

Institutionalized patterns in the public debate about the Common Agricultural Policy

Renate Werkman (renate.werkman@wur.nl)

Katrien Termeer (katrien.termeer@wur.nl)

Public Administration and Policy Group

Wageningen University and Research Centre, Bode 48

Postbus 8130

6700 EW Wageningen

The Netherlands

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been subject to continuous change, the ‘health check’ being the most recent initiative. With an increasing attention in the CAP for societal values, the numbers of stakeholders have also strongly increased. In the Netherlands, different new stakeholders were invited to participate in debates about the future of Dutch agriculture and the Dutch input in the health-check discussion. The large variety in stories, arguments and interests that they put forward, results in a highly complex debate. We studied why realizing effective debates was so difficult and how to improve the quality of the debate. Document analyses, a survey and workshops showed that stakeholders unintentionally create patterns in mutual interactions that cause stagnation. Examples are (1) asking for change of the CAP, but at the same time shying away and asking for stability; (2) having ‘cosy conversations’ with like-minded people, thereby excluding new stakeholders; (3) fixation on CAP-content and exchange of official standpoints, making key dilemma’s undiscussable. We describe these patterns, elaborate on the underlying fixations and suggest some interventions for unlocking the debate.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the difficulties experienced in the Netherlands in realizing effective debates about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the future of farming and the rural areas. Food security and acceptable standards of living were originally the most important goals for the development of the CAP after World War I. It instigated the development of a leading paradigm focused on ongoing

modernisation and increases in productivity: the so called modernisation paradigm (Hendriks & Grin 2007). On the national level, agricultural policy came into being in a closed policy community, the so-called iron triangle of the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers' organisations and agricultural specialists from Parliament. This triangle was based on a strong consensus on policy content (Bardsley 2006; Breeman 2006; Derkzen 2008). Outsiders, who were not specialized in agriculture, were not interested in or not involved in these matters. This changed with a growing societal and political concern about the negative side effects of agricultural modernisation, such as environmental pollution, trade distortions, landscape pollution and the well being of animals (Wiskerke et al. 2003; Grin et al. 2004). The traditional goals were no longer able to serve as a justification for the CAP policy and the accompanying expenditures. The iron triangle itself became the subject of criticism and was singled out as an important reason for the environmental problems in the agricultural sector (Frouws 1998). Various actors started pleading for a transition towards a European Common Agricultural Policy that was more sustainable and fair and that embraced the rural areas (Tilzey 2000; Winter & Gaskell 1998). This resulted in many incremental and more structural reforms, with varying success (cf. Winter & Gaskell 1998; Downs 1991). The most recent initiative to reform the CAP is the 2008 'Health Check' initiative. This 'Health Check' initiative has as one of its goals to align the CAP more with current societal concerns over climate change, biofuels, water management and the protection of biodiversity (European Commission, 'Preparing for the "Health Check" of the CAP reform', 2007).

Reforming the CAP and realizing the transition towards more sustainable agriculture and vital rural areas not only calls for new policies but also for new ways of *polycymaking*. Opening up the policy process to those who were previously outsiders (environmental organisations, consumers and citizens, recreants and inhabitants of rural areas) became considered as necessary for reform and for broadening agricultural policy to include a wider range of concerns (Akkerman, Hajer & Grin 2004; Hendriks & Grin 2007; Wiskerke et al. 2003; Derkzen 2008; Prager & Nagel 2008; Greer 2005; Murdoch 2006; Janssens & Van Tatenhove 2000; Morris, Mills & Crawford 2000). The Dutch ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (ANF) for instance started a societal dialogue, a web-discussion concerning the CAP and engaged in 'kitchen table conversations' with farmers and citizens.

But in spite of these promising prospects, participation in policy making and policy debates is not without problems (Breeman 2006; Warner 2006; Buanes et al. 2004; Gunton & Day 2003; Edelenbos 2005; Hajer & Wagenaar 2003; Akkerman et al. 2004). Concerning the CAP-debates, attempts to involve new stakeholders and to facilitate public debates have progressed with difficulties and disappointments: public servants find it really hard to realize vivid debates with a varied group of participants. New stakeholders put forward a large variety in stories, arguments and interests, which complicated the realization of effective debates and made it difficult to generate relevant contents. Facing these difficulties is important (Werkman & Termeer 2007).

Aims and objectives

In this paper we analyze a series of debates on the CAP and the rural areas in The Netherlands. Our goal is to understand why realizing effective debates is so difficult and to theorize on how to improve the quality of the debate. The article proceeds with an exploration of the theoretical concepts that can be helpful in analysing and understanding the difficulties in the CAP-debates in section 2. The third section describes the multi method approach we used to collect and analyse our data. The fourth section describes the main results in terms of fixations and vicious patterns that cause stagnation in the debates. In the fifth section, we discuss our results and their theoretical implications. We conclude with some suggestions for how CAP-debates might be better organized.

2. Theory

In the previous section we argued that new policy contents ask for new ways of policymaking and including new participants. We also mentioned that involving new stakeholders lead to a large variety in stories and perspectives and that realizing vivid and effective debates was difficult. These arguments underline the usefulness of studying both cognition (assumptions of stakeholders and policy contents) and interactions (the process of debating) and how process influences content and vice versa (e.g. Van Dongen et al. 1996; Voogt 1991; Van Twist & Termeer 1991). Cognitive approaches argue that (part of) people's behavior is influenced by frames or models created in past experiences of which we are not (conscious) at that moment

(Kess 1992). These unconscious frames are at the basis of our actions and the decisions we take (Stacey 1996). Cognition and interaction are inextricably connected. Interaction with others around us influences and forms our cognitive system and in interaction, we continually adjust our cognitive system (Engeström 1990; Van Dongen 1996). In these interaction processes, groups or communities of people who are communicating intensively are created. People in these communities develop shared, or at least workable, understandings and meanings and they share certain goals and ways of thinking and acting. They often have a shared orientation and give meaning to the world by sharing experiences and telling stories (Taylor 2003; Weick 1995). “Situations, organizations and environments are talked into existence” (409). Institutionalisation is the result of all this talking, acting and making sense, which, in turn, influences talking, acting and making sense (cf. Weick, 2005). While sharing and creating experiences in interaction, people develop and confirm rules, meanings and routines. The resulting social structures (meanings and routines) are both imposed on and upheld by the actors and transformed into behavioral patterns that ‘enact’ the institution. In this manner, institutions are continuously produced and reproduced. These meanings and routines after time are institutionalised and objectified, for example in the form of rules, procedures and agreements that everyone is expected to follow (cf. Hajer 2000; (Scott 1995); (Scott 1995). However, communication *between* communities is often characterized by a lack of co-orientation, which complicates these interactions (Taylor 2003). In these conversations, people create meaning and new realities, too, which can result in shared, but also in conflicting meanings. In this manner, people create an organization, but also all kinds of problems and successes together. In configuration theory, communities of interacting actors are referred to as ‘configurations’. Configurations arise because people not only develop shared meanings in interactions but also often lean towards people who harbor similar meanings. This is a causal circular process in which a group of people (a social structure) produces content (a cognitive structure) and vice versa. The social structure is both the precursor and the result of the cognitive structure. A social-cognitive configuration is characterized by a group of people with an intensive interaction pattern, agreed upon interaction rules and shared meanings (Van Dongen et al. 1996). In our case of the CAP-debates, the previously mentioned iron triangle can be viewed

as a configuration, but groups in the environmental movement as well tend towards closure.

Configurations are not static, unchangeable entities. They change over time. Not all actors are as deeply 'included' in a configuration and therefore not all are as strongly inclined towards the values and convictions that characterize the configuration (Van Twist & Termeer 1991). Moreover, many people recognize themselves in the meanings of different configurations and interact in different configurations as well. At the same time, due to configurations policy processes have the tendency to stagnate. Whenever people talk above all with people who have similar realities and only assign meanings in those interactions, the configuration closes. The internal homogeneity increases and the external borders harden. Other meanings, actors and interaction rules are excluded. Yanow describes this process of closure as follows: 'Through a process of interaction, members of a community come to use the same or similar cognitive mechanisms, engage in the same or similar acts and use the same or similar language to talk about thought and action. Group processes reinforce these, often promoting internal cohesion as an identity marker with respect to other communities' (2003, p. 237).

When actors become closely included in such configurations they can grow to be more and more convinced of their shared beliefs. They run the risk of only confirming their own perspectives and of not being open to alternative explanations or actors with different perspectives. In this case we talk about the development of fixations: non-negotiable definitions of reality or interaction rules that are seen as a tangible fact. With cognitive fixations, meanings are considered tangible facts. We speak of social fixations when it is no longer possible to reflect on the people participating and/or the interaction rules.

Underlying such fixations are the assumptions that govern people's perceptions, actions and the way in which they approach and interact with others. People are, for the most part, unaware of these assumptions and the values underlying them. Yet, these do influence the manner in which people deal with problems (cf. Schein 1991; Boje 2001; Termeer & Kessener 2007). The way in which people consequently approach others confirms their expectations and therefore their assumptions, and will fixate their assumptions even more. When people start acting on such fixations, they may become entangled in vicious patterns—cycles of repeated behaviour that are difficult to break open and cause problems such as taboos, exclusion, domination,

stereotyping and conflict (Berne 1964; Werkman 2006; Termeer & Kessener 2007). Such patterns can emerge especially when people from different configurations talk to each other from their own perception of reality. People start seeing only the perceptions of reality belonging to their configuration as confirmed and leave no space for alternative conceptions of reality. They start avoiding one another, and start seeing conflict as a tangible 'thing', an objective and unchangeable fact (Van Dongen et al. 1996). We assume that many difficulties in debating the CAP are caused by such a fixations and vicious patterns. The question is how to intervene in conjunction with processes of reality construction. Options are changing the networks in which reality is created, changing processes of interacting and learning and changing reasoning processes.

Network theory aims to change interactions by changing the institutional design of networks. This is done by for example changing the network composition (the actors and positions), changing network rules (the nature of the game, its pay-off, or position rules), changing network interactions (the unspoken of rules that influence the process), and changing network outcomes (the codes, standards or strategies that are being developed; (Klijn 2006); (Bueren 2003)). Configuration management as well focuses on interactions. Its main aim is to keep interaction between stakeholders going to prevent fixations from developing. This is done by searching for shared language, making sure no-one is excluded from interactions, stimulating reflection and turning clashes into functional conflict. If fixations have already developed, configuration management interventions aims to intervene by changing relations, behavior rules and reality definitions of actors. Interventions encompass for example introducing a third actor who can help to relax tensions and bring in alternative definitions of reality and therefore stimulate reflection on the fixated interactions. If fixations cannot be broken through, reframing might help to unblock fixations. Reframing aims to change images of reality by stimulating actors to adopt a different perspective or frame (Termeer 1993).

Drawing on the preceding exploration of theory, we can define three research questions for this paper: (a) Which configurations of stakeholders are involved in the debates on agriculture, the CAP and the rural areas in The Netherlands? (b) What happens in interactions between these stakeholders? What fixations that cause stagnation characterize these groups and what resulting vicious patterns can be

distinguished in the interactions between them? (c) How can we intervene in these patterns and unlock the debates?

3. Methods

We used document analyses, a survey and participative observation of round table conversations and workshops to study configurations of stakeholders, fixations and vicious patterns. Such a multimethod approach is also called ‘triangulation’ and has as a goal to generate solid, robust conclusions (Denzin 1970; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Silverman 1993).

3.1 Configurations of stakeholders

Document analysis We collected data about the actor groups concerned with agriculture, the CAP and the rural areas in The Netherlands through document analysis of: reports of round table discussions and other debates, official and unofficial publications, newspaper articles and website information. These data also reflected the contents of the debates and the similarities and differences in the opinions of the actor groups. We analysed the contents of the debates by coding and labeling parts of texts in the documents. This coding process can be used to quantify qualitative material and is used to distill theory from data (Glaser 1978). As more text was labeled, categories of meanings emerged from the data. By coding and tallying remarks in texts we discovered 8 ‘core subjects’ in the data. These subjects were discovered by comparing texts and labels with each other and going back to the original texts to recode them. We analysed cause-effect inferences in actors’ lines of reasoning by analysing the causal inferences that the actors made between subjects in the texts (Glaser 1978).

Survey. Based on the core subjects, we developed a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire allowed us to test for the existence of the configurations we suspected to be present from the document analysis, because it enabled us to study the extent to which opinions concerning CAP-contents were shared among groups of stakeholders. It also enabled us to study the frequency of interactions between groups of stakeholders. The questionnaire consisted of 61 questions. Fifty-eight of these questions represented statements that reflected perspectives on the content of the debates belonging to the core categories found in the document analysis (see

Appendix 1 for the statements). For each statement, the respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = do not disagree, do not agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) to what extent they agreed with it. In three additional questions, respondents were asked to tick off on a list of interest groups those 5 groups: (1) of which they valued the arguments most, (2) that they thought contributed most positively to the debates on the future of agriculture and the rural landscape and (3) that they themselves or the interest group that they counted themselves to be a part of, spoke to the most. These questions gave insight into the interactions and (therefore) the social aspect of configurations.

We approached more than 1100 actors from the groups described above, and additional actors from groups that were not represented in the document material but whom we considered relevant, such as agriculture-related service industry and agricultural processing industries. They were asked in an e-mail to fill out the questionnaire. The response to the questionnaire was almost 33 percent. Data reduction enabled us to classify the information of the 58 statements into a limited number of components or dimensions. This was done through principal components analysis. Principal components analysis transforms a set of variables into a smaller set of uncorrelated variables or components that explain most of the information of the original set (Dunteman 1989). The rotated principal components analysis was carried out on the responses to all 58 statements, using SPSS. The Kaiser-criterion (Kaiser 1960) and Cattell's *scree test* (1966) were used for selecting the number of components. Collectively, the first four components explain a reasonable proportion of variance of almost 40 percent¹. In addition, they could be easily interpreted and represented relevant factors. These four components were retained. We used the four components as dimensions and graphically displayed the groups of actors onto these dimensions using 'scatterplots' in SPSS. We also displayed the interactions between the actor groups on the dimensions by converting the answers to the question 'to what actor groups do you or the interest group that you count yourself to, speak to the most' into arrows in the scatterplot. Together, these graphs gave us insight into shared opinions, differences of opinion and the frequency of interaction between the stakeholder groups and therefore into the configurations.

¹ Detailed results from the factor analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Fixations and vicious patterns

Participant observation. Fixations are not only created but also reflected in assumptions, actions and interactions. This means that, if we want to understand how stakeholders think and act in the debates about agriculture, the rural areas and the CAP, we should study them *in the context of these debates*. We therefore chose a form of participant observation to study fixations and vicious patterns. Participant observation is appropriate when the research problem concerns meanings and interactions. It is aimed at uncovering the meanings that actors use to make sense of their daily lives. ‘Through participation, the researcher is able to observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people from the role of an insider’ (Jorgensen 1989: p. 2). Participant observation is an opportunistic research approach and can be accompanied by different kinds of research methods, such as quantitative data and arrangement of conversations (Lüders 2004).

We used two different approaches: (1) we participated in debates organized by involved actors and (2) we organized an Open Space session in which we acted as participating observers². We invited all respondents to the questionnaire to participate in this session. Almost 50 people participated, the large majority of them insiders from government, environmental organisations and farmers’ organisations. A few ordinary citizens also participated. Participants could bring their own topics of discussion to the Open Space and discuss them with the other participants. The participants brought in 10 different topics, almost all of them aimed at contents. We discussed these topics in two rounds of five and participants could sign up for the topics that interested them.

Deconstruction and causal loop diagramming. Transcriptions of conversations in the debates and the Open Space session provided data for a deeper analysis of fixations and of vicious patterns. We used deconstruction and causal loop diagramming to analyse the conversations. Deconstruction is aimed at discovering fixations and underlying images of reality. The idea is to study *how text means*,

² The meaning of an Open Space is literally ‘open space’: space for a dynamic process of dialogue and cooperation, aimed at the exploration of a certain problem. Every participant contributes to the process from his or her own expertise and influences the end result. Owen, H. (1992). Open Space technology: a user's guide. Potomac, MD, Abbott.

instead of *what* text infers (i.e., to study the content of the message) (Boje 2001). Fixations can be retrieved by studying those people, things or events that actors make a distinction between or ‘create a duality’ between. Hierarchy in a conversation for instance, or ‘us versus them’ remarks indicate certain assumptions, as well as do conflicts between what people say they think or do and the language they actually use or actions they really take (Boje 2001). To study fixations, we coded not the contents of ‘*what* people say’, like we did in the document analysis, but ‘*how* they think and do’, the fixations that are reflected in conversations and their (underlying) images of reality as well as the actions that are represented in these conversations in terms of for instance ignoring arguments or excluding other actors. We then used *causal loop diagramming* to portray the links between these fixations and their consequences for the process into vicious patterns. Causal loop diagrams are balancing or reinforcing patterns that show how interrelated variables affect one another (cf. Kim 1992). They portray patterns that actors unwittingly create and in which they keep each other imprisoned. Appendix 2 provides an example of how we coded conversations and created causal loops.

4. Results

4.1 Which configurations of stakeholders are involved in the debates?

Document analyses showed that the actors involved in the CAP debates are diverse. Besides the configuration consisting of the traditional insiders such as the public servants of the ministry of ANF (responsible for CAP-policy in the Netherlands), economists from research institutions, the farmers’ organisations and the agricultural specialists of political parties, new actors joined the debates. These consisted of non-CAP specialists from the ministry and political parties, and relatively new actors such as environmental organizations, development and consumer organizations, local governments, waterboards, recreational organisations and citizens’ initiatives.

The actors are debating eight coherent subjects: (1) preservation versus abolishment of the CAP; (2) more liberalization versus status quo; (3) the future of agriculture as an opportunity versus as a threat; (4) the preferred farm scale as large versus small; (5) farmers positively contribute to societal and ecological values and should be paid versus they should not be paid; (6) government interference versus space for

entrepreneurship; (7) commerce versus societal and ecological values; (8) univocal government policy versus plural and flexible approaches. The four most important topics as derived from these eight using principal components analysis are: a) ‘Solidarity, societal values and farm sort & size’; b) ‘Subsidising ecological values’; c) ‘Liberalisation’; and d) ‘CAP preservation’.

Based on the reflections of beliefs and meanings from the document analyses, the actors can be broadly grouped into 7 configurations (Table 1)³.

Table 1: opinions of 7 configurations on the 4 discussion topics and the participating actors

Topics	Societal / ecological values:	Farmer subsidies	Liberalisation	Future of the CAP	Actors
‘Entrepreneurship’	Societal values not central: Large-scale commercial farms, space for entrepreneurship	Less pronounced, but in general proponents when not hindered by EU policy	Mostly pro-liberalization. Provides opportunities for competitive production on world market	‘We will be ready when the CAP is abolished’. Reform CAP, more space for entrepreneurship	Large-scale farms, coalitions with agricultural organisations and ministry of LNV
‘Continuity and subsistence’	Farmers contribute to landscape and nature maintenance. ‘But we will probably have to enlarge to survive’	‘We need support to survive’. ‘Must be paid, related to regional differences & handicaps’	Interested, but mostly against full liberalisation. ‘Unable to be fully competitive in an open world market’	Preserve	Small-scale farms, ‘handicapped’ areas, agricultural organizations, agricultural trade unions, political parties
‘Nature and solidarity’	Diverse perspectives. Farmers own the land and are important actors in its maintenance; Large-scale farms do not contribute	Pay them for societal / ecological tasks but connect with strict demands and control	Problem; fear of negative consequences for nature, environment and landscape maintenance	Reform with focus on ecological values and fair trade	Nature and environmental organizations, developmental organisations, citizens, political parties
‘Normative liberal’	Farmers do not contribute to societal values.	Cost society already too much money as it is. Don’t pay them anymore	The only solution to the problems	Abolish on behalf of open world market and liberalisation	Scientists, actors from consumer organisations
‘Normative solidary’	Farmers don’t contribute to societal values. Especially large-scale	Don’t pay them	Problem; even larger, more intensive and more polluting farms	Abolish	Developmental, animal welfare, nature and environmental organisations,

³ Although the different topics are highly interrelated, for purposes of clarity we use our four most important topics to separately describe the cognitive differences between configurations.

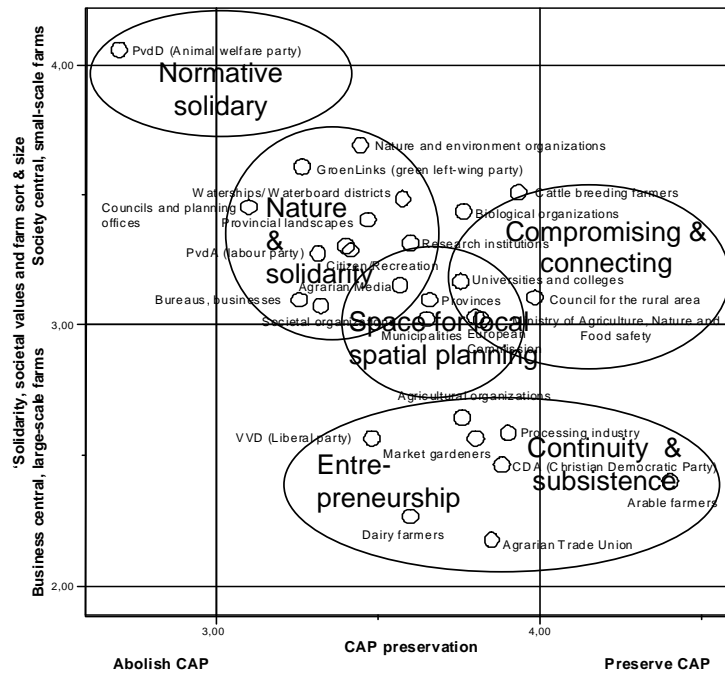
	farms have detrimental effect on nature & environment. If we keep agriculture in EU, then small-scale sustainable				anti-globalists, political parties
‘Compromising and connecting’	Compromising: dependent on different factors.	Compromising, but in general proponents of subsidies	Compromising; solution for some, problematic for others. Requires variety in policy	Reform, depending on outcome stakeholder consultations	Central government, ministry of agriculture, research institutions, advisory organisations
‘Space for local spatial planning’	Not explicit. Own claim on rural area. Strive for more financial space and space for manoeuvre	Opinion not very pronounced	Solution if it means that government interference in rural area declines	Reduce (EU) governmental interference and reform /abolish the CAP in favour of local policy making	Local governments, recreation, citizens, local organizations concerned with landscape and rural area

The survey largely confirms these results as we can roughly discover the same configurations in the survey data as those found in the document analysis and described in Table 1. We used our four topics as dimensions and graphically displayed the groups of actors onto these dimensions to study their positions. Figure 1 displays the position of the configurations on the combination of topic a (Solidarity, societal values and farm sort & size) and topic d (CAP preservation)^{4,5}.

⁴ Because of a lack of response, the normative liberal configuration could not be displayed in the graph. The ‘Normative Solidary’ perspective in our data is only represented by the PvdD (animal welfare party).

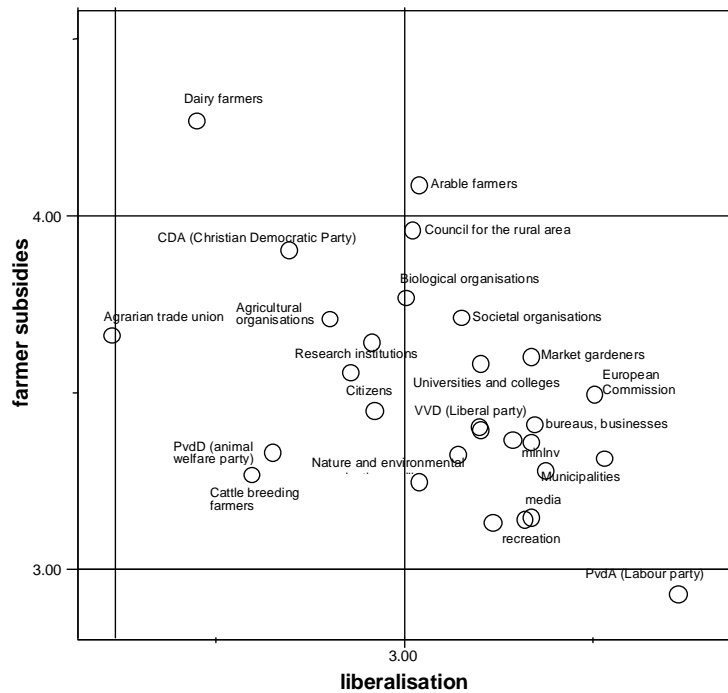
⁵ Because of a low response among groups of farmers and agrarian media, the position of these groups may not be as reliable as the position of the other groups.

Figure 1: graphical display of configurations on topic a and topic d



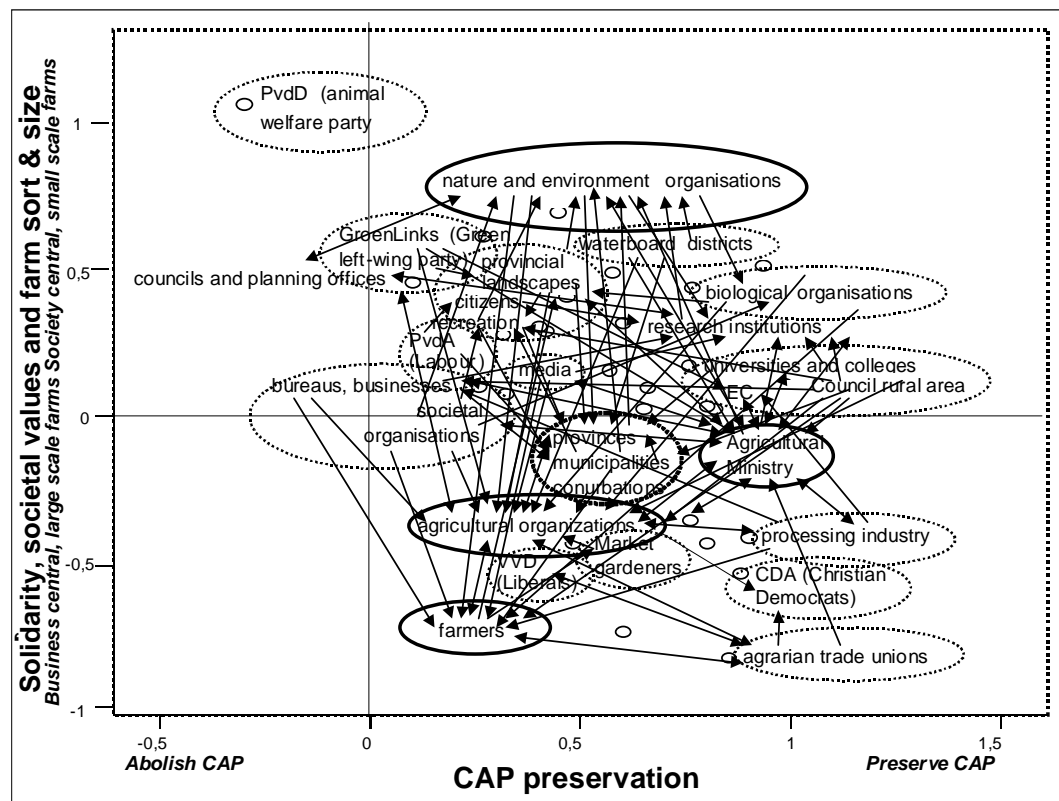
However, on the two remaining topics, 'farmer subsidies' and 'liberalisation', we cannot discover these same configurations (Figure 2).

Figure 2: graphical display of position actor groups on topic b and topic c



We used our survey results to determine interactions between actor groups; in addition to cognitive structures, interactions between actors reflect the social structure of configurations and as such represent the second indicator of the existence of configurations. The interactions are displayed in Figure 3. The arrows in the figure indicate interaction. The more arrows pointing towards a certain actor group, the more interactions between this group and other groups and the more this group is involved in the debates. These groups have been circled with uninterrupted lines. Actor groups with little or no arrows pointing towards them are not or hardly involved in the debates. These groups have been circled with dotted lines.

Figure 3: graphical display of interactions between stakeholder groups



The length of the arrows in the graph indicates conversations between actor groups rather than within groups. Remarkable in the graph is the dominance of traditional CAP-insiders in the debates: the ministry of ANF, agricultural organisations and farmers are spoken to the most. Nature and environmental organisations appear to have claimed a position among these traditional stakeholders. Furthermore, with the

exception of the ministry of agriculture, apparently there is little interaction with political parties and the EU⁶, although these stakeholders are important in the formulation of agricultural policy. Moreover, there appears to be little interaction with many other potential coalition partners: businesses and the processing industry, interesting partners where innovation is concerned; local governmental organisations; recreational organisations; biological organisations and organisations aimed at landscape preservation. The same goes for citizens, property developers, the retail sector and consumer organisations. Strikingly, an actor with diverging perspectives such as the Party for the Animals (upper left in the graph) is fully ignored as a conversation partner.

Interestingly, new actors sharing meanings hardly talk to each other. Instead, they interact mainly with the traditional insiders, whereas these traditional insiders mainly talk to others within their configuration and to actors within their own actor group.

In addition, insiders talk relatively frequently to the provinces. The Ministry of ANF and environmental organisations talk somewhat to research institutions. Farmers talk to municipalities and citizens, and relatively little to the Ministry of ANF and to environmental organisations. Agricultural organisations talk somewhat to the Christian Democratic Party. Otherwise, insiders hardly or not at all talk to any of the other actor groups.

4.2 Which cognitive fixations can be distinguished among these configurations?

Documents describing interactions between actors from five of our configurations—the Continuity and Subsistence, the Entrepreneurship, the Nature and Solidarity, the Normative Solidarity and the Normative Liberal configurations—showed that the beliefs in these configurations had developed into specific cognitive fixations. The most important fixations are:

Fixations concerning ‘Solidarity, societal values and farm sort & size’

Fixations on this topic can be found between the Nature and Solidarity and the Normative Liberal configurations on the one hand, and the Continuity and

⁶ This may not be so remarkable considering the fact that contacts with EU officials are mostly reserved to officials. In spite of this, officials as well indicate that debates are mostly carried out between other (the most dominant) groups and that the EU has little or no part in them.

Subsistence and the Entrepreneurship configurations on the other. The former believe that agriculture as a whole, and large-scale farming in particular, is animal-, landscape- and environment-unfriendly. They are convinced that only small-scale, extensive and sustainable or biological agriculture can be environmentally friendly and should be given priority in agricultural policy. The latter are convinced that ‘we will survive as long as we strive for scale enlargement’, and that ‘scale enlargement is the only solution’. They believe they are doing a very good job maintaining the landscape and keeping it beautiful and feel offended by the critique.

Fixations concerning ‘Subsidizing farmers for societal and ecological values’

Fixations on this topic can be found between the Continuity and Subsistence, the Nature and Solidarity, the Normative Solidarity and the Normative Liberal configurations. Both actors from the Continuity and Subsistence and the Nature and Solidarity configurations believe farmers should be subsidized, but for different reasons. The former proclaim that farmers are (by definition) poor and proclaim that farms will disappear if subsidies are abolished. They believe that farmers are needed for maintenance and development of the landscape and the rural areas, and that it would only be fair to pay farmers for this contribution. Many actors from the Nature and Solidarity configuration believe that subsidies for societal contributions of farmers are a necessity, because environmental organisations do not have the means to take over landscape maintenance and ‘otherwise ecological values will not be realized’. Not all actors in this configuration however agree on this. But most of them are convinced that strict government demands and control are necessary, ‘otherwise farmers won’t comply with the measures’. Actors from the Normative Liberal and the Normative Solidary configurations are convinced that subsidies have detrimental effects for farmers in developing countries, that other countries are more suited for agriculture and that landscape maintenance should be left to environmental organisations.

Fixations concerning ‘Liberalisation’

Many farmers recognize and pursue certain advantages of liberalisation. However, they appear to fear letting go of traditional agricultural policy because of the uncertainties that liberalisation will bring. Actors from the Normative Liberal configuration in particular see liberalisation as the only solution to problems concerning, among others, the world market, poverty and environmental pollution. Reverse side effects of a free market economy are not subject of discussion. We found

other proponents of liberalisation spread across many configurations. Although many believe that liberalisation may pose a threat to Dutch agriculture, they believe that liberalisation will stimulate innovation among Dutch farmers, give farmers opportunities for export to the world market and they think most farmers will be able to develop competitive farms and manage without support.

Fixations concerning 'CAP preservation'

Opposite beliefs on CAP preservation can be found between the Nature and Solidarity and the Continuity and Subsistence configurations on the one hand, and the Normative Liberal and Normative Solidary configurations on the other. The former believe that agricultural policy should remain a key subject in European policy and that farmer income policy should be arranged in Brussels. They fear that renationalisation will result in unfair competition between member states and that rural areas will pauperize. Actors from the Nature and Solidarity configuration however want more attention for nature and the rural areas in the CAP. The Normative Solidarity and Normative Liberal configurations are most in favour of abandoning the CAP. They believe the CAP is keeping a money-eating and environmentally unfriendly sector incapable of standing on its own feet, alive at citizens' expense.

4.3 Which social fixations and vicious patterns can be distinguished in the interactions between these configurations?

Analysis of the debates and Open Space-sessions confirms that debates are mainly going on between traditional insiders and those actors of the Normative Liberal and Normative Solidarity configurations. Analysis also shows that these insiders have created general fixated rules about how to organize debates. These rules have had consequences for the way in which the debate was carried out and for who was allowed to participate. They have lead insiders to unintentionally create patterns in their mutual interactions that have become institutionalized and cause stagnation in the debate. We found several fixated patterns:

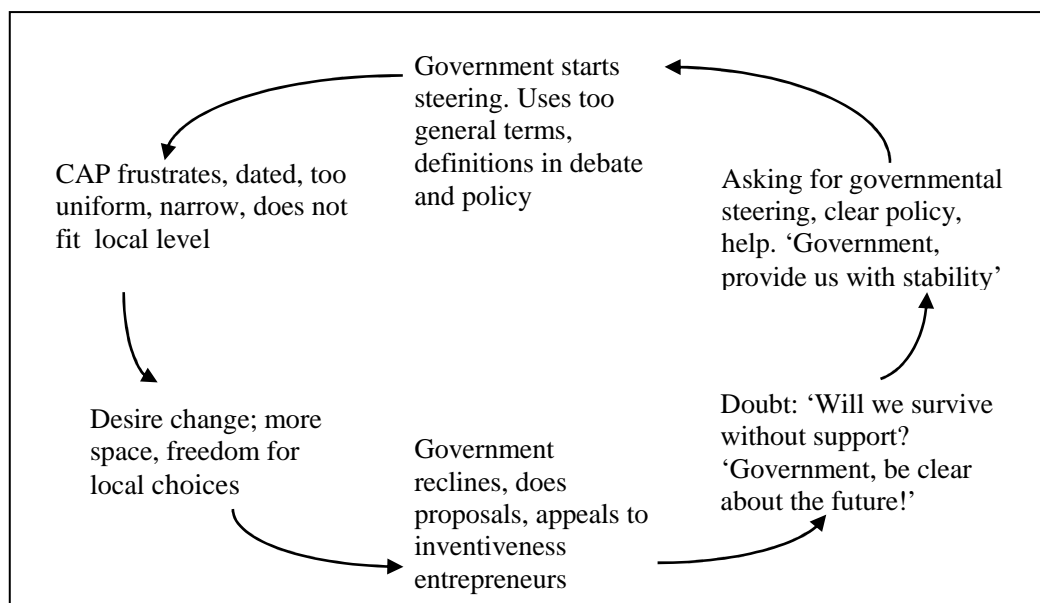
Asking for change, but then shying away and asking for stability

There is a widespread pattern of asking for change, but at the same time shying away from change. Producers, farmer organizations and farmers for instance conclude that the Health Check discussion is dated and proposed measures are too

narrow, but at the same time they ask for help, stability, guarantees for a minimum life standard and risk management. The origin of this rather dependent position lies in a history of government intervention and steering in agricultural issues. But ‘when government takes action, they all oppose measures’, complain about government interventions and ask for more space and autonomy. When government in its turn gives farmers more space and attempts to appeal to farmers’ own inventiveness, farmers appear to ‘shiver on the brink’, repeat their wish for government intervention (clarity, being unequivocal) and government is seduced to interfere again. Sometimes politicians as well on the one hand criticize the CAP as dated, but when propositions for change are being put forward, they often try to consolidate existing measures.

Government in turn wrestles with, on the one hand, its inclination to steer and intervene, and on the other hand, its new ambitions for providing autonomy and stimulating farmers’ own initiatives. Farmers’ repeated wishes for clarity and government intervention however seduces government to intervene and steer again (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Asking for and shying away from change

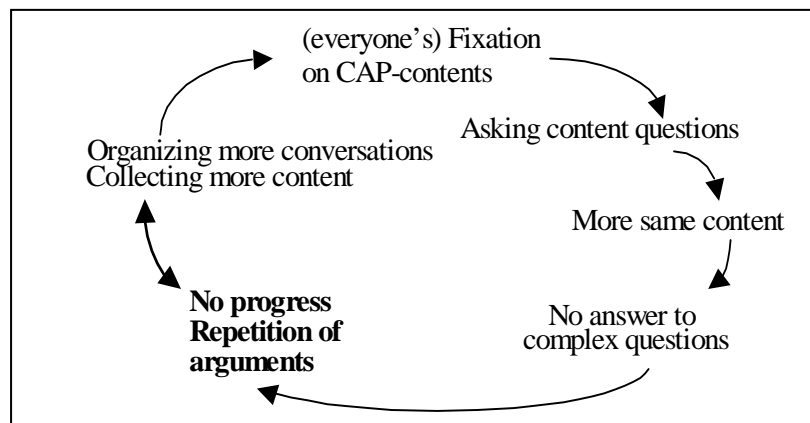


Real debates concern exchanging CAP-contents

As illustrated in the previous paragraph, participants in the debate have strong (cognitive) fixations on the contents of debate, on (their own) specific perceptions of agriculture and the CAP. From this cognitive fixation, they have developed the social

fixation that in order to advance the debate, they must exchange these arguments concerning content. Meetings are held mainly for the purpose of collecting and exchanging contents. Questions asked are of a cognitive, content-oriented nature, and when conversations fail to produce the desired contents, more conversations are organized to generate more contents. Nobody brings up the *process* that characterizes these conversations. As a consequence, conversations develop into self-confirming circular patterns that generate more and more of the same information. This, however, does not help in answering the complex questions the participants are facing. The result of all of this is that differences and core dilemmas are not discussed, that no real deepening takes place, and that it is very difficult to make progress (Figure 5).

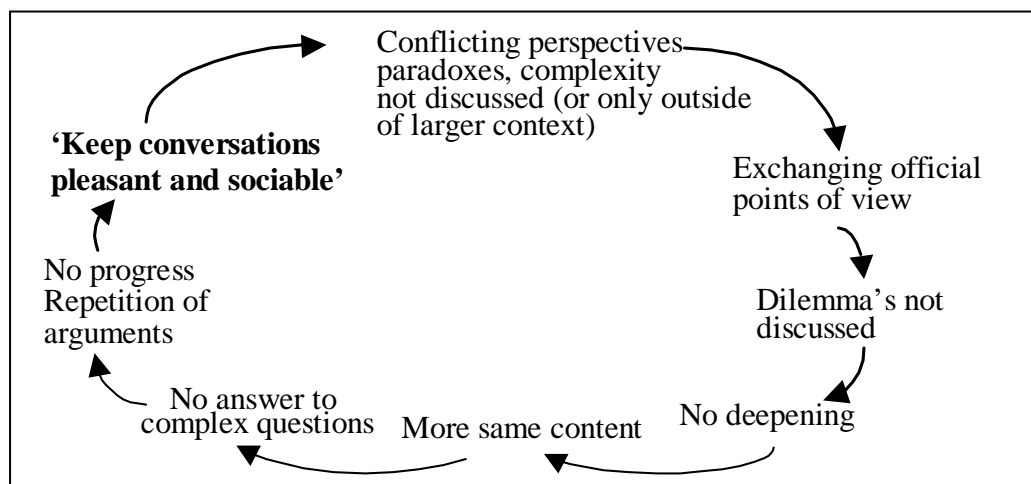
Figure 5: Real debates concern exchanging CAP-contents



Having ‘sociable conversations’ with acquaintances

In line with this fixation on content, conversations between ‘CAP-insiders’— i.e. farmers’ organisations, farmers, environmental organisations, the Ministry of ANF and researchers closely related to the ministry who regularly meet with each other — are often characterized by the interaction rule ‘to keep conversations pleasant and sociable’. Conflicting perceptions are not subject of discussion. Actors talk mainly ‘in name of’ the group to which they belong, voice official points of view and perceptions and limit their wishes to statements concerning ‘what *should* be’. This again complicates deepening and hinders progress (Figure 6).

Figure 6: having sociable conversations

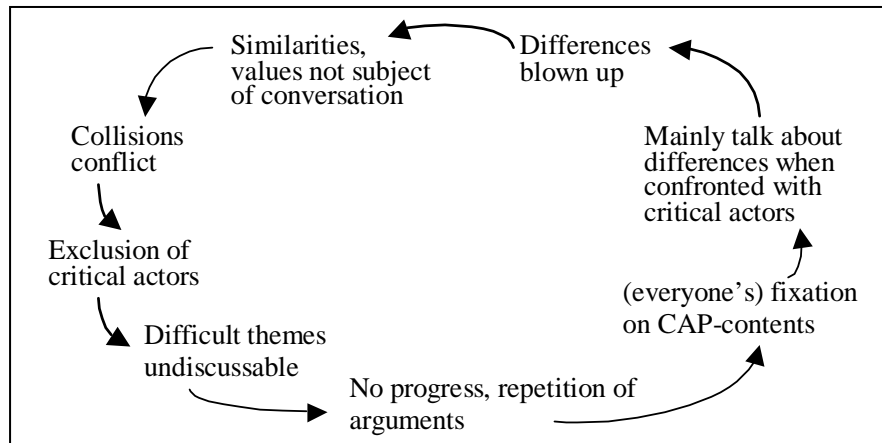


Exclusion of actors who are too critical

When insiders who are strongly fixated on their own beliefs of a solution to the CAP-problems are confronted with (new) actors with conflicting perspectives, they mainly talk about these differences of opinion. Differences are often blown-up and possible similarities in opinions or underlying values are not made subject of conversation. In some situations, this resulted in them wishing not to speak to each other anymore and in them assuming an antagonistic attitude towards each other. Some critical actors are excluded from the debate under the assumption that ‘it’s just not possible to talk to them in a normal way’. Discussions are often carried out in the media and actors sometimes get personal in them. As an example, some actors see actors from the ‘Normative and ideological’ and the ‘Normative liberal’ configurations as not constructive or even destructive for the debate. This leads to the decision of third

parties to stop inviting them all together. As a result, configurations stop talking to each other, images of each other are confirmed, and the fixation and conflict deepens. Critical actors in turn cause and reinforce this pattern with their fixation that they will only be put in the right by being tenacious, using coercion and force, action, writing critical publications and engaging in sharp debate (Figure 7).

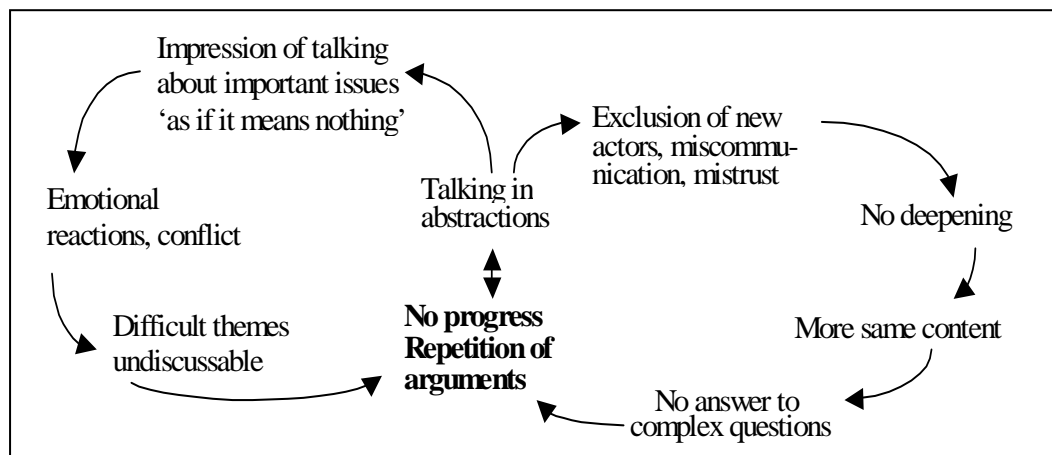
Figure 7: Exclusion of critical actors



Exclusion through the use of abstract language

Because the insiders meet regularly and are strongly fixated on content, they have over the years developed a shared language heavily dosed with abstract economic and technical concepts. Other configurations have been little or not involved in these conversations. Insiders also talk about the CAP in an abstract manner. They do not do this intentionally, but simply do not realize that they talk this way or do not realize the meaning of certain words and terms for others. This has two consequences: these ‘insiders’ (1) unintentionally exclude other groups or configurations, or unintentionally create miscommunication, incomprehension and mistrust and (2) give the impression of talking about important issues ‘as if it means nothing’ and by doing so they evoke significant, negative emotional reactions from outsiders who have these issues close to heart (e.g. (excluded) farmers, animal protection activists). For example, in their abstract tales they turn farmers’ backyards, their life, land and (other) property into ‘red problem areas’. This often causes conflict and makes it very difficult for both parties to talk about the issues mentioned (Figure 8).

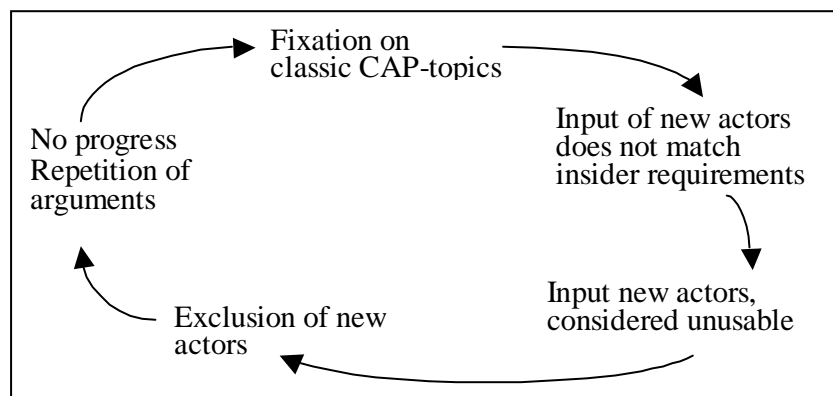
Figure 8: exclusion through use of abstract language



Exclusion of new actors through the fixation on classic CAP-topics

Not only the fixation on CAP content and the use of abstract language, but also a fixation on what characterizes a significant debate results in new actors being excluded from the debate. Insiders set clear limits to the definition of a *significant* debate concerning the CAP. In their perspective, such a debate should not concern (self-)interests and wishes, nor should it concern landscape, agriculture or nature. Instead, it should concern classic CAP-policy topics. Actors are expected to properly read into CAP-topics and engage in conversations about the CAP in relation to parallel topics and policy. Input of new actors, however, often does not match the insiders' perceptions of what a significant, relevant contribution is. Insiders view new actors as incompetent and their input as unusable. The consequence is that new actors are excluded because they cannot meet the insiders' requirements. The right to participate in debate is reserved to insiders, who continue generating the same patterns as always (Figure 9).

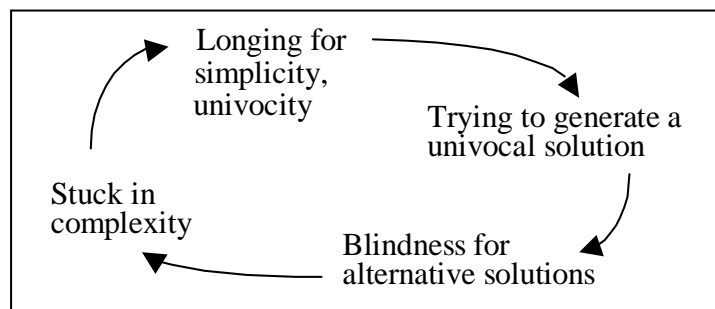
Figure 9: Exclusion through fixation on classic CAP-topics



‘Struggling with variety’

Insiders to conversations about the CAP know that they are dealing with a complex question, but nevertheless try to generate a univocal solution. In trying to do this, they get stuck in complexity, do not find appropriate solutions and consequently make the question even more complex than it already was. The unwritten rule underlying this pattern is that ‘we *must* generate a solution’ and that this solution ‘must be univocal’. It is assumed that being univocal is necessary and possible. This call for an univocal solution hinders them in finding other possible solutions and reinforces the vicious circle. A fixation on CAP-content, a taboo on discussions that are too critical, the exclusion of new actors and an inability to deal with conflict contribute to the persistence of this pattern (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Struggling with variety



5. Discussion

Our goal in this paper was to understand why realizing effective debates is so difficult. Our first two research questions were (a) Which configurations of stakeholders are involved in the debates on agriculture, the CAP and the rural areas in The Netherlands? (b) What happens in interactions between these stakeholders? What fixations that cause stagnation characterize these groups and what resulting vicious patterns can be distinguished in the interactions between them? These questions have been answered in the previous sections. Our third question was (c) How can we intervene in these patterns and unlock the debates? In this last section, we reflect on our findings and come up with some suggestions for unlocking the debate. We conclude with some suggestions for future research.

5.1 Conclusions

Our results indicate that despite the criticism and pressure for changing the ‘in crowd’ process of policymaking (Frouws 1998) as a prerequisite for broadening agricultural policy, the iron triangle of the Ministry of Agriculture, farmers’ organisations and agricultural specialists of parliament has not been broken through completely. Environmental organisations have managed to capture a position in the debates, but other, new actors still operate in the margins. These results are in line with the conclusions of Akkerman et al. (2004). Even though traditional insiders express the intention of including new actors, they still dominate the debates. Insiders actively invite new actors to participate, but at the same time define the boundaries of the debates in such a way that new participants become discouraged. It is the insiders who determine the agenda, who set the language (complex and abstract), who conclude which topics are relevant for the CAP, who judge the value of the arguments (constructive or not) and the competence of those actors providing the arguments. In doing so, they try to constrain variety as it might hinder ‘the’ solution despite the obvious complexity of the debates. This means that although the participation of environmental organizations may have generated more attention for nature and environmental values in the debates and in agricultural policy, other equally relevant issues are still ignored. This exclusion of various issues has consequently resulted in a lack of development of innovative ideas and alliances.

New actors also means new topics and new interaction rules. New actors for example are not primarily driven by CAP-policy per se, but more by a desire to increase the vitality of rural areas. These are the topics they want to talk about. By broadening the debates, value conflicts enter the scene, which ask for new ways of dealing with differences and conflict. The traditional insiders however just continue their debates about the CAP in the way they are used to. Interestingly, new actors do not challenge their unwritten rules. Moreover, insiders unwillingly have created a series of vicious patterns in their interactions that have an excluding effect on new actors. This makes it very difficult for new actors to gain a position in the debates. Besides, new actors apparently have not (yet) developed configurations which may be a cause but also a consequence of their exclusion, and may further undermine their position in the debates. The new actors also mainly focus on the insiders instead of forming their own coalitions.

The question remains whether insiders consciously and deliberately exclude new actors or whether this is an unintended by-product of their traditional and inveterate 'way of thinking, acting and talking'. A related question is whether the revealed patterns reflect exertion of power or conflict avoidance. The fixation on CAP contents, the interaction rule of making conversations 'sociable', the abstract character of conversations which excludes new actors, and the deliberate exclusion of critical actors and of alternative topics may reflect a power strategy, but may also be motivated by a desire to avoid conflict. Considering the (often) explicit wish to involve new actors and considering that people are often not conscious of fixations and interaction patterns, insiders could also be very well unintentionally repeating inveterate behavioural patterns.

5.2 Discussion: configuration theory as an approach for studying public debates and improving its quality

Configuration theory has helped us gain insight into the actors involved in the debates, their opinions and shared meanings, and the fixations and vicious patterns they create in their mutual interactions. It has helped us discover some of the underlying reasons why multi-configuration participation in the CAP-debates does not come without difficulties. At the same time, we did not find clear configurations among new actors in the context of the CAP-debates. The lack of actual configurations might lead one to doubt the usefulness of configuration theory for studying new actors. Insiders mainly interact with other insiders and within their own group. Although environmental organisations differ in opinion from the traditional insiders, they appear to have conquered a position in the debates. This finding seems to be in contrast to configuration theory, which assumes that actors talk to others with similar meanings.

Furthermore, the finding that different configurations agree on the same policy measures, but for entirely different reasons is complicating. Both actors from environmental organisations and farmers for instance agree that farmers should be subsidized. Yet, the former want this for reasons of nature and landscape maintenance, while the latter want to supplement farmer income. This seems to be a case of 'equifinal meaning': configurations with diverging opinions agree for very different reasons on certain measures (cf. Donnellon et al. 1986). Equifinal meaning may also have accounted or partly accounted for the inclusion of nature and

environmental organizations in the debates. Yet, similar meanings and interactions here do not automatically mean that these actors together form one configuration.

Our results evoke questions about how clear-cut existing configurations really are. According to Hajer (1995) actors do not have fixed roles but are constantly being positioned in discursive exchanges. This implies that people can utter different opinions in different practices, utter different wishes and interests in different stories and different contexts, and still belong to the same configuration. It might be helpful to consider these stories more to gain an even better insight into the difficulties in realizing effective debates. Nevertheless, the fixations and patterns we found are there and their stability over the years suggests that changing them is complex.

5.3 Some preliminary recommendations for unlocking the debates

This study shows that although policy makers made the first step to opening up the CAP-debates, achieving effective debates was far from easy for them. Deliberate attention for improving the quality of the debates is required, otherwise policy makers run the risk of causing a decline in the willingness of the public to participate. Despite the above mentioned complexity, we would like to outline some preliminary recommendations that might help to unlock the debates. As the problems concern fixations on content, exclusion and interaction rules, we suggest changes for both the network, participation and interaction rules, and the content of debates.

Including new and previously excluded actors might help avoid or break vicious patterns among the insiders as well as their fixation on univocal policy. This may not in the least be because it generates alternative reality definitions, perspectives and explanations and, therefore, variety in debates. Variety may help in the development of innovative solutions and in the creation of new alliances. The vicious patterns that we found however demand a thorough process architecture, and intervention in vicious patterns when and where necessary. An example might be to organize separate forums on specific topics for specific participants and make explicit choices for subjects of debate. The insights and new questions obtained from these forums can be used as input for new meetings or even for an entirely new classification of topics and forums.

The complexity and dilemmas of different perspectives, interests and expectations should not be avoided, but explicitly made subject of study and conversation. When participants dispute about possible solutions, it can be useful for

them to examine (shared) underlying values and aims. Participants will often find they share many of these underlying values and aims, and simply differ over how to achieve them. Such a conversation might help to start conversations about new solutions. A process manager can facilitate this process by bringing in new contents such as this, strategically offering alternative perspectives, making process observations and intervening if necessary.

If insiders still do not allow for new actors and meanings, then reflection on the pattern that they are creating and reframing might help break it. Systems theory (Senge 1990) states that the problem in situations involving many different actors is the larger system of which they are all part and in which they keep each other imprisoned. Reflection on this larger system characterized by many different actors and different realities as well as on its underlying assumptions, might help change it and stimulate more plurality in policy development. Lastly, the pattern of asking for change and at the same time shying away from change might be changed by using a form of reframing, for instance by not going along with it anymore but feeding back observations and exploring and discussing the underlying reasons and solutions together.

Despite our suggestions for intervention, the problems will not change from one day to the next. Our recommendations might however contribute to the realization of 'small wins' (Weick 1984).

Suggestions for future research

Agriculture is embedded into a larger, complex context characterized by ‘wicked’ problems such as hunger, rising food prices and poverty, climate change, health, fuel and biodiversity. This context requires large changes in the questions that policy makers are confronted with and demands broader debates. The debates on the CAP in the Netherlands cannot be seen or changed irrespective of these developments. Considering the complexity of the Dutch debates, it would be useful to study configurations on a European or more global level and see what influences they have, what problems and what opportunities they foresee, what their underlying values and resulting assumptions are, what that would mean for the CAP and how broad debates can be stimulated. Concerning a broader social embeddedness of the CAP and the realization of local initiatives, it might be interesting to study how this can be realized and what process architecture might be useful.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Four components in convictions about agriculture, landscape and the CAP

The values in the table represent the correlations between the proposition and the component. The highest values or loadings are most interesting and influential.

Propositions	Principal Components			
	Solida- rity & socie- tal va- lues	Subsi- dizing ecolo- gical values	Libe- raliza- tion	CAP preser- vation
1. Do not agree that a hectare of agr. land costs the taxpayer less than a hectare of natural land, while agr. land also has the benefit of producing food and energy	.579	-.354	.056	-.107
2. Agriculture is a money-eating sector that costs society too much	.550	-.448	.137	-.138
3. Agriculture is still the most important economical pillar of the rural areas	-.411	.476	-.108	.088
4. Support for Dutch agriculture is inefficient: other countries more suitable for agriculture	.371	-.405	.189	-.294
5. Consumers should pay more for food that is sustainably produced	.295	.221	-.013	.229
6. Food from outside the EU meets our quality demands	.141	-.273	.078	-.146
7. Fear of food shortage is not a justifiable reason to support Dutch agriculture	.322	-.344	.229	-.284
8. Agricultural products from EU-countries are not that safe	.415	-.184	.056	-.266
9. Liberalisation is a threat to Dutch agriculture	-.066	-.092	.618	.151
10. Liberalisation stimulates innovation among farmers	-.067	-.036	.718	.062
11. Liberalisation gives Dutch farmers opportunities for export to the world market	-.202	.066	.607	.057
12. Cheap produce outside the EU should be allowed to enter the Dutch market without obstruction	.077	-.162	.610	-.166
13. Opening the EU-market & abolishing export subsidies can help solve poverty developing countries	.402	.027	.498	-.100
14. Subsidies to farmers are at the expense of farmers in developing countries	.482	-.155	.420	-.304
15. Allow imports from countries with less strict rules concerning animal welfare & environment	-.021	-.182	.128	-.047
16. Worldwide liberalisation should be coupled with the development of worldwide agricultural policy	.212	.203	.056	.213
17. Agricultural policy should not be left over to member states	-.017	-.076	.179	.749
18. EU agriculture should not renationalized because the risk of unfair competition among member states	-.139	.005	.204	.632
19. Farmers are needed for the maintenance and development of the landscape and rural areas	-.125	.727	-.043	.060
20. Landscape maintenance is better done by environmental organisations	.524	-.436	.127	.031
21. Farmers should be paid for landscape maintenance	.094	.597	.014	.138
22. Farmers are not very well off financially	.010	.377	-.311	-.043
23. Farmers should be supported financially when confronted with developments they cannot influence (the world market, climate, diseases & plagues)	-.156	.482	-.440	.115
24. Income support to farmers should be abolished	.253	-.376	.442	-.181
25. Farmer income policy is best arranged in Brussels (rather than by national government)	-.146	.089	-.092	.567
26. Many farmers survive only when they acquire more income from sideline activities	.457	.107	.054	-.250
27. Many farmers will develop competitive farms and manage without support	-.159	-.046	.601	-.038
28. Agriculture has a right to government funds for it keeps the rural areas open	-.141	.691	-.166	.129
29. Government must not give farmers more space for entrepreneurship & not pose less rules	.589	-.256	-.030	.041
30. The rural areas belong to society	.556	-.166	.074	.116
31. Leaving landscape policy over to local governments causes disorderly landscapes	.418	-.038	-.043	.159
32. A more sustainable agriculture improves our competitive position agriculture	.409	.206	.237	.147
33. Biological agriculture is better for the environment	.782	.043	-.016	-.044
34. Biological agriculture is better for animal welfare	.762	-.082	-.034	-.169
35. Government should stimulate biological agriculture	.771	.148	.024	-.160

36. Consumers should not determine the future of biological agriculture	.609	.042	-.062	-.132
37. I think citizens consider the EU's agricultural sector to be money-eating	.366	-.098	.239	-.195
38. Agricultural policy in the EU is too complicated to explain to citizens	-.152	-.238	-.152	.223
39. Intensive agricultural enterprises are not capable of sustainable production	.621	.016	-.300	-.236
40. Scale enlargement is not the only solution for farmers without financial support	.438	-.065	.264	.064
41. Scale enlargement is not an economical necessity and should be obstructed	.738	-.011	-.099	-.227
42. Large-scale agriculture affects the landscape, the environment and animal welfare	.771	-.054	-.090	-.213
43. Government does not focus unilaterally on small-scale, sustainable production	.560	-.042	-.060	-.136
44. Less production in the EU does not automatically mean production growth & deforestation in other countries	.322	-.177	.107	-.126
45. Meadows, cows and farms make the Dutch landscape beautiful	-.030	.599	.023	-.011
46. Government policy should stimulate farmers to put the cows outside to graze	.354	.581	-.126	-.195
47. Large-scale farms make the landscape look ugly	.687	-.161	-.116	-.182
48. Agriculture should remain a key subject in EU policy	-.064	.267	-.104	.535
49. Without EU policy, rural areas in the EU will pauperize	-.102	.365	-.239	.446
50. Dutch agriculture is detrimental to the environment	.665	-.435	.003	-.094
51. Agriculture helps maintain the living environment of different species	-.337	.544	-.028	-.042
52. It is not true that farmers leave the agricultural sector because they think subsidy abolishment will endanger Dutch agriculture	.069	-.389	.557	.005
53. The Abolishment of subsidies will put a strong pressure on the rural areas	-.185	.546	-.460	.064
54. Income support to farmers should not be based on the amount produced	.424	-.199	.206	.123
55. Income support to farmers should be based on land size (hectares)	.151	-.297	.077	-.103
56. Government payments to farmers should be based on public services (i.e. nature preservation, landscape preservation, ensuring food quality, promoting animal welfare)	.522	-.094	.341	.051
57. Paying farmers for public services can result in too much bureaucracy	.245	.065	-.065	.137
58. Payments should complement farmer incomes to a certain minimum	.125	.301	.137	-.197
Eigenvalue	11.87	5.52	2.98	2.34

APPENDIX 2: coding example

The conversation in this example is between farmers and actors from nature and environmental organisations, and actors from research institutions and planning offices. The conversation in the table shows how actors struggle with understanding and solving the problem concerning the disappearance of farmers and the maintenance of the landscape. They represent configurations who talk to each other a lot and who together have created a fixated image of reality that cannot easily be broken by different actors. This fixated image of reality is reflected in a fixated pattern of debating in which the same contents and arguments are repeated endlessly. Actors do a lot of untested if-then reasoning based on assumptions and time and again, many of them conclude that only one solution is possible (cognitive fixation): organizing the problems collectively and subsidizing farmers. One or two actors try to break through this fixation by bringing in alternative solutions and suggesting that alliances should be created and initiatives should be taken. But these solutions are ignored by the other actors; they continue reasoning as they always have.

Table 1: coded conversation

Actor	Spoken text	Labels
A1	We want to preserve landbased agriculture to keep the landscape intact. It is a necessity that the entrepreneur in landbased agriculture can earn a good wage. This is however difficult, so you tend towards scale enlargement. But the trend is 'small'. This undermines production and the future.	1. Assumption: (only) landbased agriculture keeps landscape intact 2. Assumption: problem = landbased agriculture does not make enough money. 3. Assumption: only solution = scale enlargement 4. Problem: trend = small scale 5. Assumption: future of farmers in danger
A2	Should Brussels do more modulation then? Should regional areas be paid more for more landscape corridors?	Solution = modulation?
A1	You are confronted with limitations and then they also expect you to remain a farmer, and that is just not working. When someone invests in 30 hectares soil, then that is great for landscape preservation. Nationwide at least 60% of the landscape is used for conducting business. For the rest of it (i.e. handicapped areas), you receive the same milk price, so you will have to try and survive. This means that you have to pay more for handicapped areas if you want to preserve them.	2. Assumption: problem = landbased agriculture does not make enough money. 5. Assumption: farmers will disappear 6. Assumption: (only) solution is pay according to handicaps
A3	European money can be used for this, but national money as well.	6. Pay from national or European money?
A1	.. I would like to preserve the CAP. The northeast of Twente will go down the drain if we don't discriminate between areas.	6. Pay from European money (preserve CAP) 6. Discriminate between areas
A4	Who are the bearers of the landscape now? Fifteen to twenty percent farmers, or eighty percent yuppie-farmers? In the area surrounding Putten there are many small-scale landscapes, rich citizens have bought themselves into the landscape there. There will be no farmers left before long.	7. Are farmers still bearers of rural area? 7. Rich citizens take over 5. Assumption: farmers will disappear
A5	The area that switches to the alternative, recreation, is best off.	8. Assumption: best solution is recreation
A2	But how can you preserve the landscape? What is going to happen to that?	8. Assumption problem: if farmers disappear and citizens take over, landscape preservation will be a problem (duality)
A1	In Overijssel (Dutch province) there are many city people as well ...	7. Citizens take over rural area
A3	You should look at it from a regional perspective how to fit agriculture into the remaining land use.	Use regional approach
A1	If landbased agriculture disappears, recreation will disappear as well. It	9. Assumption: problem = recreation will

	is like that everywhere. You have to keep it balanced and we have think about the question how and we have to do that <i>now</i> .	decline if landbased agriculture disappears (i.e. nature disappears) 1. Assumption: only landbased agriculture keeps landscape intact
A6	So recreation is the most important consumer of the product. Then it is strange that no-one investigates the market for recreation.	Investigate market for recreation
A1	If you want city people to invest, you have to make sure that it (i.e. the rural area) is attractive and you need farmers for that. It must be balanced.	1. Assumption: only landbased agriculture keeps landscape intact
A4	Get entrepreneurs in an area together! We did that at Walcheren, too. Together we worked on a cooperative project to improve the quality of the rural area.	8. Take initiative and make coalitions to improve the quality of the rural areas
A2	But what if the market fails? I think we should turn those areas into nature areas, then.	10. What if the market fails
A4	Should government, with all its obstructions and limitations come in between or should you organize this yourselves, without all the rules? Can we bring 'togetherness' back to life? Take regional responsibility to organize it together? Everyone for whom the rural area is valuable, together?'	Assumption: government (always) obstructs. 8. Take initiative and make coalitions, without government limitations
A2	What if taking responsibility is not working?	10. Dispute solution = taking initiative
	What will happen to another farmer who is past saving?	5. Farmers will disappear
	He'll go bankrupt.	5. Farmers will disappear
	Then his land will be bought by another farmer.	3. Scale enlargement
	No, because this other farmer has the same problem.	5. Farmers will disappear
A1	In the city they have shared problems, too. The same goes for the rural areas. We have to settle them before the CAP is abolished, otherwise farmers will disappear.	5. Must settle problems otherwise farmers will disappear
	The government will have to intervene if no one wants to pay for it.	10. Assumption: no one will want to pay for it 6. Solution = government intervention
A1	You have to use the time to get from a to b now. Make a plan today. But if the milkprices don't rise very quickly, you have a problem when subsidies are abolished. If farmers disappear, then you have a problem with the landscape.	5. Must settle problems otherwise farmers will disappear 8. Assumption problem: if farmers disappear then landscape preservation will be a problem
A2	If the market doesn't want it, then farmers should be allowed to just burn it.	10. Dispute solution = market
	There is a huge potential for improving the quality of the landscape. You have to study the conditions in order to find connect with the developments of the context. The challenge is to adapt to these developments as entrepreneurs.	10. Solution = Take initiative, study conditions and adapt as entrepreneurs
A4	Get cracking! What can we do ourselves, what conditions do we need. Take responsibility ourselves.	10. Solution is taking responsibility
A1	If there will really be a market in 2013/2020, then the farmer will be the last to say 'it should be done collectively' (i.e. CAP, national level). But the question is how to get from a to b. You have to develop this process in balance, otherwise things will go wrong. (conversation about how to organize it collectively)	11. Dispute solution = market 5. Must settle problems otherwise farmers will disappear
A4	I think we should search for alternatives. The question is how to involve citizens.	10. Solution = search for alternatives, involve citizens.
A1	If it is easier to organize it collectively and the citizen is fine with it, then what is wrong with that?	6. Organize collectively
Many	There is nothing wrong with that.	6. Nothing wrong with organizing collectively

In general, the fixated image of reality is as follows: only landbased agriculture keeps the landscape intact, but farmers are poor (do not earn enough money) and are confronted with consumer trends and limitations by government. The consequence, as they assume, is that 'they will not make it'. If farmers will not make it then city people take over the rural areas and become the bearers of them. If city people take over the rural areas, then landscape maintenance will suffer because only farmers are (capable of) maintaining an interesting landscape. If citizens take over, then whatever makes the landscape interesting for tourism and recreation will disappear. This means that farmers are needed for its preservation. If you want city

people to invest in tourism, then you need farmers, because only farmers can keep the landscape attractive. If you want to preserve agriculture, then the only solution is that farmers are subsidized. Taking initiatives and making coalitions is considered a risk. Interestingly, government is criticized for its obstructing interference, but at the same time government intervention is also considered a necessity.

Figure A2: causal loop

