farms members juggle multiple tasks, working long hours to attend to care work (caring for children, older parents, etc.), farming, administration, household chores, and community activities in addition to running their tourism businesses. This impedes the possibilities for developing new activities: *“Even with my daughter on the farm, we still have too less time to do the things we want to do. ... What we do is 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We don’t go off on weekends and holidays. It is a life style. That’s what you are used to and what you have been brought up to do”*. Given the *labour-extensive* nature of many farm tourism businesses (especially B&Bs), a likely future trends is a shift towards more incomers than traditional farmers taking up farm tourism, combined with a small-holding: *“B&B compared to self-catering is more labour-intensive, so it may not be an option for farmers’ wives in the future. If children of farmers do return, it will be a matter of necessity rather than choice. But incomers will carry on farm tourism. Smaller scale farms will be sold off – farmland will be integrated into larger farms whereas farm buildings will be sold to incomers. In this sense, farm tourism as a traditional farmers’ wives business will not remain in the future. Farm tourism will therefore become a business for smaller-scale, new farmers rather than traditional farmers.*
- With the number of incomers steadily increasing within Devon Farms, it will be important for the cooperative to continue to cultivate the members’ *skills* to draw heterogeneous interests and agendas together under a single umbrella (i.e. to draw traditional farmers and incomers together) to fully overcome the dangers of a “contested countryside.”
- A key strength of Devon Farms is the unique and high quality products and services that its members offer (e.g. home-cooked food, landscape, accommodation). This follow-up study found, for instance, that a member won an award for excellence in breakfast, and another member a farming magazine’s award for the Most Beautiful Farm in the South West. One of the key future challenges is to sustain this high quality standard. At present Devon Farms does not have its own quality control system: *“Each group goes to visit farms, but we don’t grade them. The visits are for new members coming in. The secretary will visit a new member and take on board the welcome they have, their ambiance, their approach, and check that it is a farm. And check that they have a grading. If they are not sure about something they have to discuss it at group level and get the majority vote”*. In order to become a member, a business must be a member of one of Devon Farms recognised local farm holiday groups; be inspected by either Quality in Tourism or the AA; and operate accommodations on a farm with a source of income from agriculture (although this last criterion has been relaxed somewhat lately). The absence of an independent quality control mechanism is an area that Devon Farms may investigate further.

New Market Themes

Within Devon Farms the linkages between *novelties and market governance* can be further strengthened. One of the future challenges lies in the development of new product-market combinations which will link farm tourism to other sectors and offer a broader range of experience to visitors.

To develop such new product-market combinations, economical sectors should be linked more closely with rural, endogenous qualities, which can in turn lead to new market-themes (see Figure 19)¹⁶. Some examples are given below, based on the rural qualities that emerge from the interviews conducted in this study.

Figure 19 Suggestions for new product-market combinations

Markets	Rural qualities	Theme
Food & craftsmanship	Home-made products & traditional cooking (wool, jam, bread, cream, nuts, etc.)	ROOTS OF DEVON
Outdoor living & gardening	Skills in farming & gardening and maintenance of the landscape	OUTDOOR DEVON
Culture	Locations of novels Stories about historical Devon	LITERARY DEVON

The themes can function as inspiration to align different entrepreneurs around a common goal. To suggest how such themes may be developed, we have described their possible contents and illustrated them with reference images from rural communities outside the UK.

ROOTS OF DEVON

In order to strengthen the relationship between the general branding strategy, the current marketing of food, and farm tourism, the Roots of Devon theme may be developed. This encompasses tourist activities related to farm skills such as:

- Workshops/courses in home-made products
- On-farm sale of products made of local resources (wood, wool, meat)
- Educational activities
- Workshops/courses in indoor craftsmanship such as knitting
- Tea gardens

Reference images below (Figures 20, 21) show the Tea garden in Millingen, the Netherlands, which combines a tea house with a large beautiful garden and sculptures, located in a nature area which attracts about 35.000 people a year (see figure 20/21) (Haarmann and Horlings, 2010).

¹⁶ This is based on the New Markets approach, developed by Telos, Brabant centre for sustainable development in the Netherlands.

Figures 20 and 21: The tea garden in Millingen, the Netherlands



OUTDOOR DEVON

Many Devon Farms members are already engaged in relevant outdoor activities such as developing attractive gardens, cutting hedges in a traditional manner, planting new orchards, etc. People seeking to relax and experience outdoor life in Devon may join such activities, which would also relieve farmers of part of the work pressure. This theme encompasses potential activities such as:

- Workshops/courses in landscape restoration
- Educational experience in Devon gardening
- Workshops/courses in flower arrangement
- Exploration/adventure experience in the countryside

The reference image below (see Figure 22) shows a voluntary landscaping group who contributes to the maintenance of the quality of agricultural landscape in Europe.

Figure 22: Voluntary people maintaining the landscape



LITERARY DEVON

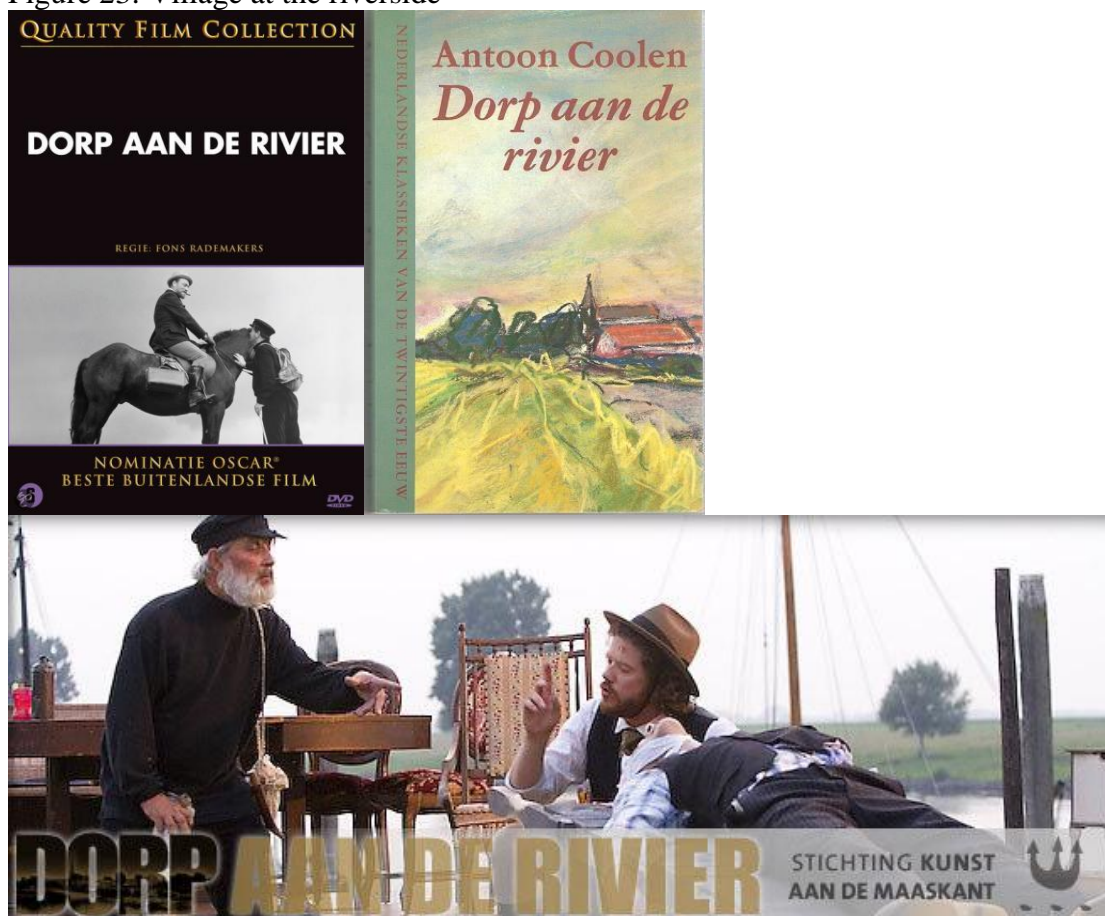
There are locations in Devon linked to renowned writers, films and novels such as Agatha Christie (Totness) and the Hound of the Baskervilles. Services may be

developed for tourists to visit these locations, combined with farm stays. Other potential activities are:

- Annual book markets
- Film festivals
- Theme attractions based on novels
- Open-air theatrical plays

The reference images below (Figure 23) show the theatrical plays performed in the little village of Lith in the Netherlands based on Anton Koolen's book and Bert Haanstra's film 'Dorp aan de rivier' (*Village at the riverside*). The open-air spectacle developed here may be seen as an example of linking between culture, the media and tourist events (Haarmann and Horlings, 2010).

Figure 23: Village at the riverside



6. Conclusions and recommendations

Rural development in Devon

- There are indications that Devon will likely become less of a ‘contested countryside’ in the future. Coalition building (as demonstrated by Devon Farms) and existing planning mechanisms have the potential to combine the aesthetic and environmental concerns held by the new rural residents with the economical and social aspirations of traditional rural residents. In the long run this may overcome the long-standing contestation between *agri-ruralism* and *post-productivism*.
- We have identified developments that suggest the emergence of *eco-economical clusters* in Devon in the form of farm-tourism, local food, (more) sustainable agriculture and small-scale energy projects. Such developments in agriculture, food and energy strengthen the link between *endogeneity* and *sustainability*, supported by *institutional arrangements* (e.g. council-led projects, the green tourism scheme, planning mechanisms, EU-subsidiary schemes and public procurement). This development trajectory is however threatened by the current recession, the cost squeeze on agriculture and developments in the domain of *governance of market*, such as the up-scaling of food processing/distribution and the decrease of local abattoirs.
- The domain of *market governance* is strengthened by *institutional arrangements* such as the capital grant scheme for farmers but also weakened by the reduced support for tourism. The change in the governance style impacts on the domain of *social capital* in that the local authority will invest less in community development.
- Public-private co-operation is still strong in Devon. For example the Economic Partnership functions as a co-ordinating framework. However, some of the successful arrangements described in the previous report, such as the Devon Rural Network, are currently put on hold, not only due to budgetary cuts, but also a result of the recent change in the Devon County Council’s governance style. The local authority’s role in rural development is increasingly seen as one of facilitation rather than a pro-active, leading one. As a result, the potential for cross-sectoral business development is not fully explored today.
- Devon has a branding strategy which focuses predominantly on destination marketing. This strategy is however yet to fulfil its potential to contribute to a collectively shared storyline for the region or to function as an instrument for developing new products and markets. This is due to a number of factors including the following:
 - The branding strategy functions mainly as a “communication style” to be used in advertising, which makes it difficult to use the brand as an instrument for steering rural development or to align businesses around a collective agenda;

- Lack of uniqueness: The brand does not make it sufficiently clear what distinguishes Devon from neighbouring counties such as Cornwall and Sussex.
- Lack of vision: The branding strategy lacks an ambition, an indication of what Devon wants to be in the future. This results in an absence of the development of quality guidelines and new product-market combinations;
- Fragmentation of marketing: Despite the role played by the Devon County Council, there is some fragmentation which hampers the marketing of Devon as a single unity. For instance, the marketing of Devon Farms is conducted separated from Visit Devon; similarly, food is marketed separately by Food and Drink Devon.
- Broad profile of visitors: Devon seeks to attract diverse groups of tourists and visitors, which makes it difficult for businesses to specialise in niches or specific product-market combinations.
- Lack of international marketing: While Devon is a major tourist destination for UK holiday makers, possibilities of cultivating an international market may be pursued in the future.

Devon Farms

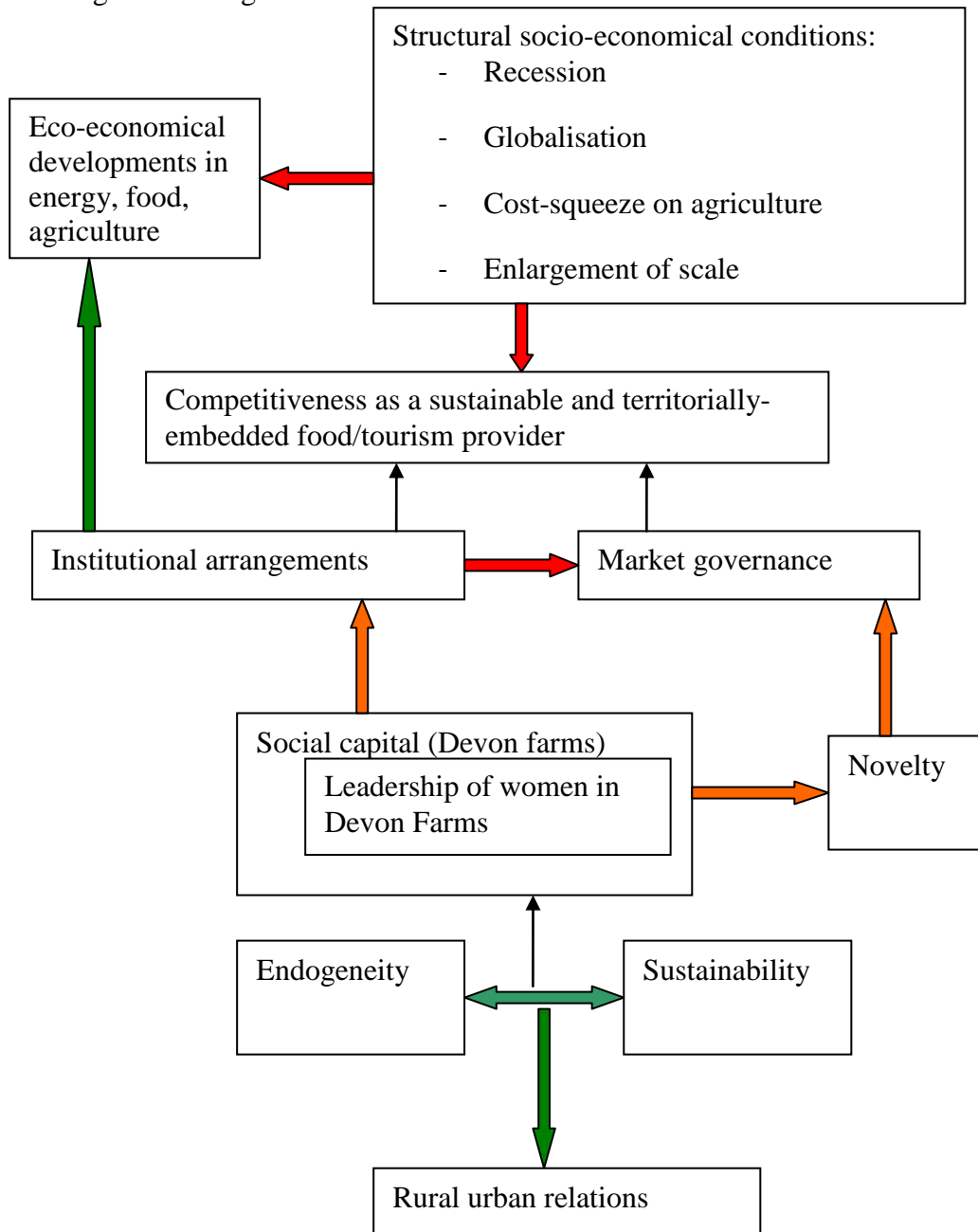
- The follow-up case study of Devon Farms shows that the developments in the last few years have strengthened some linkages between rural development domains and weakened others. Accordingly, the configuration of the rural web has shifted from what was identified in the previous study (see Figure 4). The current dynamics of the rural web is shown in Figure 24.
- The strength of Devon Farms lies in its unique “shared leadership”, which provides a strong basis for the cultivation and mobilisation of bonding and bridging social capital, and drives the cooperative forward even in the absence of public-sector support. The ITS/THEY dimension of leadership (see Figure 18) seems to be less developed, however. Devon Farms could strengthen this dimension by cross-sector co-operation with other entrepreneurial initiatives in Devon and public-private co-operation with the Devon County Council, which would strengthen the link between social capital and the domain of institutional arrangements.
- Devon’s well-established synergy between endogeneity and sustainability strengthens rural-urban relationships. Rural-urban relationships affect Devon Farms in three ways. First, there is a continuing influx of incomers from urban areas starting small-holdings and farm tourism businesses. Second, Devon Farms relies on the flow of visitors from urban areas. Third, there seems to be a degree of return migration of the children of farmers who work for some years in urban areas before returning to the farm, bringing with them new ideas about meeting urban demands.
- Devon Farms is negatively influenced by external socio-economical developments such as: 1) the current economic recession which has resulted in a fall in bookings; 2) international market forces which have led to the closure

of smaller farms and the up-scaling of larger commercial farms; 3) The up-scaling of food processing and distribution infrastructure, which constrains the marketing of local food; and 4) The cost-price squeeze on agriculture (although meat prices have risen in the last two years as a result of the changing exchange rate).

- Institutional arrangements in the form of policy measures have negatively impacted on the domain of market governance due to the decreased public-sector support for tourism in general and Devon Farms in particular.
- Future challenges for Devon Farms include:
 - To incorporate and maximise the opportunities offered by IT and related technological developments;
 - To effectively cope with agricultural problems (diseases and infections) that limit farm's accessibility;
 - To increase the membership to secure sufficient marketing resources;
 - To effectively resolve the ongoing labour shortage problem. There are indications that less labor-intensive farm tourism (such as self-catering accommodations) will increase in the future, with small-scale farmers playing a more prominent role in farm tourism;
 - To continue to cultivate *skills* of the members to draw heterogeneous interests and agendas together under a single umbrella (i.e. to draw traditional farmers and incomers together) to fully overcome the dangers of a "contested countryside"; and
 - To keep the current high quality of food and accommodation and to offer a broader range of products and services to visitors.
- A key future challenge for Devon Farms is to draw market governance and novelty closer – i.e. to develop new strategic product-market combinations such as farm experience packages. Some suggestions for new product-market combinations, organised around three specific themes, have been suggested:
 - 1) Roots of Devon
 - 2) Outdoor Devon
 - 3) Literary Devon

Figure 24 Devon Farms: the adapted rural web

Red = weakened relations
 Green = strengthened relations
 Orange = challenges for the future.



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