LABOUR, NETWORKS AND LIFESTYLES

Survival and succession strategies of farm households in the Basque Country

Hans-Peter van den Broek

STELLINGEN

1. Without 'obligatory' references to feminist adages about the original matriarchial character of Basque society, it can be maintained that Basque agriculture mainly thrives on female labour.

2. The custom among successors of Basque farming enterprises to marry relatively late in life makes it more difficult for them to mobilize sufficient labour power just when they need it most, i.e. in the years following succession (this thesis, Chapter 5).

3. Farmers who dissociate themselves from the industrialized food production chain and its corresponding treadmill of investment and expansion by taking up the generation of quality products may subsequently become subject to alternative but equally coercive treadmills (this thesis, Chapter 7; also Mak, 1996).

4. The combination of a) the objectivation of quality norms for agricultural products, disconnecting them from the farmers' craftmanship, and b) the quality producers' own strategies aimed at the routinization of labour intensive production and commercialization activities, makes the industrialized production of quality products more likely (this thesis, Chapter 7).

5. If labelling shapes policy, then policy reinforces the 'truth' of the labels in force (this thesis, Chapter 4; also Wood, 1985b).

6. As human action is in no small measure the result of intuition, habit and trial and error, sociological and economic models that are exclusively based on the rational decisions of actors can only explain a small percentage of this action (cf. this thesis, Chapter 10, footnote 1).

7. Too much faith in statistics may obscure the understanding of social phenomena, too little understanding of statistics may lead to unwarranted faith in one's own prejudice.

8. Extensive footnotes in scientific texts are not necessarily a proof of the author's erudition, but may just as well reflect his or her inability to integrate these remarks elegantly into the main text.

9. The maintenance of an extensive illegal sector of goods or people is an effective means of job creation for police, judiciary and organized crime.

10. An analysis of street violence among Basque adolescents should comprise a variety of intervening factors, such as, the protagonists' disaffection with their personal and the wider political situation, the strategic manipulation of their disaffection for political ends, and the function of violence as expression and reinforcement of group cohesion. The phenomenon can not be explained by reference to only one of these factors.

11. As a result of Anglo-saxon influences, the use of 'pidgin' among immigrants, and the minimum incidence of compound sentences in 'soap' and 'talk show' programmes on television, the typically Germanic constructions in the Dutch language (such as the inversion of subject and verb after an adverbial complement, or the auxiliary verb shifting to the end of a subordinate clause) will gradually disappear.

12. The adoration of sportsmen and women, pop musicians and television personalities may successfully be analyzed with concepts from the sociology of religion.

13. Against the background of the ageing population in Europe, it is in the interest of Public Health to test the hypothesis that the high 'infantilization rate' of popular television programmes for adults accelerates the process of dementia among the people exposed to them.

14. The way political correctness is advocated often comes dangerously close to the reasoning behind *politically* highly *incorrect* ideologies.

15. Ook landbouwwetenschappers laten zich bij de verzameling van hun onderzoeksgegevens soms knollen voor citroenen verkopen.

16. A pesar de los avances en genética, no está próximo el momento en que los agricultores puedan pedirle peras al olmo.

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LABOUR, NETWORKS AND LIFESTYLES

SURVIVAL AND SUCCESSION STRATEGIES OF FARM HOUSEHOLDS IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

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To my parents

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is about Basque farm households and their struggles to guarantee an acceptable living standard and the continuity of their holding. In particular, it is about how they mobilize family labour and social networks so as to realize these aims and how their strategies are influenced by institutional policies and social and cultural features.

In the early 1980s, I had undertaken research among farmers in the Spanish Basque Country. After Spain and Portugal had become part of the European Economic Community in 1986, a proposal was submitted to Wageningen Agricultural University to investigate the effects of this incorporation for Basque dairy farmers; the proposal was approved of in 1987. I wish to express my gratitude to the university for awarding me an *Assistent in Opleiding* grant which enabled me to do the research for this thesis.

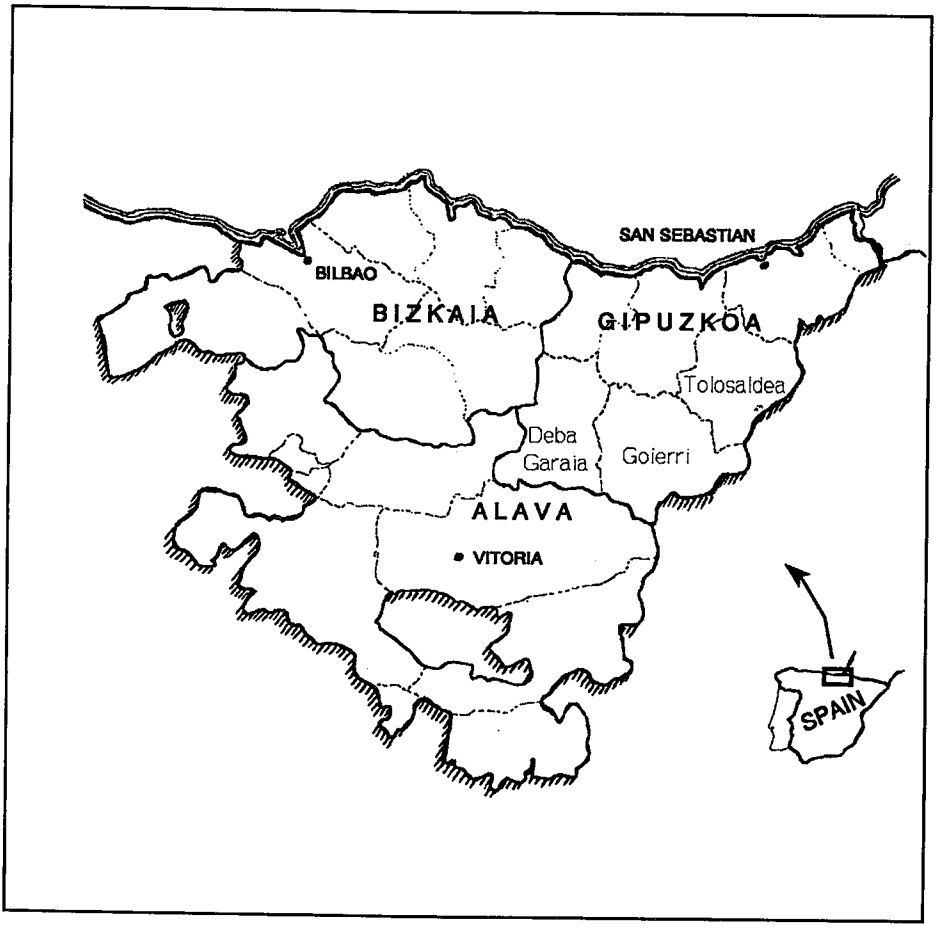
In the field, I could normally count on the cooperation of the various institutions and associations that in one way or another were engaged in implementing agrarian policies. Conversely, I was often confronted with the proverbial distrust of Basque farmers - a distrust that may be historically explicable, but which was nonetheless difficult to deal with. At this place, I want to thank the institutional representatives who made time for me (and whose names are mentioned at various places in this book) and all those farmers who made an effort to overcome their distrust in order to answer my many questions.

I also wish to thank Henk Renting, Jaap Frouws, Dirk Zoebl, Ruerd Ruben, René de Bruin and Henk Oostindie for their comments on earlier versions of this book, Ciska de Harder for her editorial assistance, and Hielke van der Meulen for his help in drawing the figures. Most of all, I am indebted to my supervisors, Norman Long and Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, for their continuous support and advice, and for stimulating me to carry this project to a successful conclusion.

Rhenen, the Netherlands
November 1997

Hans-Peter van den Broek

Map 1. THE BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY



PART I

"Agriculture in Europe and in the rest of the world is in trouble. (...)
"In some regions of the European Economic Community (EEC) there is an overproduction that creates surpluses, with few people working the land, producing food of poor quality and damaging the environment. On the other hand, in other regions farmers cannot maintain a decent standard of living from agriculture and are abandoning the work on the land. Since 1960, an average of 1300 people a day have given up agriculture in the EEC. The trend towards concentration in some regions and rural depopulation in others continues."

(From the Resolution of the 1991 Zestoa Conference on Agriculture and Rural Environment.)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The citation above comes from the resolution that was presented at the end of an international conference on Agriculture and Rural Environment, celebrated in Spain in May 1991. This conference brought together representatives of farmers' unions, consumers' organizations, and ecological groups from over 15 European countries to discuss their common interests, and the ways to bridge the differences still existing between them. The location of the conference was a small village in the Spanish Basque Country, one of the "other regions" referred to in the resolution, where difficult conditions for making a living on the land are feared to lead to the abandonment of many farmsteads and even of entire villages. It offered, that is, the participants the opportunity to observe *in situ* some of the effects of the EEC's agricultural development on one of the so-called disadvantaged areas within Europe. The final resolution of the meeting expressed the wish to develop a more "regionally-based sustainable agriculture", a new fabric for the European agrarian structure in which the interests of farmers, consumers and the rural environment, which under the present-day system dominated by industrialised food production are at best contradictory, can be reconciled.

During the conference, organized by the Basque farmers' confederation EHNE and the Workgroup on Agriculture of the Green Fraction in the European Parliament, the EEC's policy on agriculture and the Northern European agrarian superpowers, with their huge production surpluses that invade the markets of agriculturally less developed nations and regions, were repeatedly accused of being responsible for the agricultural and ecological problems of the latter.

1.1 Research problem and methodology

Spain and Portugal became members of the European Economic Community on 1 January 1986, just when the former Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC, which had stimulated agricultural production and protected the farmers' incomes through a system of intervention prices, had been abandoned and a new policy came into force that confronted the European farmers with production restrictions for surplus products and a more direct application of market prices. It was generally assumed that this policy would have negative consequences for the large number of small farmers, not only in the two new member countries, but all over Europe.

My initial research proposal focused on how farmers in an agriculturally relatively weak region experienced these expected negative consequences of their incorporation into the European Common Market, what strategies they developed to maintain their farms under (presumably) adverse conditions imposed upon them and what intervention policies were carried out by regional institutions, such as cooperatives, farmers' unions or associations, in order to defend the specific interests of certain groups of farmers. As an

example of such an 'agriculturally weak region' the Spanish Basque Country was chosen.

The Basque Country, or *Euskadi*, comprises the seven provinces on both sides of the Western Pyrenees where the Basque language is spoken. The four Basque provinces in Spain are divided into two 'autonomous communities': the Basque Autonomous Community ('Comunidad Autónoma Vasca'), which includes Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Alava; and the province of Navarra, which is an autonomous community in its own right. The greater part of the fieldwork for this study was done in rural areas in the province of Gipuzkoa. The mild and humid climate of the coastal provinces of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia is responsible for the intense green colours that are so characteristic of their mountainous landscape. This is the region of the *baserriak* (or 'caserfos' in Spanish), the Basque farmsteads, which lie scattered on the slopes of the hills and mountains that surround the small valleys where the urban centres are located. In her influential study on Basque agriculture, Etxezarreta calls the baserria "the basic, unique, and traditional form of the Basque farm and the nucleus of the family and rural social organization" (Etxezarreta, 1977: 8).

Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia are predominantly cattle-raising provinces where the main activities of farm families are the production of milk and the breeding of calves. Besides a plot of maize and turnips to feed the cattle, and several hectares of meadows, virtually all baserriak also have some hectares of woodland with the fast-growing Californian pine-trees (or 'pino Insignis' as they are locally called). In certain areas, especially in the province of Gipuzkoa, sheep-raising for the production of cheese and lamb is an important agrarian activity. Most farm families keep a few chickens and rabbits, perhaps raise one or two pigs and have a small vegetable garden for home consumption.

I was mainly interested in an analysis of the interplay of institutional policies and individual or collective farmers' strategies, which, I hoped, would enable me to identify the determining factors that explained the outcome of these multi-level interactions.

A pilot study I carried out revealed that, after two years of Spanish membership of the EEC, Basque farmers were still doubtful as to how exactly this affected their way of farming. They had experienced stagnating prices for their milk and beef cattle over the last few years, but they seldom attributed this to the Common Market; and most of them had heard about the milk quota that would be imposed on Spanish dairy farmers and industries, but they believed that the quota system would not become effective for at least a couple of years. For the majority of the Basque farmers, Europe might have come a little closer, but as far as their concrete farming practices were concerned, the Common Agricultural Policy was still regarded as of minor importance. Hardly ever had farmers consciously designed their production and commercialization strategies in reaction to EEC policies and market influences. In the policies of most regional agrarian institutions, on the other hand, the CAP appeared as a permanent and prominent point of reference. What farmers perceived of the European agricultural policy was what was filtered down to them, in different ways and with different effects, through these institutions.

Thus, instead of trying to detect strategies that I had expected farmers to design in reaction to outside influences, I needed to look for strategies derived from longer-term family farm objectives - whereby the consequences of the region's incorporation into the EEC would be seen as just one complex of factors among many others which might lead to the readjustment of these strategies and objectives.

In their comprehensive and highly readable review on "The farm as a family business", Gasson et al. (1988) conclude that almost all authors challenge or amend the classical assumption of profit maximization when writing about the objectives of the family farm, though they seldom agree on what prime objectives should be assumed instead. The most convincing alternative, in my view, can be found in the findings of a large-scale study of family firms (not only farms), carried out by Hay and Morris. According to these authors, the primary objectives of family firms were "to maintain control and to pass on a secure and sound business to the next generation" (cited by Gasson et al., 1988: 4). Judging from the trouble most Basque farmers go to so as to find a suitable successor, I assume that this idea of passing on the family farm to the next generation also occupies a prominent place on their 'ladder of values'. In addition, I posit that the short-term, day-to-day function of a family farm is to generate enough income to satisfy the consumption needs of its members (see also Bennett, 1982: 5).

In this study I will explore how farm households mobilize their networks of social relationships in order to develop production and marketing strategies that are aimed at the realization of these two objectives. I understand that this mobilization takes place on two distinct levels. First, farm households try to enrol external actors into their strategic projects; these actors may be clients, other farmers, institutions, et cetera. Second, households have to mobilize labour and knowledge among their own members. In sociological analysis of farm household strategies it frequently seems to be all too easily forgotten that "the household is itself a differentiated unit with actors trying to realize their own, often contradictory projects. (..) Households do not strategize; people do" (de Haan, 1994: 24; also Netting, 1993: 300). Central, in this respect, is the relationship between the senior farming couple and their successor (or the succeeding couple); they are the ones who are most interested in, and most capable of, mobilizing the external and internal networks - and they mutually mobilize each other, as well.

Theoretically, we can distinguish the process of enrolling other actors into one's network from the mobilization for particular ends of the network itself. But in practice, this distinction will often hardly be noticeable: one may indeed be part of a 'latent' network which may only be activated when needed, but in other cases enrolment and mobilization may take place at virtually the same time. Actors may be both individual people and collectivities (e.g. households or institutions) and it should be specified that an actor, apart from other social actors, may also mobilize material objects and symbols within his network. And although networks are normally mobilized for their resources, they may also impose constraints upon the actor as to his future decisions (Long, 1979: 125).

Social networks have been central in the works of sociologists for several decades: Barnes (1954), Mitchell (1969), Boissevain (1974), to mention only

a few. In this study, however, I have not so much followed their preoccupation with size, density, frequency of interaction, etc., but I have first and foremost focused on the instrumentality these networks have for actors trying to mobilize resources (means of production, particularly labour). In part, this may link up with what Boissevain calls the network's 'transactional content'. My perspective brings me closer to the type of analysis which is common in actor-network theory, it even borrows part of its terminology[1], yet it does not accept all of its premises.

As Callon (1986) sets out to explain, the actor-network approach starts from three principles on the part of the observer, which he summarizes as "agnosticism (impartiality [towards] actors engaged in controversy), generalized symmetry (the commitment to explain conflicting viewpoints in the same terms) and free association (the abandonment of all a priori distinctions between the natural and the social)" (ibid.: 196). It is the last principle which is problematic (whereas the first two should be 'open doors', I think, for most present-day sociologists). If the idea of making no distinction between human and non-human actors, and of describing them in the same terms, is taken to its ultimate consequences, as Callon attempts in his paper on the 'domestication of scallops and fishermen' in Brittany, the result is a logical deadlock: either one accepts interests, negotiation of power, and even motives behind the 'actions' of non-human 'actors' and ends up with the anthropomorphism Callon wants to avoid; or one does not, but then non-human entities can not be analyzed as 'actors' in sociological terms - or at least not in Weberian terms, that is attributing motives and meanings to the actors which become translated into social action.

Furthermore, this approach tends to regard the collective actor too much as a monolithic whole, moving in unison in the same direction; the attention is so much focused on processes of 'interessement' and 'enrolment' of potential allies that internal frictions, conflicting interests, and negotiations within collectivities are practically ignored. Useful, however, are the ideas of 'displacement' and 'dissociation' (or 'dissidence'). Displacements may occur all along the process of network mobilization: goals and interests of actors involved may change, and so may their resources or their locations. These displacements are the result of strategic adaptations. Dissociation means that actors break the arrangements which link them to the network, normally as a consequence of displacement. Eventually, the result may be that the whole network falls apart.

My account of the sociological processes whereby motives of actors (farm household members) are translated into action (household strategies) will to a

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[1] The terms do not necessarily coincide in their meanings, though. In Callon's analysis, for example, the terms enrolment and mobilization are reserved for particular stages in the process of generating an actor-network (Callon, 1986: 211-219): the actor who is taken as the point of departure exerts himself upon other actors by claiming to be indispensable for solving their problems (problematisation), by locking the others into roles specifically thought out for them (interessement), by relating these roles to each other in a comprehensive scheme (enrolment), and finally, by becoming the spokesman for the other actors (mobilisation) (ibid.:196).

large extent be based on the theory of peasant economy, developed in the 1920s by the Russian agricultural economist A. V. Chayanov, and more specifically on his notion of subjective equilibrium (Chayanov, 1966).

Chayanov points out that there are fundamental differences between farm households and capitalist enterprises, especially as to how the production factors labour, capital and land are used. Kerblay summarizes these differences in the following way:

> "In the capitalist economy land and labour are the variable factors which the entrepreneur tries to combine to obtain the maximum remuneration from his capital, considered as a fixed factor. In a typical peasant economy labour, proportionate to the size of the family, is the stable element which determines the change in the volume of capital and land". (Kerblay, 1971: 154)[2)]

In Chayanov's model, the peasant family farm seldom employs any hired labour. Agricultural tasks are normally carried out by family members alone, and their labour-input depends on a subjective evaluation of its marginal disutility (or, which is the same, the marginal utility of leisure) in relation to the estimated marginal utility of the output it would generate (Chayanov, 1966: 81). Durrenberger explains this in the following words:

> "... as peasants work, each successive unit of labor is exponentially more loathsome than the last. (And) as peasant workers acquire the goods they need, the next unit is less valued than the previous one. As peasants work more, they acquire more of the goods they need. At some point, the increasing marginal disutility of labor will outweigh the decreasing marginal utility of the goods produced, and the peasants will stop working" (Durrenberger, 1984: 39; see also Thorner, 1966: xvi; and Kerblay, 1971: 153).

The equilibrium, which is the production target of the household, can be graphically represented as the point of intersection of two curves (see Figure 1), where the curve AB "indicates the degree of (labour) drudgery attached to acquiring the marginal ruble" (Chayanov, 1966: 82) and the curve CD the marginal utility of the income earned.

Chayanov also postulated that there exists a causal relationship between family composition and farm size, whereby farm size is the dependent variable. His empirical data (gathered in the Starobel'sk district in the Ukraine) show that a peasant household tends to cultivate more land when the family's consumer demands increase due to a higher c/w ratio (i.e. the total number of consumers in the family related to the number of workers). He recognized, however, that this part of his model could only be generalized for those areas where peasants had easy access to land. For situations where this was not

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2) To highlight the difference, we could write these statements as economic functions. So that is for the capitalist economy:
Remuneration = f(land, labour | capital),
and for the peasant economy:
Remuneration = f(land, capital | labour).

the case, he states that the family's work hands, "not finding a use in farming, turn ... to crafts, trades and other non-agricultural earnings" (Chayanov, 1966: 94); this may also happen if there is still enough land available, but payment for non-agricultural labour is higher than remuneration of farm-work (ibid.: 107). If off-farm work is hard to find, or wages are too low, the farm household may decide to intensify the labour-input of its members on the holding itself (ibid.: 113; also Patnaik, 1979: 390).[3]

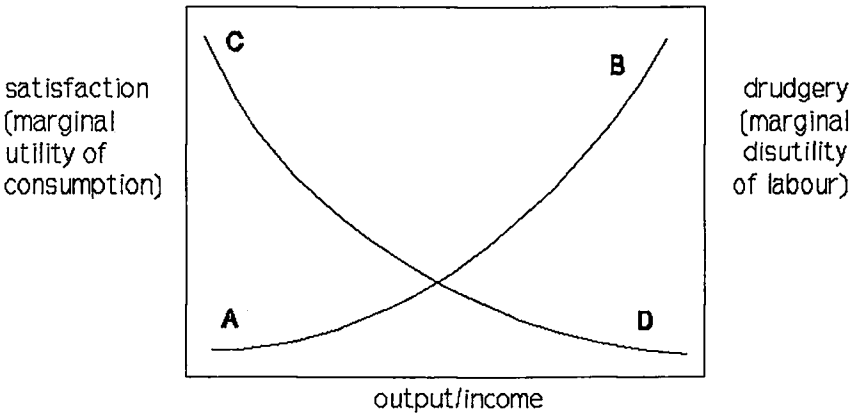

Figure 1. Intersecting drudgery and remuneration curves.[4]

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[3] So with respect to a rural economy in which the possibilities to buy or rent more land are limited, the economic function for the production factors (see also footnote 1) would rather be as follows:
Remuneration = f(capital, labour | land).

[4] As to what should be placed along the axes of this system of coordinates, I have mainly followed Durrenberger's suggestion: "Let the X (horizontal) axis of the graph represent units of goods produced, and the Y (vertical) axis represent some measure of relative marginal utility of goods (..). The Y axis also represents relative marginal disutility of labor" (Durrenberger, 1984: 40). When Chayanov himself introduces these curves, the abscissa is said to represent "the sum of values (in rubles) earned in a year by the subject running the farm" (1966: 82), i.e. the holding's income level, but where he uses similar graphs in the rest of his work, he is not explicit about this anymore.
Marginal disutility of labour can also be read as marginal utility of leisure. More recent graphical presentations (Nakajima, 1986; Ellis, 1993) are made up of indifference curves, which "describe a given level of utility (personal happiness) for different combinations of leisure and income" (Ellis, 1993: 106), and production functions. As it is not the combination of income and leisure, but the confrontation between remuneration and drudgery which I want to highlight, I shall follow Chayanov's original figures.

It is this latter model (referring to areas where access to land is difficult) which applies best to the rural situation in Gipuzkoa. Nevertheless, another proviso should be made to suit the model to the present-day situation. It can no longer be maintained that the family's consumer/worker ratio mainly dictates the minimum production and consumption levels. For farmers who are becoming more and more integrated into the wider society and its institutions, the minimum level of production is often increasingly prescribed by external institutions, whereas the minimum level of consumption family members find acceptable is chiefly influenced by what they regard as their principal reference group within society. We shall see in Part II of this book that the realization of these production and consumption levels through farming is often constrained by the amount of family labour that can be mobilized; the number of workers in the family determines the attainable farm output and income.

We should point out here that none of the production factors can be seen as a completely fixed factor. As for land, for instance, it is not only the number of hectares belonging to a farm which matters. In the Basque provinces, the same area of land may be theoretically 'under-utilized', but it may also be cultivated intensively. The area may be a constant, but land intensity is variable and depends on the utilization of the other factors, labour and capital. A similar reasoning holds good for capital: as we shall see later, extension agents maintained that Basque agriculture was characterized by a sub-optimal utilization of machinery, but a few farmers used their tractors and other equipment very intensively, working both their own plots and those of their neighbours. And also labour intensity may vary according to the implements worked with and the type of land worked on. In short, the utilization or intensity of production factor A should be seen as a function of the other two factors B and C; or in other words, production factors in agriculture should only be analyzed in their interrelatedness, no factor being constant.

Not only the quantitative presence of production factors, but also their utilization (their qualitative presence) determines the attainable farm family income. This highlights the fundamental role of farm household members in deciding upon the attunement to one another of the factors of production, and particularly of the individual labour input of the family members. By 'attunement of production factors' I mean their manipulation in such a way that they respond best to market possibilities, family members' personal capabilities and knowledge, and not least their individual preferences. Farmers choose the combination of factors of production they estimate most favourable in terms of remuneration of the family's economic activities and the costs and efforts related to the realization of these activities.

Chayanov did not analyze the labour farm in isolation from its wider economic context. It cannot be denied that he had an eye for technological developments, external markets and even the influence of urban culture on the consumption needs of farm family members (cf. Chayanov, 1966: 84, 207 ff.). But in the course of time, these external links of farm holdings have become stronger and more extensive, especially in Western European and North American agriculture, having implications for farm management that could not have been foreseen in Chayanov's days. Today, the supply of

technology in agriculture, and with it the huge labour productivity and yield increases it has made possible, is way beyond what could have been imagined seventy years ago. Markets have differentiated, all having their own logic for the actors operating upon them. And through industrial labour of farm family members, but much more as a result of mass media such as radio and television, the urban way of life - its consumption and leisure patterns - has become a constant point of reference for households on even the most remote farmsteads.

Thus, farmers' strategies are not simply designed on the basis of on-farm factors; farmers establish what Long and van der Ploeg call 'interlocking projects' - with external institutions and market agents (clients, cooperatives), but also among themselves.

> "Actors' projects are realized within specific arenas, such as those shaped by market, state/peasant, agribusiness/peasant, or farmer/farmer-representative relations. That is each project is articulated with other actors' projects, interests and perspectives. This articulation is strategic in that the actors involved will attempt to anticipate the reactions and possible strategies of the other actors and agencies" (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994: 80).

My discussion of the farm household's mobilization of its external network will be primarily focused on these interlocking processes.

I shall try to extend my analysis beyond Chayanov's discussion of the family farm's drudgery/remuneration balance. Chayanov used the intersecting marginal (dis)utility curves in the first place to explain shifts in worker output and labour intensity under changing circumstances. In my work, however, the subjective equilibrium model will be used to illustrate the rationale behind certain household strategies (of which the aforementioned interlocking projects may form part) in comparison with alternative strategies.

Farm households, some more than others, respond to new opportunities they are offered or constraints imposed on them as adequately as possible, in an attempt to enhance their room for manoeuvre. From the observer's point of view, keeping Chayanov's diagram in mind, this can be interpreted as farm households moving marginal (dis-)utility curves up and down while searching for a more advantageous equilibrium point. For instance, they may purchase new machinery in order to increase their labour productivity; as the same output can now be obtained with less labour drudgery, the curve AB shifts to A_1B_1 (see Figure 2). If this machinery can be bought by means of credit which is paid off over a number of years, the effect on the household's consumption pattern will hardly be noticeable. If the machines are paid with money from the household's savings, and part of the household's income is thus reserved for productive consumption[5], a smaller part can be spent on the satisfaction of (personal) consumption needs of the family members. In other words, for each unit of output the income that can be spent on the family's personal consumption is lower than in the original situation. When the level of

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[5] The distinction between 'productive' and 'personal consumption' is made by Friedmann (1978); see also Mauleón (1989: 102).

consumption is lower, the marginal utility of any additional unit is higher; hence, the corresponding marginal utility curve shifts upward (to C_1D_1; cf. Chayanov, 1966: 209). A similar upward shift of the consumption satisfaction curve also occurs if, for example, household members set money aside in order to emulate urban lifestyles (ibid.: 84). These shifts of (dis-)utility curves lead to a new point of equilibrium (in Figure 2, somewhere between Y and Z). Now, according to Chayanov, farm households only consider adaptations to be advantageous if the new equilibrium point is located in the shaded area under the original point of intersection (ibid.: 209, 210). It is there that the drudgery is lower than originally, while the utility of the means of consumption still increases.[6]

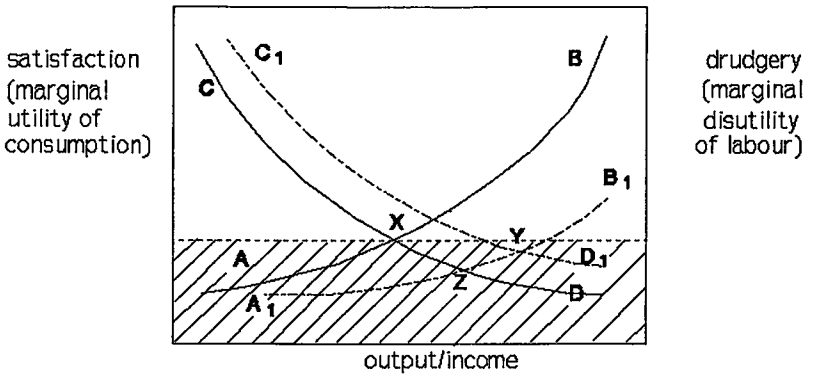

Figure 2. Shifting marginal (dis-)utility curves.

Similar shifts of these curves occur if farmers start operating on other markets where prices for their products are higher, or if they decide to take up a job in industry, so that they get paid more in return for the same (or less) labour input.

Turning to the family's 'internal' network, I believe that Chayanov's idea of 'the equilibrium of subjective evaluations' can be integrated into an analysis of the social organization of family labour within the farming household. I will therefore translate the concept of subjective evaluation to the level of individual household members. After all, it is not so much the household as a whole that makes a subjective balance between remuneration and labour

[6] It is, however, very difficult to relate these curves and equilibrium points to quantifiable levels of output or labour hours. Netting therefore remarks that "since utility and drudgery are completely subjective variables with no independent empirical referents, the model may have a mainly heuristic value" (Netting, 1993: 302).

input, but rather the individual members of the family who do so while strategizing the allocation of their labour so as to realize their personal projects. Moreover, I argue that farm family members do not just define workload in terms of physical exertion, nor remuneration in terms of satisfaction of consumption needs. A household member's subjectively experienced drudgery of labour is equally determined by his or her evaluation of farmwork in relation to work outside, by authority relations on the farm, the type of agricultural tasks he or she is expected to carry out and in what way (for example, mechanized or handwork), and so on. Whereas remuneration comprises a complex of factors, such as the income one can dispose of independently, recognition of one's task performance by other family members, status of one's labour in the wider context, or the extent to which individual realization through one's work is accomplished. Thus, family members sometimes prefer working longer hours, or carrying out physically strenuous tasks, to doing lighter or less time consuming work that they detest.

Household members outline their personal projects on the basis of their subjective evaluations (which may be different for each individual member) and negotiate with each other the realizability of these projects within the margins of the common farming strategy. Especially important in these negotiations, important for the future of the holding, are the diverging 'images of the future' with respect to the farm and Self of, on the one hand, the senior farmer (or farming couple) and, on the other, the successor (or succeeding couple). The future that a successor has mapped out for himself (labour career, social life, etc.) and the implications this has for the way the farm will be continued may or may not coincide with his parents' image of the future of the farm and the consequent expectations they have of their son. Hence, in the end these negotiations determine not only the production and commercialization strategies of farming enterprises, but also whether and how the farm is passed on to the next generation.

My research centred on family households in the province of Gipuzkoa that were engaged in dairy farming, the most important subsector in Basque agriculture (both in terms of the people involved and the value represented; cf. Mauleón, 1989:97). The Basque dairy farming sector is not a homogeneous whole, but it is not easy to come up with a typology that does justice to the existing heterogeneity of farming enterprises. A classification that is still often used by regional policy makers and other analysts of the rural economy is the one that roughly divides the Basque farming population into three main types: 'modern', 'traditional' and 'mixed' (i.e. part-time) farmers.[7] Most farmers in the region had equally adopted this typology in their discourse, and although it might go too far to speak of a real 'folk typology',

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7) This typology bears great resemblance to the one used by Vivier in a study on farming strategies in the French mountain region of 'Le Massif de l'Oisans': the 'agriculteur professionel', who sees his farm as a business; the 'double-actifs', whose off-farm incomes often enable them to introduce mechanization; and the 'plus agés' (the oldest farmers) and those without successors (Vivier, 1987: 144,145).

this categorization has been widely used to describe the agrarian sector for more than 20 years. However, the problem with this typology, which of course reminds one of similar categorizations that were used within the dominant modernization approach in rural sociology in the 1960s and the early '70s, is that it has strong normative overtones. 'Modern', 'traditional' and 'mixed' farming can be seen as labels attributed to different categories of farm enterprises, which had become internalized by policy makers and farmers alike and to which policy was subsequently tailored as if these labels were entirely neutral and objective. As Wood observes, "Labelling is in part a scientific (taxonomic) act, but it is also an act of valuation and judgement involving prejudices and stereotyping" (Wood, 1985b: 348).

In Basque rural policy, as well as in the analyses of agrarian economists in the region, 'modern' farm enterprises were for a long time believed to be the only valid model for agricultural development - and this idea was only reinforced by the knowledge that agricultural development in the region would henceforth be subject to the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy. In this view, farmers belonging to the other categories were only hindering modernization and should either follow the modern farmers' trail or disappear.

Whatmore et al. (1987) emphasize the importance of the use of adequate typologies for the correct understanding of social phenomena.

> "Typologies should not be regarded as ends in themselves nor simply as a preliminary step in the resorting of social data but rather as a potentially useful methodological tool providing a vital link between theory and practice. (..)
>
> "The method by which a typology is constructed derives from and embodies a set of epistemological assumptions about how we conceptualise and explain social phenomena and thus how theory and empirical work are related" (Whatmore et al., 1987:22,23).

But the typology they suggest, distinguishing four ideal types of farm business that are identified on the basis of their degree of (direct and indirect) subsumption, is not very satisfactory.[8] In the first place, this categorization is exclusively based on the extent to which the farm production process is subordinated to external capitals, either as a result of outside control of the on-farm means of production (direct or real subsumption), or through the external appropriation of surplus value generated on the farm (indirect or formal subsumption). Secondly, the ideal types, ranging from 'marginal closed units' to entirely 'subsumed units', are located in a system of coordinates with direct and indirect subsumption along the axes (ibid.:32); but it remains unclear why four types should be distinguished (and not more, or fewer), and why these four types should be placed along a straight line (the diagonal of the system), as if direct and indirect subsumption would invariably evolve in a

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8) Subsumption, a keyword in many debates in the 1980s, just like 'modernization' and '(under)development' had been a decade before, is defined as concerning "the different ways in which the agricultural production process on the farm, and its associated social relations, are being transformed under capitalism" (Whatmore et al., 1987:27).

parallel manner. In the end, this typology does not really seem to break away from earlier evolutionary models either.

Nakajima, whose principal work (Nakajima, 1986) aims at exploring Chayanov's subjective equilibrium model from as many angles as possible, introduces a classification that is equally based on two dimensions, viz. the proportion of hired labour input on the farm (as a percentage of the total labour input) and the proportion of output sold (in comparison to the total output produced). He then distinguishes: the subsistence production farm, the farm household, the commercial farm, and the farm firm (ibid.:6). In view of "the growing tendency in Japan and elsewhere towards part-time farming" (ibid.:7), he suggests adding a third dimension: the proportion of off-farm income as a percentage of the total income earned within the household. Although the criteria on the basis of which Nakajima constructs his typology are interesting in that they reflect strategic actions of farmers, for the Basque situation they are less relevant, as they would hardly differentiate among farming enterprises. There are very few farms that hire outside labour, apart from the incidental contract-worker. Moreover, most farms, and this certainly holds good for dairy farms, produce for the market. Thus, almost all farming enterprises in Euskadi would be classified as farm households (which is of course exactly what they are). But what I am interested in is whether and how these households can be differentiated.

The typology produced by the Basque sociologist Mauleón (1989) partly responds to this wish. He classifies the dairy sector in the region according to the following three criteria: the age of the farm owner, his being a full-time or part-time farmer, and whether an adult son works full-time on the farm or not. This results in the construction of eight household types, which are related to the scale of the enterprise (head of cattle), intensity (number of cows per hectare), and the proportion of milk sold directly to consumers. He demonstrates that there exist statistically significant relationships between these variables and the different types of farm household and tries to explain these. However, a sociological analysis of farm household strategies is not provided.

Such an analysis, focusing on the heterogeneity of farm enterprises, is central in the so-called 'styles of farming' approach, developed at the Agricultural University in Wageningen, the Netherlands. This approach in rural sociology analyzes the variety of farmers' practices as responses to change and intervention. Originally, a 'style of farming' was defined by Hofstee (1946) as "the complex but integrated set of notions, norms, knowledge elements, experiences etc., held by a group of farmers in a specific region, that describes the way farming praxis should be carried out" (van der Ploeg, 1994: 17). But in the course of time, a differentiation of farming styles along regional lines has become less relevant. At present, styles of farming are predominantly studied in relation to farmers' widely varying responses to the market and technology. Moreover:

> "Since the structuration of markets and the orientation of technological development have become increasingly the object of agrarian policy, styles of farming have, to a large extent, consequently emerged as farmers' responses to national and international agrarian policies" (ibid.: 18).

In recent years, the analytical tools of scholars belonging to the 'styles of farming' school have become more and more refined. Enterprises are classified according to criteria such as scale and intensity (Roep et al., 1991), ambition/thrift versus craftmanship/entrepreneurship (van der Ploeg et al., 1992), or market integration and orientation to technology (van der Ploeg, 1993a; Roep and de Bruin, 1994). In analyses of rural areas in various regions in the Netherlands highly sophisticated and empirically meaningful typologies have been produced.

But when I collected the main part of my field material, in 1988 and 1989, the reconceptualization of the notion of farming styles was still being developed and had not evolved beyond a rather rudimentary typology which classified farm enterprises as either marginal, vanguard, intensive, or large-scale, relatively extensive, farms (e.g. van der Ploeg, 1987a; see also Section 5.3 for a graphical expression of this typology). For the Basque situation, such a typology was not esteemed to be more adequate than, for example, Mauleón's. However, one of the basic ideas of the styles of farming approach also became the premise behind my own research: viz. that different farming practices, co-existing side by side in the same region, may all represent equally valid strategies, and that in the present economic constellation the survival capacity of large-scale, institutionally integrated, farm enterprises cannot (as is often done) *a priori* be assumed to be greater than that of other types of farming.

The 'folk' typology I referred to earlier, which was still very much in vogue in the region by the end of the 1980s and taken to be an adequate characterization of existing farm enterprises by both social scientists and farmers alike, might be reinterpreted in this way. It is true that the typology of 'modern', 'traditional' and 'part-time' farmers offers no more than a sterile taxonomy which "does not reveal how such people actually survive" (Wood, 1985b: 354). I have nevertheless accepted this typology (adding a fourth category of 'quality producers') as my framework of analysis in Part II of this book, precisely in order to bring out its normative character and highlight the divergent rationales of the various survival strategies that are hidden behind such labels.

As we have argued before, these household strategies come about as the outcome of negotiations among family members over the realizability of their personal projects. They are eventually effectuated in interaction with the economic, social and political environment in which farming households operate. But at the same time, these intra-family negotiations, the village structure, market developments, institutional policies and the extent to which farming strategies are successful all form part of the household members' 'stock of knowledge' on which they draw to establish their personal equilibrium of subjective evaluations; in fact, this equilibrium is continually readjusted, while the actors anticipate the realizability of their individual projects. This whole idea links up with the notion of 'social actor' as formulated by Long and van der Ploeg (following Giddens):

> "social actors are 'knowledgeable' and 'capable'. They attempt to solve problems, learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them, and monitor continuously their own actions, observing how others react to their behaviour and taking note of the various contingent circumstances" (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994: 66).

In my discussion, I shall regularly dwell on the question of how this type of analysis can help to elucidate household strategies aimed at the continuity of the farming enterprise. Such an analysis, in order to be meaningful, will have to incorporate cultural notions and manifestations concerning succession, marriage, authority, et cetera.

With this, my original research problem concerning the consequences of the incorporation of the Basque Country into the European Community for the farmer strategies and institutional policies in the region is not entirely given up, but must be put into the light of the foregoing model of analysis. That is, the European market influences and Community policies are seen as some of the many "forms of external intervention [which] necessarily enter the existing life-worlds of the individuals and social groups affected, and in this way are mediated and transformed by the same actors and local structures" (ibid.: 64).

Thus, I am chiefly interested in the question of how a household's survival and succession strategies emerge from (and shape) the mobilization of ('external' and 'internal') social networks, with special regard to the interlocking projects between the household and external agents and the confrontation of the household members' personal projects. The following questions will thereby be considered:

- Where do the projects of the senior farming couple, concerning the satisfaction of the household's consumption needs and the problem of succession, coincide with or diverge from those of their successor (or of the succeeding couple)?
- How are their projects influenced by cultural factors and by changing circumstances within the institutional framework and the social environment into which the farm household is integrated?
- To what extent can a 'Chayanovian' analysis in terms of subjective evaluations be helpful in understanding both farm household strategies and family members' projects?
- What hypotheses can be formulated as to the perspectives for the future that are embedded in the different household strategies?

As to the methodology used, I should make clear that from the outset it had been my aim to do my fieldwork in a rural community, living on one of the farmsteads and participating in the agricultural tasks and other daily activities of the farm families, thus getting to know the significant interrelations within the village. This, I reckoned, would give me the opportunity to sample the life-worlds of the relevant social actors in the community, map out their social networks, learn about contrasting world-views, confrontations and conflict, and select some strategic cases for further systematic analysis (cf. Long, 1988, 1989). However, I soon learned that, due to the closed character of rural communities in Euskadi, it would be extremely difficult to find a farm

family that was willing to put me up for some months or even to find a small rural dwelling I could rent. I therefore had to think of an alternative approach.

Since the late 1970s, an increasing number of adolescents and young adults has learned *Euskara*, the Basque language. The language had been forbidden during the franquist regime, although it had been preserved in remote rural areas. In more recent years, the Basque Administration has tried to motivate farmers to put up students for one or two months so as to offer them the possibility to practise the language. The response of the farmers was low, but in some cases their nationalist sentiments and love for their language got the better of them. So that was the role I created for myself: a student of Euskara who wanted to practise his knowledge of the language in a rural community. I got two offers in different villages, and in 1988-89 I spent about five months in each of these places. My attitude 'in the field', however, did not correspond to that of a typical language student. Most farmers could not understand why I kept asking them questions about their lives and seemed to be interested in their ways of farming. I finally had to fall back on straightforward interviews. All in all, I was able to do repeated, in-depth interviews with some 25 farm families.

In these unstructured interviews, the following topics were discussed at length: the history of the farm from as long ago as the oldest generation could remember till our days; the present structure of the farm enterprise (cattle, land use, feeding, machinery, types of commercialization, institutional links, investments, etc.); the life histories of the most relevant family members; the links that the household established with outside actors, like institutions, clients, etc.; the social organization of labour within the household (who did what, and why? - paying special attention to the division of labour along generational and gender lines, on- and off-farm work and authority relations); and the organization of leisure. Farmers were asked to relive those moments in their lives when important decisions had to be taken as to their farm enterprises and to explain the reasons for the changes that had taken place. I also questioned them (and their children) about their plans for the future, how they tried to realize them, and in what way succession of the holding had been arranged. Furthermore, they were asked to define what type of farming system they regarded as the most adequate for the Basque Country, which farmer in the village or the area they considered to be the best, and how they characterized their own farm in comparison? Finally, I would ask them to evaluate the agrarian policies of the regional, national and European Administrations.

I completed my research findings with a survey among another 33 farmers, in which more or less the same questions were asked in a more structured way. Their answers were recorded quantitatively. Yet, the names of these respondents were obtained through a professional association of dairy farmers to which virtually all of them belonged, which means they can not be considered a random sample of the Basque dairy farming sector; apart from this, we are dealing with very small numbers. We should therefore be cautious as to the interpretation of the data. At most, they indicate certain tendencies, but no definite conclusions may be attributed to them. Furthermore, I interviewed and discussed part of my research findings with over 25 key informants: people within the regional Department of Agriculture

and Fisheries, extension agencies, farmers' unions, professional associations, or others who could provide me with specific information about topics that were of interest to me.

The material gathered in this period laid the basis for the greater part of the analysis. Five years later I returned to the field for a few short visits. On these occasions I collected additional material on a dozen strategically chosen farm families I had visited before, which, among other things, allowed me to update the earlier research findings.

Throughout the text, whenever I have quoted people in public functions, they appear under their real names. Conversely, pseudonyms have been used for the two villages where I carried out my research, the farmsteads I visited, and their inhabitants I interviewed.

1.2 Overview of the book

Chapter 2 provides some insight into the agricultural evolution in Gipuzkoa in the course of this century and the extent to which the industrial development of the region determined this evolution. The outcome of this process is set against the background of the history of the European Economic Community until the incorporation of Spain and Portugal and the expected consequences of Spain's membership of the EEC for Basque farmers. We will see that since the 1950s and under relatively unfavourable circumstances (small plots of land, a deficient technological level), farmers in Gipuzkoa started to specialize in types of production (dairy farming and stock breeding) that were also dominant in other European regions where large-scale, technologically advanced agricultural structures prevailed.

The following two chapters provide the necessary background for an understanding of the wider setting in which household strategies were being developed by the end of the 1980s. Chapter 3 deals with the social environment of the farms in the rural mountain communities where I carried out the main part of my research. There was a certain consensus in the Basque Country with respect to the importance of maintaining the social viability of isolated villages, as it was feared that, when schools and shops closed down, doctors left, and more and more marginal farms were given up, eventually even the most modern farms with the best lands would be abandoned, too.

Chapter 4 sets out to explore how different categories of farmers had to cope with a few major policy decisions as to the regional dairy farming sector. We shall also see how the modern-traditional typology I referred to earlier was translated into a kind of allocation of tasks among regional institutions. Basque farmers are in the first place affected by agricultural policies designed at the regional level (by the relevant Basque Government Departments, the farmers' unions and professional associations), but they also have to do with national and supranational laws and regulations. These policies seldom run completely parallel and at some times they may even be diametrically opposed. The interplay of institutional policies can be conceptualized as a social arena in which the different parties try to realize their particular objectives as well as possible, making use of personal, material and rhetorical

resources, and counteracting or neutralizing the constraints put upon them by the other parties involved.

Most of the theoretical considerations exposed earlier come back in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, where I discuss the production and commercialization strategies of different types of family farm households in relation to their social organization of labour, and the possible implications of these strategies for the terms of negotiation over succession on these farms.

Chapter 9 shows that succession is not the more or less automatic result of successful economic strategies, but depends at the same time on the creativity and flexibility of both the older farming couple and the younger, succeeding, couple in working out a definition of the position of the successor's wife on the farm of her parents-in-law which is acceptable for all parties involved. This creativity is further needed to prevent siblings from dissociating themselves from the common family project called farming. In the concluding Chapter 10 the different arguments explored in the previous chapters will be brought together.

The reader will find that, in these various chapters, the narrations of the protagonists of farming practices and agricultural policies have a central place (cf. also van der Ploeg, 1993b). They provide us with the insights and concepts which enable us to come to meaningful generalization. For, as Bennet observes:

> "If generalization is possible in multidimensional social analysis, it is to be found in what Robert Merton (1949) called the 'middle range' of theory, or an empirical generalization: that is, a generalization that pertains to an historically specific, and usually socially important, context of behavior and endeavor" (Bennett, 1982:23).

Chapter 2

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION UNDER CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

2.1 Basque agriculture in historical perspective

Nineteenth century Euskadi was a particularly traditional society, dominated by the Church and rural caciques, fundamentally opposed to the liberal regime in Madrid and the nascent national bourgeoisie. Minor confrontations culminated in the two Carlist Wars (1833-39 and 1872-76) that ended in victory for the liberal forces. The defeated Basque Country was deprived of its regional privileges and lost its special status as a free trade zone. Commerce received a severe blow. Commercial capital was thereupon invested in the gradually increasing industrial sector and banking institutions in the region, which gave the impulse to the industrialization of the coastal provinces Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. This process took first place in and around the capitals Bilbao and San Sebastian, but expanded slowly over other parts of the provinces in the course of the twentieth century.

The Civil War (1936-39) meant another major divide in Spanish history. In the 1940s, the Franco-regime abolished the payment of groundrent in kind and likewise restricted the yearly rent increase. As a result of the high inflation level in those decades most landlords were motivated to sell their farms to the tenants. Until the fifties, the majority of the farmers in Gipuzkoa still cultivated a wide variety of crops, the most important being wheat and maize. Some had even introduced the first threshing machines on their farms when suddenly the changeover came. In the course of a few years wheat cultivation was given up, the machines were disposed of again, and a process set in towards commercial cattle-breeding (see Douglass, 1977). What had brought about this change?

The industrialization and the rising standard of living in the region had attracted an ever greater number of migrants from poorer regions in the South, like Extremadura and Andalusie, and the increase of the urban population led to a growing demand for dairy products and meat. In reaction to this, the dairy cooperative Gurelesa was created in Gipuzkoa, which offered its clients pasteurized milk, important in a region where tuberculosis and bruselosis of cows still took their toll among the people. This guarantee of milk of high quality created an even higher demand for dairy products. On the other hand, the cooperative guaranteed the farmers the sale of their total production all year long, which was a big improvement compared with the seasonal fluctuations of milk sales farmers had experienced so far. Gurelesa even committed itself to buy the incidental surplus production of those farmers who did not become cooperative members but kept on selling their milk directly to the consumers. The cooperative's policy stimulated milk

production on the farms to a great extent.[9]

By and by dairy factories were set up in the other Basque provinces as well, while more and more farmers specialized in dairy farming with meat production as a complementary activity. As a result, the autochtonous Pyrenean cow lost its importance for the family farm economy in favour of, first, the Swiss breed, and eventually the Friesian milch cows.

2.2 The industrialization paradox

The regional industrialization also influenced agrarian development in other ways. I stated before that the regional industrialization was not just limited to the area surrounding the provincial capital. Factories were set up in many towns and villages all over the province, while industrial wages went up due to the demand for labour power. This did not only lead to the immigration of people from elsewhere, but also caused an important flow of labour power from the rural areas to the industrial centres, which only declined in the late 1970s when Basque industry began to feel the effects of the economic recession. Among those who sought refuge in industry was the overwhelming majority of agrarian youth as well as a large number of heads of farms. This had several consequences.

First, the category of part-time farmers increased strongly. The 1982 census suggests that only 36.8% of the heads of farms (men and women) in Gipuzkoa "mainly work on the farm" (Gobierno Vasco, 1985). Yet, this percentage has to be read with some reservation. It should be mentioned that the data in the 1982 census are not always very reliable. Moreover, it is far from easy to produce an empirically sound definition of part-time farming (I shall discuss this definition problem in Chapter 8).

Etxezarreta (1983) states that it was not just the desire to earn more money (a pull factor) that made these farmers take up a job in industry. In most cases it was the shere impossibility to reproduce the farm household with only an income from agriculture (a push factor) which motivated them to take this step. A farmer who started working in the factory usually reduced the agricultural activities that demanded high labour input: the number of cattle was brought down, milch cows were replaced by beef cattle, meadows were converted into woodland, etc. Some part-time farmers, however, were able to invest the extra money earned in increasing the labour productivity of the remaining family members on the farm.

Second, as fewer farmers' sons were inclined to take over their parents' holdings, the number of young farmers decreased so that the average age of farmers rose. According to the 1982 agrarian census, only one out of six heads of farms in Gipuzkoa was younger than 45, whereas almost 60% were older than 55. By the end of the 1980s, however, the situation seemed to have changed. In the 1989 census, the percentages were 22% and 55%, respectively.

Third, industrialization and urbanization caused a high demand for land,

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[9] This is not to say, though, that the introduction of Gurelesa in the Gipuzkoan countryside was entirely unproblematic. We will come back to this in Chapter 4.

both in urban and in rural areas, and led to a spectacular increase of land prices in the countryside. Farmers who had found a job in agriculture rarely sold their farmstead or surrounding estates, speculating on a continuing value increase of their landed properties. On farms without successors something similar occurred: while the buildings were often left to decay after the owners had died, their children, who lived elsewhere, planted pine-trees on productive arable land and meadows. Thus, the reduction of agrarian labour power did by no means result in a growing availability of farmland that could be used by the remaining farmers to enlarge their small-scale holdings.

The economic crisis of the 1970s did not change this situation. Industrial workers with a rural background realized that their landed property could serve as a labour buffer in case of unemployment. Hence, though prices of both land and wood sagged, this still did not motivate farmers to sell. (In addition, it is characteristic of non-professional speculators that, while prices go up, they wait for even better opportunities to sell, and when they go down, they decide to wait and hope for better times.)

So to sum up, industrialization enlarged the outlet markets for agrarian products, thus leading to product specialization on most of the farms: instead of cultivating a wide variety of crops and raising many different animals in small quantities and numbers, farm households concentrated on fewer products, but produced more of these. Besides, it enhanced the labour market, giving farmers the opportunity to employ their labour power in activities presumably more remunerative than agriculture. On the other hand, industrialization led to a stagnating land market, which impeded the (small) group of farmers in need of land to realize the necessary expansion that would have enabled them to increase productivity significantly. At the same time, the strategy of most part-time farmers to replace certain production lines by others (less labour demanding and less remunerative) aggravated the situation of 'sub-optimal utilization' of agricultural land; that is to say, the real productivity of the land was considerably lower than its theoretically attainable productivity (the productivity that would have been realized in the absense of the mentioned limitations). This process of diverging consequences of industrialization, offering opportunities in some cases and restricting alternatives in other, is what we might term the industrialization paradox.

This situation, whereby dairy farmers faced with a growing demand for their products on the market were hardly able to expand their livestocks as a result of the impossibility to purchase or hire more land, could be overcome by a policy of land re-allotment, something strongly advocated by some rural economists (cf. Etxezarreta, 1985) and policy makers. No political party forming part of the Basque Autonomous Government has been prepared to execute such a re-allotment policy, as this would have met with the opposition of the greater part of the farming population.

This was the situation in the Basque countryside at the moment that the Iberian Peninsula became part of the European Economic Community and Basque farmers were confronted with the consequences of the Common Agricultural Policy.

2.3 The Common Agricultural Policy: its creation and reform

The idea to create a European Common Market was launched in 1955 by the Benelux countries within the European Community for Carbon and Steel (E.C.C.S.), and on 25 March 1957 the European Economic Community, comprising France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg, was founded. In 1973 the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark entered the Common Market, and eight years later, in 1981, Greece became the tenth member state of the Community, With the incorporation of Spain and Portugal, on 1 January 1986, the European Community acquired the dimension it had at the time the research on which this study is based was carried out. Its objectives, as stated in the Treaty of Rome, ran from raising the living standard of the people in the associated countries to establishing closer economic and political relationships among the states and maintaining peace in a continent that in the course of only 30 years had been devastated by two World Wars.

In the summer of 1958, the foundations of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) were laid by the representatives of the first EEC countries in the Italian town of Stresa. Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome defined the objectives of this policy as follows (Werts, 1981: 18; Caja Laboral Popular, 1985: 181):

- increasing the farmers' productivity,
- providing the rural population with a reasonable income and a living standard comparable with that of the industrial workers,
- stabilizing the markets of agrarian products, in order to avoid shortages and surplusses and sudden ups and downs of agrarian market prices,
- guaranteeing Western European food supplies,
- establishing reasonable consumer prices.

The means to realize these objectives come from the European Fund of Agricultural Orientation and Guarantee, or FEOGA ("Fonds Européen d'Orientation et Garantie Agricole"). It was the CAP's price policy (the intervention prices that should guarantee the farmers a more or less stable income, the subsidies on exports, and the costs of storage, elaboration, or destruction of agrarian surplus products) that more and more absorbed the lion's share of this agricultural fund. In 1985 approximately 62% of the whole EEC budget was needed to meet the financial expenses related to the European Agricultural Policy (Arenaza et al., 1986: 72), which gives us an idea of the prominence of the CAP within the general policy framework of the European Community.

The image of European agriculture has changed rather drastically over the last few decades; suffice it to say that in the first fifteen years after the Stresa meetings, every minute a farmer in one of the EEC countries gave up his agricultural enterprise. None the less, most of the objectives of the CAP were realized due to a radical rationalization of the primary sector: in spite of a decreasing rural population, agricultural production volumes in Europe kept on growing. In the words of Miramon: "Over the last 20 years the agrarian production has increased 40% with only half of the labour power. Today, European agriculture is characterized by structural overproduction" (Miramon, 1987: 8), especially of dairy products, meat, cereals and wine. Indeed, we

may well agree with Miramon's observation that the Common Agricultural Policy became a victim of its own success. The policy to guarantee European farmers more or less constant prices for their products implied an ever greater pressure on the EEC's financial resourses.

The 'Greenbook' ("Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy"), published in July 1985 by the Committee for the European Communities, announced a reform of the Agricultural Policy of the European Community, that aimed at restoring market balances and getting rid of the agrarian surpluses. These objectives were to be achieved by a more rigorous application of the market prices in force and the establishment of a quota system for surplus products. At the same time, special programmes were designed for farmers in mountainous or disadvantaged areas, based on the philosophy that is was important to keep the agrarian population on the land so as to maintain the social structure in these rural areas as much as possible. The new CAP suggested, however, that the future of the rural population in disadvantaged areas would not exclusively lie in the agricultural sector.

We saw before how in the second half of this century farmers in Gipuzkoa specialized in those types of production that were dominant in the EEC member states with the most modern agricultural enterprises. Whereas the dimension and technological level of most Basque farms were only comparable with those in the most backward countries in the Common Market (Caja Laboral Popular, 1985). Irony had it that Spain, and thereby the Basque Autonomous Community, became part of the European Community when the former Common Agricultural Policy, that had stimulated agricultural production and protected farmers' incomes through a system of intervention prices, had just made way for a new policy that confronted farmers with production contingents for surplus products and a more direct application of market prices.

In the years before Spain's incorporation into the Common Market, several economic studies were published that analyzed the future survival capacity of Spanish (or more specifically, Basque) farmers under the reformed CAP regime. In view of what has been said so far, it is hardly surprising that the majority of these publications gave the reader little reason for optimism.

2.4 The Common Market and its expected consequences for Basque farmers

Ceberio (1981) stated that the market perspectives of Basque products like dairy and beef would worsen after the incorporation into the Common Market. Basque dairy farmers had every reason to fear possible imports of milk from other European countries, as "one observes that price and quality differences are favourable for the EEC, where surplus is structural" (Ceberio, 1981: 106). It was therefore of the utmost importance that milk producers in the Basque Country could rely on a strong and modern dairy industry, once they had to stand up to competition from their European colleagues. According to the same author, poultry and pig farms would hardly be affected; export of pork to the rest of Europe would be out of the question, though, as long as the

African plague among pigs still existed in certain Spanish regions. Anyway, both types of production were of minor importance in the Basque provinces. Ceberio mentioned the production of mutton as one of the branches that might face a somewhat brighter future within the EEC. This opinion was shared by Garaizabal and Garcia de la Cruz (1986) who also saw good market perspectives for mutton; on the other hand, producers of beef, wheat, sugar, pork, and especially milk, faced great difficulties, that could only be overcome by modernizing Spanish farm enterprises and increasing their productivity.

Another study (Mansvelt Beck and Nierop, 1986) mentioned a surplus production in Spain of olive oil, vegetables, fruit (including citrus fruits), and wine, and the country's self-sufficiency for suger, pork, poultry, and potatoes; there was a shortage of grain, milk, and beef. Before the adhesion of the Iberian Peninsula, the EEC was short of tobacco, fruit and citrus fruits, and this study suggested that some regions in Spain (Cáceres for tobacco, Valencia for citrus fruits) might benefit from these market perspectives. This did not hold good for the Basque Country, however, where the mentioned products were hardly or not produced. The authors cited a Spanish stock-breeder who pointed out that since the beginning of the eighties many dairy farmers had run into debts while trying to modernize their farms so as to resist European competition; this farmer feared that most of his colleagues would nevertheless be eliminated once the milkpowder and fresh milk from other European countries started to invade the Spanish territory.

In the northern provinces of the peninsula, where the great majority of Spanish cattle-breeders can be found, small-scale, intensive farm enterprises prevail. In the early 1980s, the average number of cattle on Spanish farms was 10 (against 32.8 in the EEC-10, i.e. the EEC before the incorporation of Spain and Portugal), of which 4.9 were milch cows (15.7 in the EEC-10). The milk production of these Spanish cows was 3,173 kg per cow per year, against an average of 4,258 kg per cow per year in the EEC-10. The predominance of small-scale farms and aged farmers also accounted for the low level of mechanization in Spain: according to the 1982 census, there were only 2.1 tractors per 100 ha. of cultivated land (4.9 in the EEC-10), and 0.6 combines per 100 ha. of cereals (1.8 in the EEC-10).

The expansion of the Common Market called for the establishment of a transition period for certain agricultural products to avoid too traumatic adaptation problems on both sides of the Pyrenees. (This was not new, though: something similar had happened on former occasions, when first Britain, Denmark and Ireland, and later Greece, joined the European Community.) For agricultural products that were not expected to cause special problems, a transition period of seven years was established, during which the prices in Spain and Portugal that were lower than those of similar products in the rest of the EEC would gradually have to go up, while higher prices would remain on the same level until European prices would catch up with them. For milk, beef, oil, vegetables, fruit, etc., considered to be more 'problematic' products, either by the Iberian countries or by the other EEC members, a transition period of ten years was agreed upon. As Spanish dairy farmers, before their incorporation into the Common Market, were paid higher prices for their milk than their European colleagues, the dairy sector in Spain would at least for some time have to cope with a stagnation of producer prices. At

the same time, the transition arrangement regulated the maximum quantities of milk, dairy products and beef that were allowed to enter the Spanish market; over the first four years, these quantities would gradually have to increase, while after the fifth year imports should be free (Arenaza et al., 1986: 86-87; see also the Acta de Adhesion España-CEE, Agricultura, 1985, for a more detailed explanation).

In short, whereas the producers of typically Mediterranean products, such as citrus fruits, olive oil and wine, were expected to benefit from the new opportunities offered by the European market, most authors foresaw a very dark future for Spain's dairy sector. This observation was particularly relevant for the regions along the Cantabrian Coast where 470,000 people were employed in agriculture, or one third of Spain's agrarian population (Arenaza et al., 1986: 87). The great majority of farm enterprises in this Northern fringe of the country, which includes the Basque provinces Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, are dairy farms. According to one of the studies cited earlier, these farmers would become the "victims" of the integration of Spain into the EEC (Mansvelt Beck and Nierop, 1986: 78).

A study published by the Research Department of a Basque banking institution explored in detail the economic opportunities of the different subsectors of regional agriculture within the EEC (Caja Laboral Popular, 1985). The abundancy of statistical material of which this exhaustive study made use yielded conclusions that were not at variance with those we already know. It was pointed out that in 1981 the number of people employed in agriculture as a percentage of total employment in the Basque Autonomous Community was 5.6%, which demonstrated that on this point the Basque Country, and especially Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, was more comparable with the industrial regions in Northern Europe than with the rest of Spain, where agricultural employment averaged 17.5% of total employment. The economic crisis of the seventies had had a devastating effect on Basque agriculture, causing the loss of more than a third of the jobs in this sector in less than ten years (ibid.: 8, 9). The study laid special emphasis on the deficient structures and low productivity of the majority of the farms in this region, and concluded that "with the incorporation into the EEC, the problem of the lack of profitability of many Basque farm enterprises will become more acute, which will probably continue the process of disappearance of small farms and the reduction of employment in the agrarian sector" (ibid.: 225; my translation).

The Caja Laboral study showed furthermore that while there existed a structural overproduction within the Common Market for products such as grain, beef, milk, and cheese, Spain still had not even reached a level of self-sufficiency for these products by the middle of the 1980s. The outputs of Basque agriculture would thus have to compete on the Spanish market with imported products from the rest of the European Community. Within the Basque Autonomous Community, though, the proximity of the market might be in the advantage of the farmers; this was interpreted as "a defence against the competition coming from more distant places" (ibid.: 257). But other data in the same report were less comforting. A comparison of milk prices in the Basque Country and in the rest of Europe revealed that the most direct menace for Basque dairy farmers would come from their French counterparts, and especially from those in the South-western region of Aquitaine: even if

considerable transportation costs were charged, imported French milk would reach the factories in the Basque Country (and in other regions south of the Pyrenees) with a lower price than the milk delivered by farmers in the region itself (ibid.: 170).

The publications referred to earlier all seemed to coincide in that the farmers' margins for survival would be reduced under the new CAP-regime. Indeed, by the end of the 1980s, when I carried out the main part of my fieldwork, the general complaint among dairy farmers was that they faced an important increase of the costs of inputs, whereas milk prices had hardly gone up.

In May 1991, dairy farmers held several demonstrations in the Basque provincial capitals of San Sebastian and Bilbao to protest against the milk price they were paid by the factories. They claimed that the 1991 price of 34.5 pesetas per litre equaled the prices of 1985 and did not even cover the production costs of 47 pesetas per litre (Social Security costs included).[10] Table 1 suggests that the first part of this assessment was not entirely correct, however. It shows the basis price of milk (i.e. not including bonuses) paid to farmers by the dairy factory Gurelesa/Iparlat in the month of March of the years indicated.

Table 1. Basis milk price paid to farmers in March of each year. Source: Iparlat.

year	pesetas/litre	year	pesetas/litre
1984	29.25	1991	36.5
1985	31.6	1992	36
1986	32.6	1993	36.5
1987	32.6	1994	40
1988	32.9	1995	38.5
1989	39.4	1996	44
1990	36.5	1997	43

We thus see that the prices the farmers had received for a litre of milk had risen in some degree between 1985 and 1991, and that this increase had also continued during the next few years. At the same time it becomes clear that in some years prices also stagnated or even fell back to a lower level. Seasonal price fluctuations in the course of one year were considerable, as the following table shows, and these may have coloured the farmers' perception of the general evolution of prices over the years. (The table gives the monthly prices for 1991, but similar examples may be given for other years, as well; see Gobierno Vasco, 1990: 21.)

[10] See for example *El Diario Vasco*, 4 May 1991, and *El Mundo*, 23 May 1991.

Table 2. Milk price fluctuation in 1991. Source: Gobierno Vasco, 1993: 83.

month	pesetas/litre	month	pesetas/litre
January	41	July	34.9
February	40.5	August	36
March	38.3	September	38.7
April	36.1	October	40.4
May	34.6	November	41
June	33.7	December	41.1

These fluctuations may have obscured the overall upward tendency of milk prices. All the same, this does not alter the fact that even in the months the farmers got paid most, the milk price remained well below what were esteemed to be the total production costs of 47 pesetas.

As for the dairy sector as a whole, Spanish industries were gradually taken over by foreign companies: in the early 1990s, five of the eleven largest dairy factories in Spain were controlled by French capital, while further attempts of French dairy industries to increase their grip on the Spanish market were inminent.[11] A Dutch dairy industry tried to take over one of the Basque cooperatives.

In view of the gloomy predictions cited above and these recent developments, the Basque Administration successfully attempted to convince dairy factories in the region to unite their forces: in 1992 the factory Iparlat was formed, which comprised Gurelesa and most of the other cooperatives in the Basque Country and Navarra. Moreover, the regional Department of Agriculture and Fisheries pursued a policy of stimulating dairy farmers to increase their production, mainly by subsidizing infrastructural improvements, like the purchase of modern machinery or the conversion of woodland into meadows (while the EEC policy by then was aimed at converting pastures into woodland or nature area). When the central Government in Madrid began to implement the European dairy quota policy all over Spain, the Basque Administration tried to shield the regional dairy sector from its negative consequences by acquiring a quota reservoir of about 25% more than what was actually produced in the region.

What about the evolution of the number and size of farm enterprises in Gipuzkoa in the course of the 1980s and after? Although I lack sufficient data to relate these in any way to the incorporation into the European Common Market, the following statistics are interesting enough in their own right. If we first compare the number of cattle farms with the total cattle population in the province for the years 1982 and 1989, we see that many cattle farms disappeared, while the remaining holdings became bigger: the average livestock per farm increased from 10.1 to 12.3 heads.

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11) See *El Diario Vasco*, 26 May 1991.

Table 3. Number of cattle farms and total cattle population in Gipuzkoa. Sources: Gobierno Vasco, 1985; EUSTAT, 1991.

	Cattle farms	Heads of cattle
1982	6,362	64,079
1989	5,783	71,005
	(-9.1%)	(+10.8%)

Unfortunately, the 1982 census does not specify the number of dairy farms. We can show the evolution in the number of dairy farm enterprises between 1989 and 1994, however (see Table 4); in the latter half of this time-span farmers were confronted with the effects of the milk quota.

We see that in only five years the number of dairy farms in the province had been reduced with one-third. In part, this may be due to the fact that many full-time farm enterprises that change into part-time holdings shift from dairy to beef production. Furthermore, since the coming into force of the dairy quota, aged farmers without successors may have seized this opportunity to give up milk production.[12] The decline had occurred principally among the dairy farms with fewer than 20 cows, whereas the number of holdings with more than 20 milch cows had increased with almost 30% (viz. from 234 to 302).

Table 4. Farms with dairy cows in Gipuzkoa (specified according to intervals of heads of cattle). Sources: EUSTAT, 1991; Gobierno Vasco, 1995.

	in 1989		in 1994	
	No. of farms	% of total	No. of farms	% of total
1-4	1,813	45.17%	1,160	43.28%
5-9	1,268	31.59%	744	27.76%
10-19	699	17.41%	474	17.69%
20-49	225	5.61%	265	9.89%
50-99	8	0.2 %	33	1.23%
≥100	1	0.02%	4	0.15%
Total	4,014	100 %	2,680	100 %

Table 5 shows the figures referring to the number of heads of farms in the course of almost two decades. It remains unclear whether we should assume that the number of heads of farms really grew in the 1980s or that the increase in the total number of farm managers between 1982 and 1989 must

[12] Complementary to this decline in the number of dairy farms, there seems to have been an increase in the number of beef producing enterprises. From 1993 to 1994, this increase was almost 10% in Gipuzkoa (Gobierno Vasco, 1995).

be attributed to a difference in definitions (in the 1989 census the term 'jefe de la explotación' did not only refer to the farm holder but could also imply another household member or a regular hired worker).[13] It is not unlikely that the evolution suggested is due to imperfections in the 1972 and 1982 censuses, which are now generally recognized. More interesting, however, is the evolution of the percentages of full-time farm managers: even taking into account the unreliability of data in the earlier censuses, the declining importance of full-time farm enterprises in the Gipuzkoan countryside is unmistakeable.

Table 5. Heads of farms in Gipuzkoa (total number and full-time farm managers) between 1972 and 1989. Sources: EUSTAT, 1991; Gobierno Vasco, 1986.

	Total number of heads of farms	Full-time farm managers Number	percentage
1972	11,601	7,413	63.9%
1982	11,456	4,211	36.8%
1989	12,018	3,054	25.4%

At the same time, the table suggests that a reducing number of full-time holdings does not automatically imply a depopulation of the rural sector. If it is correct that the total number of heads of farms remained fairly constant, we may expect the number of part-time farms to have risen.

In the 1980s, policy makers still feared that a dramatic depopulation of the Basque countryside would take place. It was expected that, among other things as a result of the entry into the EEC, many farmers would be forced to give up their holdings and move to the city. Part-time farming was regarded as no more than a transitional stage between full-time farming and eventual abandonment. In order to prevent the small rural villages from being abandoned, the regional Government aimed at carrying out a policy of 'comprehensive rural development', a policy that was aimed at "not only agriculture, but also infrastructure, communication, services, schools, and the development of small-scale industries in rural areas" [Urrutia, Department of

[13] Barinagarrementeria (1989:37, 40), confronted with an increase (from the 1950s to the '80s) in the number of owners of farm land in a village in Bizkaia, suggests another explanation, namely that people from outside the rural sector, motivated by the increasing profitability of the Californian pine-tree since the middle of the century, bought parcels of woodland from big landowners who sold their properties in seperate parcels. I do not believe this explanation is valid in our case, however, as this so-called 'green gold' boom had come to an end by the 1980s.

Agriculture[14] of the Basque Autonomous Government; X/87].

That the expected massive rural exodus has not ocurred may have been partly due to this rural policy, but is in my view mainly the result of the resilience capacity of the Basque farming sector itself. The former tables suggest that we are not so much faced with a disappearing, as with a changing countryside. It is precisely this idea of a changing countryside which can be heard in the narrations of villagers themselves. These narrations and the people's motives to leave or stay in the villages will be discussed in the following chapter (Chapter 3).

In Chapter 4, I shall discuss how, with the European Common Agricultural Policy in the background, national and regional institutions designed their own agricultural policies, in what way the inter-institutional struggle over a definition of agricultural development was at the same time a struggle over power, and how the outcome of this struggle was perceived by the Basque farming population.

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[14] Until 1994, the full name of this department was: *Department of Agriculture and Fisheries*. Since then, it has been the *Department of Industry, Agriculture and Fisheries*.

Chapter 3

THE REVALUATION OF RURAL VILLAGES

In the first half of the 1980s, the policy of the Department of Agriculture of the Basque Autonomous Government had been aimed at a certain rationalization of the countryside; this implied that the majority of the small-scale, unviable, farms should gradually disappear so that their land could be taken over by bigger and more modern farming enterprises that were expected to be better able to resist the competition with which Basque agriculture would be confronted after the region's incorporation into the European Common Market. At the same time, the idea prevailed that a massive exodus of rural inhabitants to the urban areas should be prevented. Not only because of a lack of jobs and housing facilities in the urban-industrial sector that still suffered from the consequences of the economic recession. But also because policy makers had more and more come to realize that modern agricultural structures and favourable market conditions were not always enough to motivate farmers to continue their farming enterprises; farmers' decisions on continuity or abandonment equally depended on social factors like the number of inhabitants of the village, and the presence of a school, a shop, a doctor and a vet. The awareness that it was important to guarantee the social viability of rural villages coincided with the recognition of the importance of mountainous and disadvantaged regions within the agricultural policy of the European Community. By the end of the 1980s, all over the Basque Country so-called Associations for Mountain Farming had been set up and money from European funds was passed on to projects that should support the maintenance of remote mountain villages.

The greater part of my fieldwork was carried out in two small mountain villages which I shall refer to as Aritzmendi and Zelaizabal. When I call these rural communities 'mountain villages' it is not so much because of their altitude. A village can be defined as a so-called Mountain Farming Area, in terms of the European Community, if the difference in altitude between the highest and the lowest point within the village boundaries is greater than 400 metres, or if the average angle of inclination of mountain slopes is higher than 20%. In most villages in the province of Gipuzkoa either one or both conditions are fulfilled. In both Aritzmendi and Zelaizabal, the village nucleus consisted of no more than the village hall, the church, a small school, a bar with restaurant and a few houses around the village square; as in almost all villages in the Basque coastal provinces, the majority of the farmsteads lay scattered on the mountain slopes around these nuclei. Although it only took about 10 minutes to a quarter of an hour by car to get from the village nuclei to the nearest urban centres, it might take another 10 minutes or more, driving along winding mountain roads, to reach the isolated farms. There are reasonably well maintained asphalted or cement roads to virtually all inhabited farms, and on most farms there is at least one car. Complaints of feeling isolated, both among young and old farm dwellers, did normally not concern

the distance in kilometres between the farm and the village, but had generally more to do with disappearing services in the village and a gradually shrinking social environment (cf. Greenwood, 1976: 151).

3.1 Aritzmendi

In the second half of the last century, this village in the Goierri region had had about 1,100 inhabitants, and all through the first half of this century, numbers had still fluctuated around 800. But since the 1950s the population had decreased rapidly. In 1988, the village had 476 inhabitants; 399 inhabitants lived on the 86 farms around the village nucleus. There were only 20 farms where the owners were registered as full-time farmers, but 8 of them received an old-age pension. So there were no more than 12 farms with full-time farmers younger than 65 in the whole village. On three of these farms did the inhabitants gain their income exclusively through their farming activities, while on the other nine either the owner's wife, children, or other relatives living on the farm, gained additional incomes outside the agricultural sector. According to the "Enciclopedia Histórico-Geográfica de Guipúzcoa", published in 1983, almost 40% of the local inhabitants belonged to the 'active population', which means they had a job; 7.62% of the total population worked in the primary sector, but this percentage was probably lower by the end of the decade.

There were four factories within the village limits, one bar with a dining-room, two gastronomic societies, and (at some distance of the nucleus) a restaurant. The small school with two teachers was only attended by very young children; the older children had to leave the village. There were no shops, nor was there any public transport that passed through the village (although there was a small station at about a kilometre from the nucleus where a train stopped a few times a day). If one needed a doctor or a vet, one had to go the nearest town. Recently, a new, roofed fronton (where people of all ages played the popular Basque ball-game 'pelota') had been built right behind the church, but there were no other sports facilities.

According to the mayor, during the 1970s and early 1980s, the general tendency had been for people living in small and relatively isolated places like Aritzmendi to leave the village and start living and working in more urbanized centres. Since then, however, the situation had changed.

> "People have become aware that it's much better to live here. Roads have improved a lot, everyone has a telephone and a car, so it has become easier to live here and work in a town some 10 km away. So nowadays, a number of young people are not leaving the village anymore: they are rebuilding the farm or are having a house built next to their parents' farm."

People also had the possibility to go and live in some new blocks of flats that had been built near the village square a few years earlier.

Although the mayor was quite pessimistic about the future of farming in the region, he did not believe village life would be seriously affected.

> "As I see it, the phenomenon of farming as a way of life will disappear. But that does not mean that the farms themselves will disappear. The majority of farmsteads in Aritzmendi are being renewed or redecorated. The people who live there work in industry; they see the farm as their house and maybe have a vegetable garden and some fowls and rabbits or so."

Farms may still be abandoned in the future, but in the mayor's view this will only happen "on those farms where there are no children, no successors". There were, however, several farms in Aritzmendi that were occupied by a few brothers and sisters, an old childless couple, or a bachelor - that is by people without any descendants to pass the farm on to when they died.

3.2 Zelaizabal

In the first half of the 20th century, the population of Zelaizabal, situated in the Tolosaldea area, increased steadily, from 890 inhabitants in 1900 to 1027 in 1950, but since then more and more people began to leave the village. In 1988 there were only 491 inhabitants left. The Historical-Geographical Encyclopedia of 1983 stated that 50% of the village population was employed, with 18,11% working in the primary sector. Again, this percentage, which suggested that more than a third of the active population was working in agriculture, must have declined considerably by the time I carried out my fieldwork here. (It is, however, doubtful that the percentage of people working in the primary sector in Zelaizabal has ever been so high in the last twenty years; I believe it is much more likely that this number is due to statistical defectiveness. The agricultural census of 1972 is nowadays seen as totally unreliable, and even the 1982 census is believed to contain more or less serious imperfections.) According to an Animal Health Control Census, carried out in 1989, there were 76 farms where cows or sheep were kept: 64 with only cows, 3 with sheep, and 9 farms with both.

There were a few small factories in the village, but almost everyone with a job in industry worked elsewhere; there were two medium-sized industrial towns at ten minute distance by car. A bus passed the village twice a day in either direction. There was one small school with only lower classes, two bars with dining-rooms, but no shops - though some basic products could be bought in one of the bars. There was, however, a small cooperative where farmers could buy animal fodder, fertilizers and the like, and drink a glass of wine while they were waiting. As for sports facilities, the village had a hunting society with quite a few enthusiastic members, and two frontons, one of which had been built a year before. The doctor and his family left the village during the months I spent there (leaving head over heels, as a matter of fact, for he had been threatened by some villagers who accused him of not having done his work properly...); the vet had already left two years earlier. The village did not even have its own priest anymore; a few times a week, a priest from a neighbouring village visited Zelaizabal to say mass.

Some families from San Sebastian or other towns near the coast had bought houses or farms in Zelaizabal where they spent their weekends and

holidays. Two families from a neighbouring town had bought a piece of land in the village and had had their cottage built there. (Some of these people behaved rather like the average North European holiday-maker on the Costa Brava, and were consequently treated with considerable disdain by the villagers.) The owners of one of the bars were building a country hotel, trying to benefit from the increasing popularity of rural tourism among urban residents.

I interviewed a group of teenagers from Zelaizabal, most of them farmers' children, on what village life meant to them. Although they admitted that town life had much more to offer as far as cultural and sports activities go, most of them preferred living in the village. Only the few people who followed a university career and lived in town during the week said they would rather live in an urban environment on weekdays, while spending their weekends and holidays in the village. The general opinion among these teenagers was that few farmers' children would take over their parents' farm; however, most of them would probably not leave the farm either, but change it into a kind of rural dwelling - "especially taking into account the prices of houses nowadays". They thought it would be a good idea to build some blocks of flats in the village. In former years, young people who had a job in town and wanted to get married were usually forced to find a house there as well, as there were no housing facilities in the village. "If there had been houses here, these people might have stayed."

These young people were quite neutral about urban weekend and holiday visitors, though they did not find that their presence really helped to make village life 'livelier'; after all, most of them were over 50 and their only visible activity in the village used to be their spending money on eating and drinking in the local bars. The teenagers thought it was much more important to make sure that people who lived in Zelaizabal would not leave in the future. As one of the students said: "If there were fewer than 100 people living in the village, I don't think I would come back at the weekend."

Worth mentioning too is that they believed they were less affected by typical youth problems than their contemporaries in town. Not unimportant in a region where youth unemployment is about 50% and numbers for drug consumption and alcohol abuse are also among the highest in Western Europe.

3.3 The quest for social viability

Until the 1970s, mountain villages in the Basque Country were much more isolated than they are now: there were fewer roads, many roads were not asphalted, and very few people had a car. When, as a result of regional industrialization since the 1950s, many young men from the rural villages found a job in industry, they normally had to go and live in town. They were not only farmers' sons who left the village, but many times their fathers also followed after a while, leaving the farm behind. Within twenty years, the number of inhabitants was often reduced to half or a third, and together with the leavers most services had disappeared as well.

As a result of the world-wide economic crisis it became more difficult to

find work in the industrial sector. But still it was easier for farmers' sons to find a job than it was for urban people. The former had a reputation for working harder and being less organized in trade unions, which was why Basque industrial entrepreneurs, the majority of whom were farmers' sons themselves, preferred contracting them. A farmer's son in Aritzmendi I asked about unemployment among villagers explained:

> "I think it helps if you have a rural background, because employers know that you are used to working. In the factory where I work, except one technician, all of us are farmers' sons. I was just about to finish my schooling, when people from two different factories had already offered me a job. As far as I know, there's no-one here who is unemployed."

And if they do lose their job in industry, and they are still single, they can always come back to the farm and help their parents. Some farmers' children were known to have started working on the farm because they either had lost their job or had not been able to find one; this had led to the purchase of more animals and a higher production level.

When communication between town and countryside improved, it became common for people in the more isolated villages to have a job in the factory without entirely giving up the farm. The number of cattle normally decreased, while pine-trees were planted where once had been meadows, but these part-time farmers did not let their farms fall into disrepair and they kept their fields clean. It is because of this that many people claimed that "the part-time farmer has saved Basque agriculture". Although this statement might be challenged, there is, I think, little doubt that part-time farming has at least contributed to the maintenance of village life.

It is true that children of part-time farmers hardly ever become full-time farmers themselves, just as the complaint of some farmers may be justified that they could have expanded their farming enterprise if only their neighbour had abandoned his farm (and sold them his lands) instead of becoming a part-time farmer. Without wanting to ignore these objections, which indicate some real problems in concrete cases, it is nevertheless my contention that part-time farming has become a determining factor in the process of rural development: policy makers no longer deny that part-time farmers constitute (part of) the social environment in which other farming enterprises operate. (A more detailed discussion of the phenomenon of part-time farming can be found in Chapter 8.)

Considerations with respect to the maintenance of social environment in rural communities also play a role in the European policy on disadvantaged areas. There were several Associations for Mountain Farming in the Basque Country that worked out projects on behalf of groups of farmers or even whole village communities for which they hoped to get subsidies from Brussels. These projects varied from the collective purchase of agricultural machinery or the improvement of mountain roads to the renovation of meeting places for villagers and the organization of school transport. And villages developed their own initiatives, too. In some places houses were built to motivate young people to stay, summer courses were organized for young children, in many villages new, well-equipped frontons had been built. And, as

an informant observed:

> "Some people may criticize the fact that 'now they're even having the bloody church of village X done up.' But for that village, this may have an important function: the church affirms their identity, it's a meeting place, it contributes to the image of a beautiful village..."

3.4 The social environment and the maintenance of the holding

For some time, it was feared that the disappearance of small farmers would gradually lead to greater social isolation of their more viable colleagues, who would therefore become more inclined to give up farming as well. More recent developments show that this scenario should probably be readjusted.

People in the villages have come to realize the advantages of living in a healthier, less industrialized and less urbanized environment. Several farmers or their children told me they felt privileged in comparison with townspeople. They did not have to live in flats or put up with noise and pollution, and they could eat vegetables from their own garden and meat of pigs, rabbits or chickens they had reared themselves. Villagers who had a job in town may have experienced that the ultimate aspiration of some of their urban colleagues was to have a cottage in the countryside.

If a farming couple had any children, one of them normally decided to stay on the farm. In some cases the successor continued the farm as a full-time enterprise, but most of the times he or she combined a non-agricultural job with some minor activities on the holding, whose status was reduced to that of rural dwelling. In either case, it was customary practice that the son or daughter would take care of the parents; on the other hand, the successor did not need to run into debts to buy a house (although successors normally did have to pay part of the value of the farm to other brothers and sisters; see Section 6.5).

In a number of villages, housing projects had been set up, so that farmers' children who had to leave the holding after being married would not be forced to go and live in town. It was hoped that these initiatives would bring back some services, like a small shop, or sports facilities, which would be favourable for social life in the village. School facilities for older children were not expected to return, but in many parts of rural Gipuzkoa there were schoolbusses that brought the children from the village to their school and back every day. Some parents found it a safe idea that their children were brought back to the village immediately after the school was over instead of hanging about in town for hours like the urban youth.

It can safely be assumed that a greater awareness among the rural and urban population of the healthier aspects of village life, both physically and socially, will make it easier for farmer's sons, whether they want to continue their parents' holding as a productive unit or merely use it as a dwelling, to find a woman willing to marry them and live on the farm (cf. Chapter 9). In the past, many young farmers had experienced the incompatibility of running a farm and getting married, which had motivated them to take up a job in industry and find a house in town.

There is no denying that the number of full-time farmers is decreasing, but all in all I think that expectations with respect to the social environment in which farm households operate are more favourable than in the past. Crucial is the subjectively perceived isolation of the village. If the distance to the urban-industrial centres is too great, the roads have not been maintained, and the younger villagers meet fewer and fewer people of their own age-groups on the streets or in the bars, the village will gradually be abandoned and only the aged people remain.

In most villages, the downward spiralling development of farm abandonment, reducing social viability of the rural area and consequently a higher incidence of farm abandonment, has virtually come to a halt and it can be assumed that this notion is taken into account by household members who negotiate their future role on the farm, especially by those who negotiate the conditions of succession with their parents.

Chapter 4

AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: POLICIES AND CONFRONTATIONS

This chapter describes how different policies of regional, national or supra-national institutions affect farmers' strategies and how at least part of the interplay of (regional) institutional policies is dominated by clashes over political interests. I try to come up with an explanation for the way farmers react to these agricultural policies and why they sometimes choose not to get involved in them.

Nowadays, most of the milk sold in the Basque Country reaches the consumer through one of the dairy cooperatives. There are still many farmers who personally sell their milk every day to their clients in the villages and town, but their number is gradually decreasing, not in the least because their circle of clients is shrinking. Consumers of fresh milk may give up buying directly from the farmer for a variety of reasons (which will be explained in a later chapter), but the result is invariably the same: they will start buying either sterilized, pasteurized or skimmed milk from the dairy factory.

The situation some forty years ago was quite different. In those days, the newly created dairy cooperative Gurelesa had great difficulty to hold out. This was due to the opposition of the great majority of milk hawkers, who saw their own interests threatened, and the attitude of the consumers, who had little faith in the milk that came from the factory.

4.1 Legal restrictions and people's protest

The first years after the Civil War were years of prosperity for the farmers in the Basque provinces, but prices of most agricultural products stagnated when products from outside began to enter the region. As to milk, in many Basque homes its consumption was still far from general: children often had garlic-soup for breakfast. In Gipuzkoa, milk production exceeded its consumption. For about twenty years, all through the 1940s and '50s, the price that a farmer in the province could ask for one litre of milk hardly changed, while on the other hand prices of consumer goods did go up.

In the fifties, consumers in San Sebastian, the provincial capital, paid between 5.5 and 6 pesetas for a litre of milk, whereas farmers in villages at 20 km distance did not charge more than 2 pesetas. So hundreds of farmers from surrounding villages began to travel to San Sebastian each morning, offering their milk from door to door and little by little creating a fairly stable market for their products. In the end, there were nearly 2,000 hawkers going into town every day to sell their milk and whatever other agricultural products (vegetables, fruit, eggs) the urban housewives might be willing to buy from them. There were extra buses and even special trains to transport these farmers from their villages to the capital and back. And as these hundreds of

hawkers (the majority of them women) would do their daily shopping in town, the commercial sector boosted. Even chemists, doctors and dentists used to benefit from this situation.

The dairy cooperative Gurelesa was created in the mid-fifties. Soon afterwards a law was promulgated that gave regional dairy factories the exclusivity of milk sales in a certain territory; at the same time, the law stipulated the prohibition of milk hawking in towns with over 50,000 inhabitants (this number was later reduced to 25,000). However, the law was never effectively sanctioned as it met with widespread opposition of both consumers and hawkers.

The first demonstration under the Franco regime, in the streets of San Sebastian, was organized to protest against this prohibitive law as well as against the dairy factory: the most popular slogans were those that meant to discredit the quality of the milk offered by Gurelesa. Of course, the solidarity of the urban population with the milk hawkers was not entirely disinterested. If the law had been enforced and milk hawking had been forbidden in San Sebastian and other big towns, the whole network of economic interests that over the years had been created around the hawkers (of shopkeepers, bus and train companies, even medical services) might suddenly have collapsed. In the words of one of the founders of Gurelesa, and one of its first managers:

> "Everyone was against the dairy factory, the anti-propaganda was enormous. We even considered closing down the factory because we were losing huge sums of money. Imagine, even doctors recommended the consumption of raw milk - complete idiots![15]
> "But many farmers had to give up hawking, because more and more people tasted our milk and they said it was much better. (..) I can show you letters of mothers who raised their children with our milk, expressing their gratitude... They saw that all those dysenteric deseases that existed before disappeared by using pasteurized milk." [Erzilia, Gurelesa; XII/88]

Informants also suggested another reason for the decreasing consumption of fresh milk among urban clients. Milk hawkers, perhaps still under the influence of their success in mobilizing support against the prohibitive law and the dairy factory, began to charge more money for their milk, claiming that it was of better quality than the cooperative's pasteurized milk. Urban solidarity with the farmers' fate deminished as a result of this manoeuvre.

Slowly, the dairy cooperative managed to gain the confidence of both consumers and farmers. The opposition of the milk hawkers was successfully neutralized by the cooperative's policy to accept their surplus production: i.e. what the hawkers were not able to sell to their clients in the villages and towns, could still be sold to the dairy factory afterwards, which was especially important in summer when their cows produced more milk but consumers would buy less.

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[15] This happened in a period when tuberculosis and brucelosis were still quite frequent deseases among the cows in the region.

4.2 Subtleties of regional policy: restrictions in the 1980s

A study that was carried out in 1990 by order of the Basque Department of Public Health revealed that by the end of the 1980s 34% of the milk produced and sold by the farmers in the Basque Autonomous Community did not reach the consumers through the dairy factories. (This was 24% for the whole of Spain, whereas the average for the 12 member states of the European Union was only 8.8%.)

A representative of the farmers' union EHNE (*Euskal Herriko Nekazarien Elkartasuna*, that is the Union of Basque Farmers) explained why, even some thirty years after its promulgation, the law forbidding milk hawking in towns with over 25.000 inhabitants was still a dead letter:

> "The Administration in Madrid was not able to enforce this law in Franco's time; and today, neither Madrid, nor the Basque Government, nor the town-councils dare to sanction the law that forbids farmers to sell their milk on the street. Those who could demand the application of the law are the dairy cooperatives, but they would get the whole group of milk hawkers against them. So there are no complaints, no formal accusations, and the Government does not undertake any action either."
> [Lekuona, EHNE; XII/88]

According to the manager of Gurelesa, who corroborated the latter comment, the reasons why the cooperative had never made a charge against the hawkers were both practical and social.

> "There's no point in forcing farmers to become cooperative members by accusing them of illegally selling their milk on the streets, because such farmers would never become loyal members of the cooperative. (..)
> "And many farmers in the Board of Directors of Gurelesa have neighbours who are hawkers; they realise that in times of great industrial unemployment, it has been a solution for many farms if a son or daughter could go and sell milk on the street for a couple of hours a day, thereby earning some money. In accepting their surplus production, we might even state that the cooperative fulfils a social function, although this policy is not approved of by all of its members."
> [Larrea, Gurelesa; XII/89]

The main argument of those who would like to forbid milk hawking was that it was non-pasteurized and normally unpacked milk that was offered to the consumers, who were therefore believed to be subject to important health risks. The EHNE representative cited before strongly objected to this vision:

> "Two things to answer this: one, for many farmers milk hawking is a way of life; the margin that would otherwise be for the dairy factory means an important extra source of income on these farms. And two, nobody would drink this milk without boiling it first; we've all grown up with farm milk here: if you boil it, it's practically the same as when it's pasteurized. (..)

"We would never accept it if milk hawking was all of a sudden forbidden - it would mean a small-scale war..."
[Lekuona, EHNE; XII/88]

The Basque Autonomous Government had never seriously tried to enforce the law by forbidding dairy producers to sell their fresh milk directly to their clients. (Some people I questioned on the agrarian policy of the regional Government suggested that the Administration did not want to put its popularity at stake by sanctioning a law that had been promulgated by the former dictatorial regime and that had met with such wide popular resistance.) But in the latter half of the 1980s, a few years after Spain's incorporation into the European Economic Community, the Basque Department of Public Health let hospitals, old people's homes, bakeries and cake shops know that henceforward they were only allowed to use packed and pasteurized dairy products. As a result, many milk hawkers lost their most important clients. The farmer union's representative told me:

A.L.: "We try to fight this decree, but it's very difficult as they have the law behind them."
HvdB: "But does the Administration refer to the restrictive law of 1956 or to EEC health norms in these cases?"
A.L.: "This law dates back to the Franco days and it doesn't make such a good impression if you start waving with it."
HvdB: "But many people may find it a lot more acceptable if the Department of Public Health declares that they are only following European regulations..."
A.L.: "Exactly."
[Lekuona, EHNE; XII/88]

While sales were left undisturbed, purchase of raw milk by institutions and shops was limited, apparently invoking EEC norms on the hygienic treatment of foodstuffs. This policy allowed the Basque Administration to shift responsability for such a relatively impopular measure on to some higher, more anonimous authority.

4.3 Quota and conflict

Whereas restrictions on milk hawking only affected part of the dairy farming population (though still an important part), the application of milk production quota in the region would affect the whole dairy sector. In 1987, the Ministry of Agriculture in Madrid stipulated that, as a first step towards the introduction of the dairy quota, farmers in the different regions of Spain should declare their milk production over the year 1985. But in the Basque Country this met with resistance of both the regional Administration and the farmers' union. The Basque Department of Agriculture objected that the statistics on rural production that the Spanish state operated with, and on the basis of which the regional quota would be determined, were highly unreliable and did not correspond at all with the data elaborated by the Basque Statistical Bureau. Thereupon the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Romero,

threatened that he would consider the entire production of the dairy farmers who refused to declare as surplus production over which they would have to pay the 'superlevy'. This rather untactful observation only served to increase the atmosphere of conflict. The farmers' union EHNE replied that "Basque farmers, faced with Romero's blackmail policy, will use every possible means to defend themselves." But equally unambiguous was the reaction of the Minister who declared he would not negotiate "with people who behave like hooligans!"

Tensions died down considerably when the Basque Administration claimed its own competency in the matter and promised to send Madrid the required information on regional production volumes as soon as the Minister of Agriculture sent the Autonomous Government a report in which he explained his criteria for quota distribution. There came no reaction from the Minister. And as EHNE also refused to declare individual milk production volumes to their 'own' Department of Agriculture, the situation around the application of dairy quota was at a deadlock for quite a long time.

Eventually, in 1993, the dairy quota were established on the basis of individual and regional production in reference year 1991-92. According to the former Minister of Agriculture of the Basque Government, it was the pressure of their own farmer members which motivated EHNE to give up their policy of resistance against the application of the quota.

> "There was a certain evolution in the policy of EHNE, because their own dairy farmers were in favour of the quota. Some decided to give up farming and they wanted to sell their quota, which would provide them with an interesting sum of money. And others realized that it was evident that the quota would someday be put into effect and they wanted some security. So both groups put pressure on the union.
>
> "The Basque Government has acquired important quantities of quota - about 25% more than what was produced here. And we strongly confined the trade in quota, as we feared that people would start selling quota outside the Basque Autonomous Community. So free trade in quota was restricted and the Basque Administration quickly acquired the quota offered, buying the farmers' productive capacity, in order to avoid the creation of a market... These quota were then redistributed according to other farmers' necessities, not exclusively in function of their economic resources, as would have been the case in a completely free market. (..) The criteria that we have been using to determine who would get more quotum were: the necessity of the dairy farmer, the scale of the farm enterprise, the age of the owner of the farm, and the investments over the last few years."
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> [J.M. Goikoetxea, former Minister of Agriculture, Basque Autonomous Government; VII/96]

In other autonomous regions milk quota seemed to cause farmers and dairy factories more problems, as they were based on the declarations of the production volumes of 1985. The six year delay in the application of quota in the Basque Country was believed to have benefited the region considerably. The farmers' union EHNE agreed that the existence of a 'global' quotum in the

Autonomous Community had worked out favourably for dairy farming in the region. But they criticized the way in which, according to them, the Administration carried out the redistribution of 'liberated' quota (i.e. quota sold by farmers who give up milk production) in practice.

> "The dairy factory needs milk, they have invested a lot of money and they have to produce as much as they can in order to get some benefits. And they want this milk to be produced here. Many dairy farmers made investments in order to expand their enterprise without having the corresponding quotum. But they thought: When I need it, they'll give it to me. The present-day policy of the Administration is to give quota to those farmers who exceeded themselves."
> [X. Goikoetxea, EHNE; VI/96]

4.4 The institutional arenas

The former sketches of conflict situations show that there are several arenas in what Basque farmers may perceive as their 'landscape of power' (Pile, 1990). Following Swartz et al. (1966), I see the arena as a particular kind of political field[16] in which conflicts take a predominantly dichotomous form (Swartz et al., 1966: 33, 34). These arenas may be located on different levels (either regional, national or international); although they are temporary, some may coincide in time, but even if they do not, the course of a struggle in one arena may still be influenced by the outcome in another. The protagonists in one arena may or may not be the same contenders in another arena. Coalitions that are formed among the actors in an arena are sometimes relatively stable, while others easily shift, depending on whether actors expect to gain or lose from breaking existing coalitions and establishing new ones.

In the first description (Section 4.1), we saw how a short-term coalition came into being of hawkers, consumers and representatives of the urban commercial sector, whose common interest was the abolition of a law that forbade milk hawking in big towns; however, each group had its own particular motives to join the coalition. The hawkers, who sold their milk in the capital at a far higher price than they would ever get in the villages, were afraid this market might disappear. Many shopkeepers also feared to lose an important number of clients. And consumers were moved by their distrust of the quality of factory milk and by sentiments of nostalgia (most of them had known the farmers who sold them their milk and other products for a great many years and had established truly personal relationships with them). In principle, the law was meant to protect regional dairy factories against

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[16] A political field is described as "a field of tension, full of intelligent and determined antagonists, sole and corporate, who are moved by ambition, altruism, self-interest, and by desire for the public good, and who in successive situations are bound to one another through self-interest, or idealism - and separated or opposed through the same motives" (Swartz et al., 1966: 8).

competition from outside: in the region where Gurelesa had the right to sell milk, for example, no other dairy factory could enter. But this protective clause was linked to the one on restricting dairy hawking, a measure which most people saw as repressive. The hawkers can only be given credit for their ability to transform people's protest against the latter restrictive measure into what eventually turned out to be an anti-Gurelesa demonstration.

The dairy cooperative, however, managed to overcome this conflict. As Gurelesa needed all the milk it could get, and the hawkers had to get rid of what they could not sell on the street, the factory offered to buy their surplus production: an intelligent policy, which seemed to be guided by the principle that an adversary who cannot be defeated can still be neutralized by establishing mutually beneficial links.

At a later stage (Section 4.2), it was no longer the Spanish State, but the Autonomous Government of the Basque Country that had to enforce the restrictive law of 1956. The arena had shifted to a regional level and the main contenders had also changed. On one side we could still find the milk hawkers, but they were now supported by the farmers' union EHNE; this farmers' association had come into being in the mid-1970s, just after Franco's death. However, their direct opponent remained in the background. The institution that could have enforced the law that restricted milk hawking, the Basque Department of Public Health, apparently tried to avoid an open confrontation with the farmers and their union representatives. Indeed, the authors of the 1990-report on dairy hawking, which had been carried out under the auspices of the regional Department of Public Health, had already warned the Administration that a prohibition of the hawkers' activities would probably have a negative effect on the image of the Basque Government. The Department, on the other hand, is expected to carry out a policy which prevents people from being exposed to contagious deseases. So it was decided that hawkers should no longer be allowed to sell their raw milk to centres, like hospitals and bakeries, that could become the *foci* of spreading desease. And in the meantime it was hoped that hawkers would eventually either give up or become integrated into the dairy factory. (This policy seemed to follow another strategy, viz. that if a frontal attack is impossible, one contender may try to deprive the other one of his resources, thus forcing his retreat. Maybe the 'final retreat' of milk hawkers was not the Department's first aim while applying the described policy, but it may have been regarded as a welcome by-effect.)

Now, the farmers' union EHNE also found itself in an awkward situation. Apart from some 'heroic' statements in private, they had to recognize there was little they could do.

> "We don't want to stir things too much. (..) We avoid discussing this theme in our magazine, for example, so as not to give the Government an argument to say that 'those hawkers are doing something illegal'. We try to help those who get into trouble with legal advice, but that's all we can do."
> [Lekuona, EHNE; XII/88]

Thus, in this regional arena, the 1956 law had become a true sword of Damocles, a weapon that hung as a permanent threat over the protagonists'

heads, though no-one wanted it to be actually used.

The third description dealt with the application of dairy quota in the Basque Country (Section 4.3). Initially, the conflict situation was dominated by, on the one hand, the Spanish Minister of Agriculture Romero and, on the other, the Basque Government and the regional farmers' union. The danger that this conflict would get out of hand as a result of radicalized statements of both the Minister and EHNE was warded off after the intervention of the Basque Administration, claiming their own competency in matters of quota distribution. This did not solve the problem, though, as the former arena was then reproduced on a regional scale. EHNE also refused to declare production volumes to the Basque Government; one of its foremen declared to the press that the Autonomous Government had only defended its own competency but had never really objected to the imposition of the milk quota. The accusation filled the Basque Vice-minister of Agriculture with indignation:

> "That is foul play. There are documents of 1984 that prove that we have always been against the quota. (..) We had come to an agreement with the union and the cooperatives that we would only send Madrid information about the milk production in our region if we received a report on distribution criteria first. But everyone accepted that in the end, as a means of defending the sector, it would be more effective to forward the declarations than not to do anything. The farmers' union also defended this."
> [Urrutia, Department of Agriculture, Basque Autonomous Government; X/87]

The evolution of the union's point of view towards a more favourable attitude regarding the quota was brought about by pressure from their own members who were more motivated by economic necessities than by political principles. However, EHNE still maintained a critical standpoint as to the Government policy on quota redistribution, which, as they claimed, favoured mainly the biggest farmers who sold their milk to the dairy factory. If we look at the criteria for quota redistribution, summed up by the former Minister of Agriculture of the Basque Government, their criticism does not seem to be unwarranted. The assumption that dairy farmers who invested in expansion anticipated on a for them favourable quota allocation is quite plausible.

4.5 A divide in the rural sector

The major divide at the level of rural institutions in the Basque Country, as perceived by both farmers and representatives of these institutions, was the one between the farmers' union EHNE on the one hand and the regional Department of Agriculture on the other. It can be defended that this situation was the result of a conscious policy of the farmers' union, on the one hand, and distrust on the part of the regional Government as to the 'true' intentions of EHNE, on the other.

EHNE was created around 1975, in the first years after the Franco dictatorship, by people from different backgrounds, but with a common aim: defending the interests of Basque farm families. After several years,

professional associations originated that assisted farmers with accountancy and veterinary services, dairy control, cattle selection, genetic improvement, etc.; they were actively supported by the Basque Autonomous Government, which came into being in the beginning of the 1980s. Many of the founders of EHNE became in later years outstanding figures in these associations. Most of these people belonged to the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), the conservative party that has been the dominant political force within the regional Administration since the early years of the Autonomous Government. In the middle of the 1980s, the farmers' union radicalized when central positions were occupied by people who were close to the left-wing nationalist coalition Herri Batasuna, integrated into the so-called Movement for Basque National Liberation, of which also ETA forms part.

According to the former president of EHNE, the union defended in the first place the interests of small and medium-sized farmers. (Another informant, a researcher of the biggest cooperative movement in the Basque Country, characterized the farmers' union therefore as 'lawyers of a lost cause'.)

> "The small farmer who lives on the farm, with 10 cows or 50 sheep, that's the one we defend through thick and thin. We also defend the big farmer, but the big farmer normally belongs to the professional associations; these organizations depend on the Administration. (..) It's very easy to defend viable projects. If we all did the same, there would be chaos; because all those people who are economically less interesting would go to hell! EHNE has to help the ones who are not viable, we can't let them down now."
> [Aldasoro, EHNE; IX/88]

People within the Administration had their doubts about these supposedly altruistic motives of the union, and suspected political intentions behind the interest of left-wing nationalists in the agrarian sector. The president of Lurgintza, the most important professional association of farmers in Gipuzkoa, subscribed the idea of what could be termed a functional dichotomization in the countryside.

> "Lurgintza carries out the accountancy for the other associations and for some 180 farmer members who are also counselled in their conduct of business. Yes, I would say that in Lurgintza we work with the most modern farming enterprises in the province."
> [I. Arruti, Lurgintza; IX/88]

On account of the political affinity of the people who dominated not only these professional associations but also some of the most important cooperatives for the commercialization of milk and meat, EHNE accused the Basque Administration of wanting to control the whole agricultural sector in the region and of being biased in favour of the needs of more modern, specialized farmers.

> "The Administration makes it a habit of mapping out routes for farmers which it then tries to control. (..) The intention is always to create projects controlled by the Administration."
> [X. Goikoetxea, EHNE; VI/96]

And:

> "It has been a big mistake to develop one sectorial aspect, and some associations, at the expense of others. The associations are focused on specialization. And with respect to small farming enterprises that complement milk with beef or cows with sheep they do too little."
> [Aldasoro, EHNE; IX/88]

Distrust within EHNE as to the Administration's intentions came strongly to the fore by the end of the 1980s, when people belonging to the union tried to set up the marketing cooperative Behiki on behalf of beef producers in the region. The Basque Government had financed a study on the marketing possibilities within the regional meat sector, carried out by an economist of EHNE, but when it was presented with a viability plan for the creation of the new cooperative, the Department had its doubts about the successful realization of the plan and decided to give only limited financial support. Representatives of the cooperative refused to believe that this was the real reason.

> "We suppose that in the end the reason for this obstruction is a political one. The Department of Agriculture is dominated by PNV people. Now, the initiative to do this study on the basis of which we decided to create the cooperative was taken by EHNE. The Administration seems to be politically interested in our not being too successful. In private, they have called us a cooperative of Herri Batasuna."
> [Representatives of Behiki, III/89]

The Vice-minister of Agriculture, on the other hand, maintained that it was Herri Batasuna that had made it its object to increase its hold of the sector.

> "If the PNV had wanted to control the sector, it would have been very easy to do so - they would have controlled all those associations from the beginning and they wouldn't have privatized them. No, it's HB that tries to dominate everything, not only in the agricultural sector, where politics hasn't interfered as much as in other sectors, but everywhere. In the Sokoa papers[17] it said that it's one of HB's objects to control EHNE in order to propagate their ideology through the farmers' union and to reclute activists. (..)
> "This policy is dividing the sector. If, in the end, people associate EHNE with HB, those who don't belong to HB will leave EHNE."
> [Urrutia, Department of Agriculture, Basque Autonomous Government; VII/90]

The words of the Vice-minister turned out to be prophetical...

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17) Documents belonging to ETA militants that explained the strategies of the different groups that form part of the Movement for Basque National Liberation; the papers were found in a factory (Sokoa) in the south of France.

4.6 From divide to confrontation

In the second half of the 1980s, left-wing nationalists became more and more dominant within EHNE, but the major part of its membership still consisted of people who voted for more moderate nationalist parties. In the same period, a group of young farmers originated that regularly came together to discuss general matters related to agriculture; most of them were members of EHNE, but many began to adopt a more and more critical attitude towards the new official policy line of the farmers' union; this frequently led to internal frictions. In 1992 it came to a split: a new farmers' union was formed with the name ENBA (*Euskal Nekazarien Batasuna*, that is the Union of Basque Farmers). Naturally, both unions had their own views on the event. The explanation of a spokesman of EHNE was the following:

> "The Administration tried to get a hold on EHNE. During the campaign to elect the next president, people in favour of the two most important candidates went from farm to farm to ask for votes. The candidate who was approved of by the Administration lost... So when the Administration saw they had failed to get their man elected president of EHNE, they decided to create another union."
> [X. Goikoetxea, EHNE; VI/96]

The interpretation of the president of ENBA was quite different:

> "It became more and more clear to me that EHNE had stopped being a union that defended the interests of the agricultural sector; political interests predominated. Before the union finally disintegrated, we often had tremendous disagreements. Some of our people were even threatened - so that was the last straw!"
> [J. Arruti, ENBA; VI/96]

However, he added to this that EHNE's policy might have become more moderate in recent years.

> "They have changed their image; it may just be 'make-up', but they seem to be more moderate and they tend to be more discreet in their attitude towards the Administration. You don't hear those radical statement of before anymore and some people have gone, too. But they haven't changed their ideas with respect to the sector, it's still the same old message: maintaining agricultural jobs, women, direct sales, local markets, etc."
> [ibid.]

As to their philosophy on rural development, both farmers' unions maintained widely divergent views. As we have seen before, EHNE's policy with respect to the dairy sector defended the farmers' possibility to sell their milk directly to the consumers. Even though it was recognized that more and more farmers were giving up milk hawking, it was still seen as a way of life for many farm families. ENBA's president, however, did hardly believe in the economic rationality of this activity:

> "I doubt whether it really pays. I'm convinced there are many who rather lose money; for they spend all morning selling their milk on

the street and they don't count it as work - which is a mistake. (..) Many of them sell part of their production to the dairy factory, so in the end they also depend on the factory. In fact, we should support the dairy factory unconditionally, for it's the one that determines the future of the sector. (..) We don't have a particular policy on milk hawking, because our members are not involved in this activity."
[J. Arruti, ENBA; VI/96]

As a matter of fact, ENBA only accepted what its president called 'professional farmers' as members: that is, those farmers who contributed to the Agrarian Social Security Fund and whose income came for at least 50% out of farming. Small farmers did seldom become ENBA members, the president admitted. Whereas EHNE's principal target group consisted of precisely these less viable small and medium-sized farming enterprises. (Membership numbers of both unions in the province of Gipuzkoa reflected this difference in target groups: about 1600 for EHNE and some 420 in the case of ENBA - according to numbers given by the respective unions; though we must take into account that EHNE has a longer history than ENBA. There were about 12,000 farmers in the province in the early 1990s, but the number of full-timers was estimated to be under 3,000.)

The ENBA president criticized the opinion, defended by representatives of EHNE, that rural policy should be aimed at maintaining as many jobs as possible in the sector. He qualified this as unrealistic: aged farmers, or those with little land and small farms, should give up farming, so that others could increase the scale of their farming enterprises. While ENBA saw further specialization and investments as the way for farmers to increase their production, according to EHNE there was too little attention for complementarity of activities, something which could offer members of especially small family farms the possibility to raise their incomes.

In interviews and upon reading magazines, reports, leaflets, etc. of the parties involved in the institutional drama in the Basque countryside, I frequently had the impression that the ENBA ideas on agricultural policy were much more radically at variance with the policy line defended by EHNE than the rationale behind the regional Government policy had ever been. The Vice-minister of Agriculture outlined the rural policy of the regional Administration as follows:

"One of our aims is to defend the family farms, but at the same time we should try to improve their production structures, to increase their scale and, above all, to raise their technological capacity, so that finally their productivity goes up. (..) Starting from our basic activity, which is milk and beef production, we should diversify, develop complementary products, create a market for regional quality products. (..) And people begin to realize that agriculture has not only a productive role within society, but also a social and ecological role. (..) In more urbanized areas, part time farming may help to maintain the rural environment."
[Urrutia, Department of Agriculture, Basque Autonomous Government; VII/90]

Which brings out a much more middle-of-the-road vision on rural development than the ENBA policy which focused mainly on the creation of modern, specialized ("professional") farms. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind, as Pile (1990) observes, that the Administration's discourse and policy do not always, nor necessarily, run parallel: "There is a divergence in the desire of the State to give considerable ideological support to the small independent family farm, while simultaneously directly stimulating the concentration and centralisation of capital in agriculture" (Pile, 1990: 13). I suggested above (see Chapter 3) that the increased sensibility of the Basque Administration with respect to the social and ecological role of agriculture might have been boosted as a result of the European policy in favour of disadvantaged areas.

EHNE's strategy of creating an image of constant confrontation between this farmers' union and the Administration seemed to have had a boomerang effect, now that the 'modernization' type of agricultural policy the union had projected onto the Basque Department of Agriculture became the openly defended, official policy of the competing farmers' union ENBA.

4.7 Farmers in the social arena

The institutional landscape had changed considerably during the first half of the 1990s as a result of the creation of the new farmers' union ENBA. More than four hundred farmers, most of whom had left the competing union EHNE, had become ENBA members; and the annual subsidies of 9 million pesetas that EHNE had thus far received from the Basque Administration had henceforth to be shared: one-third for ENBA and two-thirds for EHNE. According to several informants, EHNE's proceedings had become more moderate in recent years. When asked to express their opinion about confrontations between institutions, farmers normally said things like "It's all politics" and "I won't have anything to do with that". Politics pervade Basque social life and people often suspect political manoeuvres even behind rather neutral attitudes. Therefore, most people keep themselves far from political issues, knowing how easy it is to be misinterpreted or to be used in some political battle. Politics is to a large extent a taboo subject in Basque social life, to be discussed only in the circle of one's own family - and often not even there.

Nevertheless, the few hundreds of farmers who had left EHNE to join ENBA are likely to have done so for political reasons. I have not been able to ascertain anymore whether this step had affected farmers' discourse on agricultural policies or their decisions as to family labour organization and farming strategies in any relevant way. What we can say, however, is that ENBA had become the incarnation of the most pronounced faith in the beneficial effects of agricultural modernization. No tinkering with part-time farming or hawking activities. Professionalization of individual farmers and of the sector as a whole, specialization of farming enterprises, creation and maintenance of strong marketing organizations, those were seen as the necessary conditions for Basque agriculture to hold out within the European Common Market. Modernizing, expanding farmers may find herein ideological support to back up their own aspirations. Farmers with small-scale enterprises

and those who hawk their milk on the streets may recognize themselves more in the 'small farmer ideology' of EHNE.

When I carried out a small survey in the region in 1990, ENBA did not exist yet. More than 90% of my respondents turned out to be members of EHNE; the same percentage belonged to a dairy cooperative (although several of them did not sell their milk exclusively to the factory) and 25% were members of Lurgintza. One of the questions I asked them was whose interests they thought the Administration and different agrarian organizations defended. 79% responded that the Basque Department of Agriculture and the provincial Administration favoured mainly or exclusively the biggest farmers; 67% had the same opinion about Lurgintza. With respect to EHNE and the Agricultural Chambers (where farmers could apply for credits and subsidies) my respondents maintained quite different opinions: 79% believed EHNE defended the interests of all farmers, while 82% stated that the same held good for the Agricultural Chambers. Several farmers claimed that EHNE was the only organization that 'fought back' (*borroka egin*) when farmers' interests were threatened. As to the dairy cooperatives there was more diversity of opinion: 49% said that they defended all farmers, but another 46% believed they favoured mainly the biggest farm enterprises.

Farmers were also asked to grade a number of factors according to the estimated importance for their farm management. The following table indicates the frequency with which these factors were given the respective scores, whereby score 1 stands for 'most important factor', score 2 for 'not so important factor' and score 3 for 'least important factor'.

Table 6. Factors determining successful farm management; farmers' assessment of their importance.

factors	scores			
	1	2	3	
financial help (subsidies, etc.)	**20**	8	5	33
high(er) product prices	**21**	6	6	
low(er) production costs	8	**18**	7	
reliable marketing channels	4	**21**	8	
technical advice	4	5	**24**	
political pressure	9	8	**16**	

Some 60% of the respondents considered that high prices for their products and financial help in the form of subsidies or cheap credits were the most important factors for the well functioning of their farm enterprises. (One of them linked both factors in saying that "the best financial help is a good price for your products.") Low production costs and reliable marketing channels

were seen as less determining (50 to 60% gave these factors a 'middle range' score). We should of course take into account that almost all respondents were members of a dairy cooperative, so that the selling of their milk was hardly ever seen as problematic. Technical advice (of extension agents and organizations like Lurgintza) was generally estimated as least important. And in spite of the favourable opinion of some respondents about the militancy of EHNE, the majority saw its political pressure on regional and national institutions that determined agricultural policy not really as decisive for the future of their holdings.

Part-time farmers turned out to be the most critical with respect to the way agricultural institutions defended their interests. Although the Basque Department of Agriculture attributed a role to part-time farmers in the maintenance of the social environment in more urbanized rural areas, these farmers normally found it extremely difficult to get financial support for investments in their enterprises. As one of them said: "The high incidence of part-time farming has been favourable especially for the Administration, because we had to pay for everything ourselves without ever getting any subsidies; they haven't lost any money on us." And another one observed: "No institution has really defended our interests. The part-timers have been ignored by everyone." This opinion was generally extended to EHNE as well, even though many of them were members of the union in case they needed legal advice.

4.8 Conclusions

Farmers are not mere spectators in the various social arenas where institutional policies are designed and confrontations among institutions are fought out. They may try to interfere in the design or implementation of certain policies, they may want to keep aloof from institutional clashes, and sometimes they will have to undergo passively the consequences of the policies of agrarian institutions. Most of the time they will be affected in one way or another by rural policy, and they will respond accordingly, although their reactions may be difficult to measure as they do not always affect their farming strategies immediately or in a perceptible way.

Basque farmers preferred to be involved as little as possible in political conflicts among the regional institutions that determine agricultural policy. Only when the schism between the two farmers' unions EHNE and ENBA had become a fact, did those farmers who saw more in harmonious negotiations with the regional Administration than in EHNE's policy of confrontation switch over to ENBA. However, it was the agricultural policy as such, intended to stimulate certain farming activities or curtail others, which affected them more directly.

In Chapter 1, I have pointed out that it was quite common at the end of the 1980s, and particularly at the levels where agricultural policy was defined, to classify the Basque farming population as 'modern', 'traditional' and 'part-time' farmers. Modern dairy farming was equated with investments and the expansion of milk production. As we saw before, most farmers believed the Basque Government's agricultural policy favoured mainly the interests of

modern, expanding farmers. This helps to explain why (as an EHNE spokesman claimed) these economically stronger, modernizing farmers, while planning their future strategies for further expansion, trusted that they would be assigned the necessary extra quota.

Those farming practices that did not fit this 'dynamic' image of continuing investment and expansion were implicitly regarded as more traditional. In part, this held good for part-time farmers, who felt they were not supported by any organization. But most of all, it was true of those farmers who were engaged in activities, such as dairy hawking, which most policy makers characterized as obsolete. The hawkers themselves, as well as the farmers' union EHNE, suspected that if it had not yet come to a direct prohibition of their activities, despite a law that sanctioned the hawking of fresh milk in the streets, this was merely because such a prohibition might imply political risks for the regional Government. It was still remembered how in the 1950s, when this law had been promulgated, the hawkers had effectively mobilized their urban network of clients, shopkeepers, and the service sector, in order to ward off the threat of prohibition of their way of marketing. In the late 1980s, however, many farmers saw their sales restricted as a result of the policy of the Basque Administration that forbade hospitals and shops to use non-pasteurized milk.[18] Through this policy the regional Government managed to dissociate the hawkers' most important clients from their networks. Moreover, it was suggested that the motive behind this prohibition had been displaced, as well: from an old Franco law to an EEC Public Health norm. The hawkers found that they did not have a good response to this move. They could hardly rely on support from the farmers' unions, which lacked either the will or the legal instruments to challenge the prohibitory policy. It often compelled the hawkers to adjust their farming strategies quite radically, but exactly how they modified their operations depended on their family composition and on the subjective evaluations of household members as to labour input, remuneration, free time, status, and so on (see Chapter 6).

By selling their milk in plastic bags and having regular inspection carried out of their cattle, milk and installations, a small association of hawkers hoped to convince the regional authorities to legalize their way of marketing. For many years, however, the Basque Administration refused to support these initiatives, with the argument that priority had to be given to supporting the dairy cooperatives. It was not until 1993 that the first of these 'modernized hawkers' were given officially recognized Health Certificates, which allowed them to sell again to the institutions they had once lost as clients (see Chapter 7).

From the foregoing, we can deduce that modernizing farmers who expanded their enterprises and were fully integrated into the dairy factory could count on facilities from the side of the Government, whereas those who were classified as more traditional farmers saw their room for manoeuvre restricted. I would argue that there exists a kind of dialectical relationship between the typology used to classify the farming population and the

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[18] Though we shall see in Chapter 6 that this was not the only reason for the hawkers' loss of market.

agricultural policy implemented: whereas the typology in force legitimizes this policy, the same policy makes the typology turn into a self-fulfilling prophesy. This links up with what was said in Chapter 1 about labelling. According to Wood,

> "Labelling is ... present as a necessary condition of the public (especially bureaucratic) management of scarcity. (..)
> "(T)he authors of labels, of designations, have determined the rules of access to particular resources and privileges. They are setting the rules for inclusion and exclusion, determining eligibility, defining qualifications" (Wood, 1985b: 351,352).

The same author also suggests that labelling is particularly compelling, for appearing "as natural and objectively true" (Wood, 1985a: 345), when it is linked to an ideology of rationality.

The lines about the so-called Programme of Assistance to Agrarian Incomes (PARA: *Programa de Ayudas a la Renta Agraria*) in a Strategic Plan for the rural sector drafted by the Basque Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in the early 1990s were illustrative in this respect:

> "Just like the majority of the measures which make up the new Basque agrarian policy, (PARA) has a marked, *discriminatory and selective character*, stressing support of viable family farming .. affected by the prolonged situation of falling prices. It does not offer unconditional assistance, but demands requirements whose fulfilment will foster *modernization and sectorial competitiveness*" (Gobierno Vasco, 1991?: 14; my translation and emphasis).

In recent years, rural policy in the region has also become focused on the maintenance of holdings other than only the modern, expanding enterprises. That is, the importance of keeping small-scale farms occupied was recognized as a means to avoid further depopulation of the countryside. But whether this reorientation also leads to an active policy of supporting production and marketing possibilities of 'marginal' holdings remains as yet to be seen.

In the meantime, it is ironical that the normative dichotomy of modern versus traditional farming, which seems to have been superseded in the discourse of policy makers within the regional Government, has now become institutionalized in the confrontation between ENBA and EHNE.

The former typology, which until recently guided the agrarian policy to a large extent, returns in the chapters of Part II, where I have analyzed the farm households belonging to the different categories as being the exponents of diverging, in principle equally valid, farming strategies.

PART II

In the four chapters which make up Part II, I will discuss the survival and succession strategies of different types of farm households, as they came about through the more or less effective mobilization of external networks and of the labour of family members. The titles of these chapters refer to the typology that by the end of the 1980s was still much in vogue in the region to characterize the heterogeneity of the Basque farming sector: 'modern', 'traditional' and 'mixed' (i.e. part-time) farmers (or *baserritar modernuak, tradizionalak* and *mixtoak* in Basque). But I have analyzed these types (as is common in the styles of farming approach; see Chapter 1) as divergent farming practices that all have their own, particular, internal logics and should be seen as in principle equally valid strategies; they are certainly not to be considered as different stages of development, as is normally done in evolutionary models.

Those who are classified as 'modern' dairy farmers usually have relatively large-scale enterprises, deliver their whole milk production to the dairy factory, and maintain close ties with other institutions. By 'traditional' farmers I understand those who run smaller-scale holdings, with a less dynamic investment pattern, and who often try to realize an acceptable household income by selling their products directly to consumers. On 'part-time' farms, the family combines a full-time, external job of, generally, the farm owner with the commercialization, to a greater or lesser degree, of agricultural products.

Some respondents would include the few producers of quality products (like ewe-cheese or fresh milk, with their respective quality labels) among the members of the select group of 'modern' farmers, while others thought that these innovators should rather be seen as a separate category. I have taken the latter view, in consonance with the opinion of these quality producers themselves, who regarded their strategy as completely distinct from the 'modern' farmers' dominant practice of delivering their entire production to the factory. The household income depended in this case on the creation and maintenance of a circle of clients who were prepared to pay comparatively high prices for what were presented as high-quality products.

The four chapters in this Part II gear around a few cases that have been dealt with to some extent. These cases provide the reader with an idea of the divergence of practices that even exist among farm enterprises belonging to the same category; at the same time, they suggest the main lines that will be elaborated in the subsequent sections of each chapter.

Chapter 5

'MODERN' FARMING: OF 'TATE', TREADMILLS AND LABOUR

Modern farmers, in the eyes of social scientists and laymen, were those who had a relatively large herd (by Basque standards around 1990, that is; with respect to dairy farming, this meant some 20 dairy cows or more), who had been able to expand their farming enterprise and had kept up with the latest developments in agricultural machinery. They were full-time farmers and, if they were in dairy farming, delivered all their milk to the factory.

In this chapter, I shall explore how the degree of integration of these farm households in the institutional environment is of influence on their strategies of continuing investment and expansion; what structural limitations exist on expansion; and what strategies they design to get round these. These 'modern' farm enterprises are generally seen as the only ones that may be continued successfully by the next generation, but I will argue that cultural factors may thwart existing plans for succession on a full-time basis.

It will become clear that there are some striking differences among modern farm enterprises as to their mobilization of labour and their perspectives of continuity.

5.1 Etxeberri: getting bigger and bigger

On Etxebarri, as on many farms in the Basque Country, there were three generations living under the same roof: the owner, Juan, and his wife, six of their seven children, and the owner's parents. The eldest daughter was married and lived elsewhere. In 1989, Juan was 56 years old. His eldest son, Joseba, was 23 and worked full-time on the farm; the second son worked in a factory in the village and the others (one daughter and three sons, aged 12 to 20) were still at school or at University.

Juan was continuously trying to increase his livestock. In 1985 he had about 20 milch cows, four years later 33, and in 1996 there were 44 milch cows and more than 30 followers. In 1989, he also had more than 20 fatting-calves, but because of lack of space in the shed, they had to be sold when the number of dairy cattle grew. The milch cows grazed on the meadows around the farm; he also kept some 25 head of beef cattle on remote mountain pastures. He rented several pieces of land from other farmers or from urban visitors who had bought a house with some land in the village (see Chapter 3); the grass he cut on these fields was either used for silage or hay-making. In the deals with the weekend-guests there was usually no money involved: he simply kept the fields behind their cottages or renovated farmsteads clean and in exchange for this, he could keep the grass for free.

He had recently built a slurry pit under the cow-shed, which enabled him to dress his fields with liquid manure. In the whole region, there were still no more than a few farmers who used this procedure. And periodically, the farmers' counselling organization Lurgintza (see Chapter 4) carried out soil

analysis on most of his land to determine what types of artificial fertilizers were needed. Juan claimed that his cows received more concentrates, and better attuned to their individual needs, than those on other farms in the village; a computerized fodder system determined exactly how much each cow should get. He definitely had more machinery than most other farmers: apart from a tractor, there was a pick-up cart, a mowing-machine and a plough; in 1991 he and his son bought a hay baler and a few years later, in combination with two more farmers in the village, a machine to make silage bales. Joseba often carried out contract work on other farms with most of these machines.

In 1989, their cows produced an average of 6200 litres per cow per year, but Juan thought they should be able to produce more: "7000 litres per cow should be possible," he said then. Genetic improvement, breeding only with the best cows, with selected semen (that he bought from the regional artificial insemination bank), occasionally buying better cows, and disposing of dubious yearlings - that should do it, he thought. The average annual production per cow in 1996 had risen to 7700 litres, which meant that the total production volume had increased with about sixty-five percent in 7 years![19]

Work on the farm was mainly done by Juan and Joseba. Whereas Juan primarily did the tasks on and around the farm, his son - after having fed and milked the cows - often went to work in the fields with his machines, or he did contract work for other farmers. Juan was not all that happy with this: "Of course it's good that he has so much work. But with all the work he does for others, the work on our farm sometimes comes second."

In 1996, the amount of contract work had only increased. With two other young farmers in the village, Joseba had put together enough money to buy an expensive silage baler; they used to take turns to work with this machine for their clients. By that time, Joseba's brothers had all found jobs outside agriculture, but as they still lived on the farm they normally lent a hand in the evening or at weekends. In summer all of them helped with haymaking, while in winter each one had his own, well-defined tasks. When Joseba or his parents wanted to go on holiday for a few days or a week (something which happened only once a year, at the most), those who remained on the farm had to increase their labour input.

In 1989, some villagers had doubts about Joseba succeeding to his parents' farm. "They say that he may try to find a job elsewhere, as he's still single...," it was said. Juan had told me that his son should become a full-time farmer, if he wanted to take over the farm. "It's no good being a part-time farmer; then the farm will be lost," he believed. Seven years later, Joseba had a girlfriend and their plans were to get married and to continue on the farm. "At the outset full-time," Joseba explained. "Later, we'll see. As long as my parents are able to work, fine. But after that... it's much more difficult to do all the work alone."

Although Juan was still the owner of the farm in 1996, the cattle and machinery had already been put on Joseba's name.

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[19] 33 cows * 6200 l/cow = 204,600 litres in 1989, against 44 cows * 7700 l/cow = 338,800 litres in 1996.

5.2 Iriarte: modernizing in the absence of successors

In the winter of 1988-89, when I visited this farm a few times, there were four brothers living on the farm; the youngest, Koldo, was 54 years old, the oldest 68. The four of them were bachelors. An unmarried sister who had also lived with them on the farm had died several years ago. Two brothers had always worked on the farm. The third one had given up his factory job in a nearby village some seven years earlier and had joined them; he was crippled and had an invalidity benefit. The oldest brother had been a dentist all his life; when he retired in 1987, he received his old age pension. He helped a little on the farm, though he could not do very much due to serious health problems.

Koldo and his brothers were regarded as the richest farmers in Aritzmendi. People said they normally worked like animals, because they had nothing else to do: "But there's no one they can give their money to, for they have no children nor nephews or nieces."

More than 20 years ago, they sold the milk of their six cows to a hawker; but after several years, this man let them know that it was becoming more difficult to sell milk in summer, and that he could not accept their whole summer production any longer. They then decided to sell all their milk to the dairy cooperative. In 1980, when they had about 10 milch cows, they rebuilt the cow-shed, rented more land, bought some machines to work the land and increased their livestock to 16 head. In 1988 they had 20 milch cows and 14 yearlings, and a total production of 80,000 litres of milk per year. Seasonal fluctuation was considerable: they produced more than 400 litres a day in summer but only 150 litres in winter.

These farmers were believed to have the best land in Aritzmendi, relatively flat and most of it close to the farm. All the same, they claimed that no farmer here really had enough land to keep 20 cows and that that was the reason why farmers had to give their cows so much concentrates. Koldo's oldest brother added to this: "I always say there's only place for two farms in this valley. What we need here is a re-allotment scheme so that the land will be used in a more rational way."

Koldo described their present farming system as follows: a lot of land, many cows, and a relatively low milk production per cow. They still thought of increasing the total production volume of milk, but they did not want to increase their cattle population any further. Instead of that, they wanted to raise the milk production per cow, which in their view depended primarily on the possibility to improve the quality of their yearlings. That is why they had become members of the regional artificial insemination bank, which enabled them to buy semen of some of the best bulls in Europe. And they would also try to improve the quality of their milk, so that they could claim higher quality bonuses. They belonged to a professional association that regularly checked the milk quality of all their cows.

When I came back in the village in 1996, the situation on this farm had changed quite drastically. The oldest brother, the former dentist, had died in 1992, and around the same time the others had sold all their dairy cows - and their milk quotum, for which they were said to have received a considerable

amount of money. The shed where they once had kept their dairy cattle now gave shelter to some 15 cows of a beef producing race. Koldo, who was 60 by now, still seemed to work as tirelessly as ever, but both his brothers had retired.

5.3 Vanguard farms: scale-enlargement and intensification

Farms like Etxeberri and Iriarte were seen as 'vanguard' farming enterprises in the region, both by farmers and representatives of the Administration. They combined a large number of dairy cattle with a relatively high milk production per cow, tried to adopt the latest technological innovations and were to a large extent integrated in input and output markets. If we caracterize these farms as vanguard enterprises, we should of course point to the relativity of the term: with their 20 to 50 milch cows, they would be considered small or medium-sized farms in north-west European countries (something of which Basque farmers and policy makers were well aware), but according to Basque agrarian standards they belonged undeniably to the 'elite'. If there still was a future for Basque dairy farming within the European context, it was believed to be theirs. Thus, regional agricultural policy was aimed at defending and potentializing precisely this type of farming.

Vanguard farms (or 'grands intensifs', as they are adequately characterized in French) are a relatively recent phenomenon in the dairy farming sector, as van der Ploeg (1987b) demonstrates. Before social scientists had become aware of more complex differentiating patterns in agriculture, they would often describe the sector in dichotomous terms: of small, intensive farms on the one hand and large-scale, relatively extensive enterprises on the other. Vanguard farmers are the exponents of a style of farming in which scale-enlargement and intensification are combined. Van der Ploeg contrasts these vanguard farms with marginal holdings. The increasing differentiation in time among these four farming styles, which has to do with specific developments within these styles, is brought out in the following figure (Figure 3), whereby 'intensity' is defined as the output per object of labour and 'scale' stands for the number of labour objects per labour units (cf. van der Ploeg, 1985:6).[20]

This typification is based on statistics covering hundreds of farms, whereby the terms 'scale' and 'intensity' have been abstracted from farm related factors like hectares, dairy cows, amount of labour input etc.

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[20] I have mentioned earlier (see Chapter 1) that in later publications of authors belonging to the 'styles of farming' school this typology has been much more refined and elaborated.

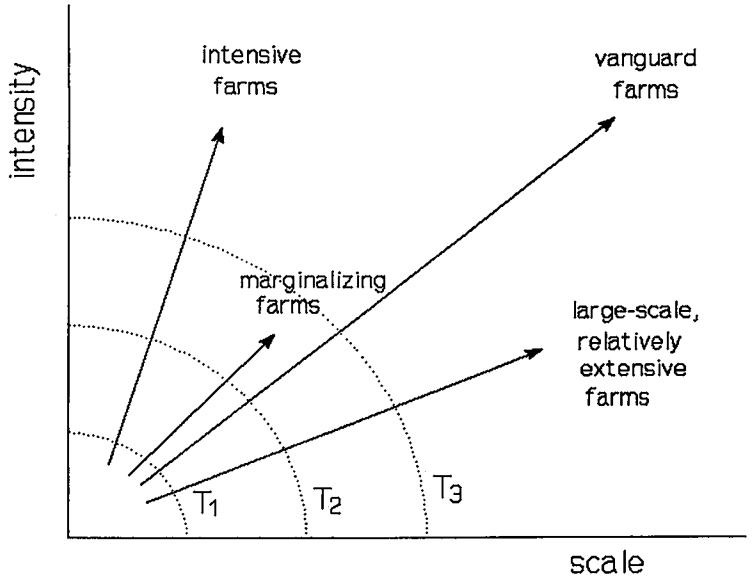

Figure 3. Ideal-typical sketch of the increasing differentiation among farming styles. Sources: van der Ploeg, 1985: 7 and 1987b: 260; Bolhuis and van der Ploeg, 1985: 92. Adapted.

However, if we descend to the concrete level of farming practices in the Basque countryside, strategies like intensification or scale-enlargement are not always that unequivocally interpretable. It is the ambiguity of the concept of 'labour object' - meaning either a milch cow, or a piece of land, a fruit plantation, etc. - which should make us cautious in labelling farmer strategies. At one time, a strategy of intensification may mean: increasing the milk production per cow (but on the same area), and at another: incrementing the output per hectare (through a greater number of cattle per area, without increasing the production per cow). Scale enlargement, on the other hand, could be: a) expanding the area for pasture, under a proportional increase of the number of cows, but also b) increasing the number of cattle per labour unit on the same area. In situation a) the intensity remains the same, while in situation b) intensity varies with scale. We are thus dealing with distinguishable strategies, based on different underlying farming decisions.

When I interviewed farmers about their strategies so far and their plans for the future, their answers provided me with some insight that remains obscure in Figure 3 above. This figure may induce the reader to think that farming enterprises experienced a unilinear and exclusive development towards the (ideal-typical) style of farming they belong to at present; my own findings suggest that the evolution of individual holdings is not always that

straightforward. Even if farm enterprises belong to the same style of farming they may have got there following completely different steps. We saw earlier how Juan of the farm Etxeberri had increased the number of dairy cows and the production of milk per cow at the same time, introducing more and better machines both on the land and in the stable so as to prevent an intolerable increase of labour input. On the other hand, Koldo and his brothers of the Iriarte farm had first rented more land, bought machines and expanded their livestock; they then planned to increase their total milk production by raising the production per cow (which means they initially followed a strategy aimed at scale-enlargement, and subsequently adopted an intensification strategy). On another big farm in Aritzmendi, the farmers (three elderly men) had followed a similar strategy as on Iriarte: they had increased their landed property and the number of cattle and then strived to augment the production of their dairy cows; but at the same time they planned to expand the area under cultivation even more, so that they could feed more forage which might bring their mash expenses down. (We see here an intensification with respect to the dairy cows, but an extensification in relation to land surface.)

Studies in terms of the styles of farming tradition would certainly be enriched by a deeper insight into the different strategy 'paths' that farmers choose before eventually creating the type of farm which, at a certain moment in time, induces the sociological observer to classify them under one or another style of farming. This naturally asks for intensive, longitudinal research, comparable to the analysis Bennett carried out with respect to changes in 'management styles' among Canadian farmers in the course of a decade (Bennett, 1980: 214, 223 ff.). Unfortunately, this is not the easiest type of investigation to be carried out. Such research, however, will probably bring out that farming enterprises which were once headed under style X may within 5 or 10 years be found under style Y or Z; it would thus contribute to shed more light on the chain of decisions these farmers have to take 'along the way'.

5.4 Scale-enlargement, intensification and TATE

On the basis of extensive statistical material, Bolhuis and van der Ploeg (1985) conclude that in the Italian region which they studied the growing incorporation of farming enterprises into the market corresponded with a tendency towards enlargement of scale (and relative extensification). For farmers who attune the organization of their production process more and more to market and price relations, entrepreneurship becomes an increasingly important quality. The farmer may decide to 'externalize' certain tasks in the production and reproduction process on the farm, which means that they will therafter be carried out by external institutions. At the same time, "the 'coordination' between farms and external institutions (..) is frequently organized via a complex of technical-administrative instructions that links and subordinates farm labour to external market agencies" (van der Ploeg, 1985: 16). Here, the analysis links up with Benvenuti's model of the Technological and Administrative Task Environment (or TATE).

Benvenuti stresses the growing integration of the farm enterprise into the

wider institutional environment. TATE is defined at the level of the interrelations between the farm and surrounding institutions as "the 'social constellation' of which a given farm operation *directly* takes part and within which its operator technically acts" (Benvenuti, 1975: 47; emphasis in original). The relationship between TATE institutions and the farm is an asymmetrical one: what is being cultivated or reared and in what way is no longer exclusively decided on the farm, but is increasingly determined by the institutions that are part of the TATE environment of that farm.

> "TATE forms with the farm operation a complex network of functional interdependencies which most of the times signify normative, functional and material dependency of the farm unit upon it" (ibid.: 49).

According to the author, they are particularly the most specialized farms, those that are believed to be run by the most modern-thinking, dynamic, agricultural entrepreneurs, that are caught in the TATE web: "In fact, the greater the specialization of the farm operation, the greater its openness and therefore its dependency upon TATE" (ibid.).

The empirical material on which this model rests was gathered in Italy and the Netherlands. It turned out that in Italy TATE was predominantly related to large-scale and relatively extensive holdings. The heads of these farms were more in contact with extension agents than their colleagues on other farms; they made themselves and their farm enterprises more dependent on TATE institutions. In contrast, farmers of intensifying holdings normally relied more on their craftsmanship; their attitude towards TATE tended to be more critical. On the other hand, Benvenuti's analysis in the Netherlands of the relationship between an agricultural cooperative and its members suggested that strong links with the TATE complex may also force farmers to intensify. What it amounts to in both cases is that the more farmers are drawn into TATE relations with surrounding institutions, the more their farm management becomes subject to external prescription. As production is becoming more and more dependent on outside technical and scientific knowledge, the farmer's craftsmanship and experience is gradually made superfluous. Benvenuti states that the institutional environment consciously intends to standardize farm management on individual enterprises (Benvenuti, 1991).

De Haan (1994: 16) criticizes this model for stressing technological and economic factors too much, while ignoring family factors. The criticism may be correct, but this shortcoming need not be inherent to the model. My own empirical data suggest that it is possible to relate the establishment of TATE-like relationships to family factors like household composition and capabilities of members.

In the case of Iriarte (see Section 5.2), the farmers had first followed a strategy of scale-enlargement (more land, more dairy cattle) and then tried to raise the milk production of their cows. In other expanding and modernizing farming enterprises the idea of a further increase in the production per cow was rejected; the argument was that there was too much risk involved in such a strategy, these cows needed much more attention and care, and if something went wrong with one of them, it would immediatly have important economic repercussions for the farm. However, for farmers with no more

scope for expanding their area under cultivation and the number of cows, intensification becomes the only option to increase their income from farming. Now, intensification is seen as a hazardous undertaking by most farmers: it is more expensive to replace a highly productive cow than an average one. Besides, it normally implies more work and demands more of the farmer's craftsmanship. My hypothesis is that it is precisely for these reasons that farmers who follow a strategy which involves taking certain risks may establish or strengthen ties with the institutional environment, in order to externalize certain tasks for which they lack the knowledge or the time (as a matter of fact, Benvenuti himself suggests that farmers, out of an attitude of risk-avoidance, place themselves under the "protective umbrella" of institutions; Benvenuti, 1975: 53). On Iriarte intensification was realized through improving the quality of their livestock and of the milk produced, while selection and quality improvement of both cattle and milk were delegated to external institutions.

As I have said before, the essential part of Benvenuti's argument is that once producers are part of the TATE network they tend to become increasingly subject to the external prescription of their farm management. Not only that, TATE also confronts them with ever changing and more compelling advice and exigencies. And only if these farmers conform to the logic of TATE will they be regarded as rational entrepreneurs and rewarded correspondingly.

It is the idea of external prescription of farm operations, and induced innovations, as a result of TATE relations that will be explored next.

5.5 The treadmill

In his comprehensive anthropological study on the rural sector in two Basque villages, William Douglass (1977) mentions that in the 1960s a farmer with 3 cows and 10 calves was called a big cattle owner. Some 25 years later, one of the bigger farmers I interviewed told me how they had had to expand and modernize "in order to be better able to make ends meet. Formerly you could live on 5 cows, but at present you need about 25."

Pile (1990) uses the metaphor of the treadmill to characterize this development.[21] He states that farmers are forced to constantly adopt new technologies if they want their farms to survive. This "expanded reproduction of capital in farming" (ibid.: 135) is what he calls the treadmill's 'driving force'. The consequence for farmers is that they "have seen a continual increase in the size of the 'viable' farm unit" (ibid.). Yet, technology also enables farmers to cultivate more land, keep more animals and raise production levels with more or less the same amount of labour input. Or as Juan of the Etxeberri farm put it: "We have 44 cows now and we have less work than many years ago, when we only had 10 cows. This is due to the machines we use: they save a lot of labour."

The work on the land and in the cowshed can be carried out with the help

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[21] For a fuller discussion of the treadmill concept, see Ward, 1993.

of all sorts of machines, fodder may be administered by means of a computer, and farmers themselves belong to institutions that regularly carry out quality controls of their cattle and the milk or where they can obtain selected semen. All in all, their work probably demands less physical exertion than one or two decades ago. But the treadmill also had the effect of "further linking producers to external agencies" (ibid.: 13). Farmers are faced with indebtness, causing financial worries, and with institutional prescription of certain tasks that have to be coordinated with the rest of farm labour. This all means a greater mental burden for farmers. Induced by external institutions and motivated by their own desire to keep abreast of new developments, they adopt further innovations that should help them to secure the reproduction of their farming enterprise.

The most direct way in which farmers are induced to adopt new technology is through regulations of Government agencies, normally alleging the necessity of public health measures, or through marketing organizations like agricultural cooperatives, generally for reasons of efficiency in the collection and processing of farm products. In the early 1980s, the dairy cooperative Gurelesa decided that its members should purchase a milk refrigerated tank: this would not only benefit the quality of the milk, but it would also enable the cooperative to collect the milk once every two days instead of each day. Most farmers followed the cooperative in this, but for some members such an investment (or the additional costs of improving the access roads to some of the farms so that the new and heavier trucks would be able to reach them) was beyond their financial possibilities; they had to leave the cooperative and look for alternative marketing channels or give up farming.

However, farmers are not only 'chained' to the treadmill through the adoption of technology (or 'technical capital') but also through the input of biological capital. In the past, the Administration carried out several sanitary campaigns to eradicate tuberculosis and brucelosis among the cows: the farmers received compensation for the infected cows that had to be sacrificed and were then offered the opportunity to replace them (often under advantageous financial conditions) by the more productive Friesian cows that were imported from Germany, the Netherlands or Denmark; some bigger farmers even went abroad on organized trips, subsidized by the Administration, to select the cows personally in their countries of origin.

All this is not to say that farmers are the passive victims of institutions that incite them to ever higher investments. The farmers themselves (i.e. those who are able to do so) actively adopt the innovations and integrate these into their farming operations. And in their discourse the adoption of new technology is frequently presented as entirely their own decision. But even if this is so, they often realize that they are somehow forced to continuously innovate and progress, if they do not want to be overtaken by economic developments. It is precisely on the bigger farms, with the most cows and the highest production, that the treadmill of investment and adoption of technology is most strongly felt. The family farm household may earn quite a good income, but at the same time its members must realize that there is hardly a way back for them: if one has specialized in large-scale dairy farming for many years, the economic risk involved in taking up an alternative line of

production or commercialization or even of slowing down the pace of investments has simply become too big (see also Benvenuti, 1991: 49, for a similar development in Dutch agriculture). One of Pile's respondents expressively summarized the effect of the treadmill on farm management as "you've got to run faster to stay in the same place" (ibid.:135).

Pile's observation about British agriculture that "(t)he amount of land required to provide a living for an individual family member has increased progressively over the years" (ibid.:139) is equally valid for the Basque situation (and, indeed, for that in many other countries or regions). However, Basque farmers willing to expand often found themselves severely constrained in their possibilities to acquire more hectares or to make a more productive use of the land they already had in property. The dispersion of fields and the steep mountain slopes on which these fields are located are factors that were believed to contribute to a sub-optimal utilization of land in property. Factors that were held responsible for the difficulty to buy new land were the existence of an large group of part-time farmers and the virtual non-existence of an adequately functioning land market in many areas.

5.6 Under-utilization of land and machinery

Negative sentiments towards part-time farmers were fairly widespread among full-time, modernizing farmers and might also be expressed by people in rural institutions. The general image was that a part-time farmer was only interested in carrying out not too labour demanding agrarian activities that were compatible with his industrial job and at best yielded him some extra income, but not in making the best possible use of agricultural production factors. There are many examples of farmers who took a job in industry, replaced their milking herd by beef cattle and planted pine-trees on their dispersed pasture fields.

Part-time farmers had in common with other categories of farmers their unwillingness to sell part of their landed property. Retired farmers without any heirs, for example, would seldom sell the meadows or mountain fields that they hardly exploited to modernizing farmers who might need these lands in order to expand their farming enterprises. Nor were they very much inclined to lease land to others. Some of my informants would attribute the farmers' reticence to sell or lease to their 'attachment to the land' as if we were dealing with some irrational attitude of the farmers in question. Farmers themselves, however, referred to less abstract reasons: like the high inflation rate, which made it unwise to sell land and put the money into a bank, or certain laws that made it difficult to cancel a lease. Furthermore, in times of economic growth and industrial expansion, many owners of rural land in possession of a permit for industrial construction tried to speculate with their property, asking prices that would far exceed what might have been justifiable from an agricultural point of view. On the other hand, in periods of economic crisis, both full-time and part-time farmers (and even urban heirs of abandoned farms) would keep their property intact, considering it as something to fall back on in case times got even worse.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that voices might be heard demanding a re-allotment policy in order to guarantee a more optimal use of agricultural land - and not only in interviews with big farmers, but also in reports of policy-makers (e.g. Ansola et al., 1980) and publications of rural economists.

> "The extension of some farming enterprises can only be realized by using the land that other farms occupy at present. Stimulating and strengthening agricultural modernization demands the territorial reorganization of farming enterprises, their scale-enlargement, which implies a drastic reduction of their number" (Etxezarreta, 1985: 132; my translation).

Nevertheless, ideas on land re-allotment were far from popular among the majority of Basque farmers and the topic did therefore not appear on the priority list of the regional Department of Agriculture.

If it is politically unfeasible to carry out a policy aimed at creating bigger farming enterprises, the alternative may be to stimulate farmers to make a more intensive use of the land they own or rent at the moment. In the 1980s, Basque farmers were known to spend a lot of money on concentrates (according to Lurgintza studies, cattle-fodder purchases on average farms amounted to about two-thirds of total farming expenditures, most of it being spent on mash) and relatively little on artificial fertilizers. They believed that the organic manure produced by their cattle was of good quality as a consequence of their high mash consumption. "To produce high-quality dung, you should feed concentrates," was their maxim. Now, this practice of feeding cattle a lot of concentrates and comparatively little forage was criticized by representatives of the Administration and the professional institutions, who recommended farmers to spend more money on manuring their fields better so that they would be able to feed their cows more forage instead of mash; eventually this would save them money. In the words of the Deputy of Agriculture of the province of Gipuzkoa:

> "First you have to 'milk' the land and then the cows. But you cannot milk the cows while not 'milking' the land, and then buy fodder elsewhere, for that increases production costs."
> [J. Zubia, X/87]

And the retired vet Erzilia, former manager of the dairy cooperative Gurelesa and an informal adviser of farmers in the region around Aritzmendi:

> "There are many different types of soil here that should be treated with different types of fertilizers. (..) Farmers here have never properly fertilized their lands. Did you know that some farmers have been able to double their livestock because they improved their manuring? (..) Farmers should make their concentrates at home, but they should see it as something complementary. The basis should be forage: that has to fill the cow's rumen."
> [A. Erzilia, XII/88]

In general terms, farmers seemed to subscribe to these ideas. When the farmers who participated in my survey were asked to describe the most ideal

farming system for agricultural producers in the region, they were quite unanimous in their answers: a lot of dairy cows, a high production per cow, more than enough land, and using a great amount of fertilizer. Only referring to concentrates their opinions diverged: the percentages against and in favour of feeding big quantities of mash roughly equalled (40%), the rest did not mention it. The argument of those who were against was that concentrates were normally one of the principal expenditures on the farm.

On the other hand, most farmers I interviewed did not believe the scenario of little mash and much fertilizer would work in practice, and they explained why not. First, the grass in the region was claimed to be of bad quality so that extra manuring would make little sense; and second, if they were able to increase grass or maize production, it would in many cases be difficult to mechanize crop care and harvests on the mountain slopes: a production increase of forage would thus imply the need for higher labour input. But on many farms labour was scarce.

Nevertheless, some of the bigger farmers had begun to have soil analysis carried out on all their pieces of land. Directed manuring should raise their forage production, while on fields that were hard to mechanize beef cattle could be kept (though at times the farmers still had to go into these fields to scythe the grass that the cows refused to eat). Furthermore, the 'silage revolution' that has taken place over the last decade or so might reflect an improvement in manuring practices. In 1984, hardly any farmer in the region had a silo: "the cows won't eat it," and "it smells as if it were rotten," were the arguments farmers used. But more and more farmers realized that a silo made it possible to have an extra cut of grass early in the year, on top of the usual two cuts a year for haymaking, so by the end of the eighties it had become quite common for farmers to feed their cattle from the silage pit. And in 1996 many of them had adopted the latest innovation: the big silage bales that were made by contract workers.

Extension agents assured me that farmers did not only make an sub-optimal use of their land, but that the same applied to their use of technology: the potential of agricultural machinery on many farms was claimed to bear no relation to the use that was made of it. A similar argument could be found in studies on agricultural productivity (see for example Caja Laboral Popular, 1979: 314).

At first sight it may seem contradictory that under-utilization of land co-exists in the same region, even in the same village, with under-utilization of agricultural machinery. After all, if there is an overcapacity of machinery on the farms in a village, there seems to be no reason why the land around these farms should not be used to the limit. Farmers explained this paradox as follows: they simply needed all the machines they had so as not to depend on others in peak periods such as the haymaking season. In agriculture, they claimed, everyone needed the same machines at more or less the same time. Greenwood, in his study on Basque horticulture in a village in Gipuzkoa, stated that "lack of capital is not the cause of farm problems" (Greenwood, 1976: 203), and perhaps we might extend this conclusion to the dairy sector as well: if farmers had machines, that was because they could afford to buy them. This held good especially for part-time farmers, of course, who could

spend part of their industrial income on the purchase of machinery that should lighten their work on the farm. However, if we allege that money seldom seemed to be a limiting factor for farmers who wished to buy machinery, we should not forget Mendras' warning. Speaking about the French countryside, Mendras points out that the pace with which 'mechanical improvements' spread over the countryside has often little to do with their profitability for the majority of farmers, but everything with their desire to imitate their wealthier colleagues:

> "(Small farmers) emulate in big farmers the actions that best conform to the dominant image of progress (the purchase of a tractor, for example) and not those that are more effective (such as the use of chemical fertilizer and artificial insemination) and within their means" (Mendras, 1970: 149).

This is another possible reason why even on relatively small farms more machinery could be found than what might have been justifiable on the basis of the economic criteria of extension agents in the region.

Farmers who were willing to expand, but did not have the possibility to intensify their land use nor to purchase new land might design other strategies to get round these constraints.

5.7 Machinery and land use: interlocking projects

Douglass describes the distribution of land belonging to a Basque farm in a schematic way as a number of concentric circles around the farmstead that coincide with different forms of land use (see Figure 4; from Douglass, 1977: 44, slightly adapted). As Douglass observes, the general rule governing this type of land distribution is that the amount of labour dedicated to a plot decreases as we move away from the farmstead. While accepting the validity of this rule, we should nevertheless elaborate the schematic distribution laid out in Figure 4 a little more, thereby introducing some corrections that changing circumstances since the days Douglass carried out his research in the area (1962-63) have made necessary. Firstly, in the Basque coastal provinces there are practically no farmers anymore who grow cereals. Yet, most farm households still have their kitchen gardens for home consumption (though some may also sell some vegetables on the market or hawk them on the streets together with milk) and some fields on which they grow fodder plants, like maize, mangold and turnips, for the cows. Secondly, in the sixties most dairy farmers still kept their cattle in the cow-shed all year long, while meadows were only used to produce forage, but not to let the cows graze. Nowadays, dairy cows normally graze on the pastures around the farmhouse, weather permitting (i.e. if it is not too hot or too cold), whereas the meadows farther away from the farm are kept for silage and hay production. However, if because of steep slopes or a rocky surface it is difficult to introduce machinery for manuring and harvesting on these meadows, cows of a beef or milk-beef producing race (Charolais, Limousin, etc.) may be kept there.

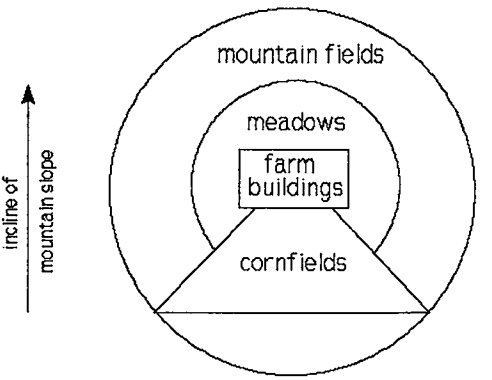

Figure 4. Distribution of land according to its use.[22]

On mountain pastures, farmers normally keep the tougher Pyrenean beef cattle.[23] Thirdly, the fields belonging to a farm do not normally form a continuous surface; at best, this may hold good for the pastures around the farm buildings. The meadows farther away and those in the mountains, on the other hand, seldom lie side by side but are normally rather dispersed, distributed among the fields that belong to other farms. With these corrections in mind, we can now re-sketch Douglass's scheme (see Figure 5).

The number of farms for sale in Gipuzkoa was very low. And if a farmstead with surrounding lands was sold, modernizing farmers were seldom willing to pay a large sum of money for a whole farming enterprise that might lie several kilometres away. But in many cases there were quite a lot of fields, belonging to, for instance, part-time farmers or urban weekend visitors, which lay scattered among their own parcels and whose owners did not mind leasing them to other farmers who would make a more productive use of this land. (These fields correspond to the shaded areas in Figure 5.) These part-timers or urban cottage dwellers could do without the forage and in this way they did not have to keep these fields clean themselves. It also happened that these lease arrangements were made without money being involved. Under the prevailing circumstances, the expanding farmers did not even find it necessary anymore that fields to be leased bordered their own lands. After all, these fields would be used for forage production (as the cows normally grazed

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22) Douglass distinguishes two different types of land use, one with the farmstead and the other with the village nucleus in the centre of the concentrical circles. I only refer to the first type, which turned out to be more relevant in the context of my own research findings.

23) Farmers used distinct terms for these fields in Basque: *etxe inguruan* (also *belardia* or *zelaia*) for the fields around the farm, *errepartitutak* (or *aldapak*) when they referred to the dispersed fields on the mountain slopes farther away, and *mendi zelaiak* for the mountain pastures.

around the farmstead), and due to better access roads and machinery, distance had become less important. If forage could be obtained for free, farmers did not even mind mowing it in another village.

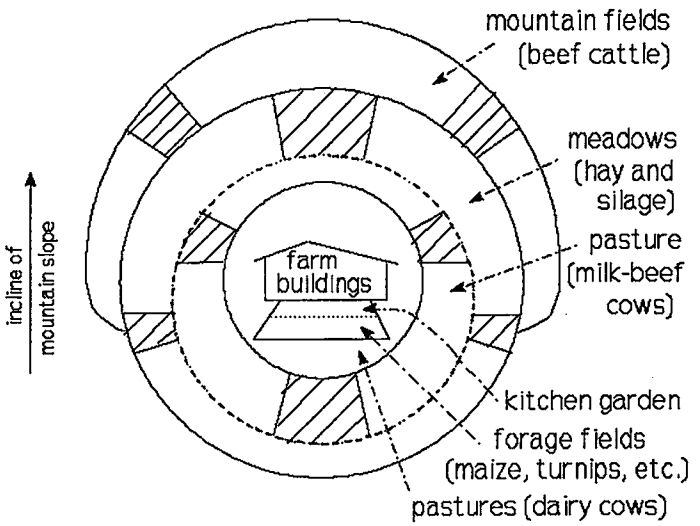

Figure 5. Distribution of fields according to their use (the shaded fields belong to other farms).

For the good order, this arrangement whereby one farmer obtains forage through working the land of another without paying for this has nothing to do with the way such things were done in traditional agricultural systems. What we see here is a kind of symbiosis between the modern farmer, on the one hand, and the part-time farmer or urban weekend visitor, on the other: a creative arrangement that is not laid down in an official lease contract, in which no money is involved, and of which both parties know that they will gain by it. (As a matter of fact, if a weekend visitor asked money for his grass, the farmer would probably not accept mowing it; consequently, the urban visitor would have to clean his fields himself!) As long as both parties were interested, these arrangements would automatically be renewed year after year. It would be wrong to conclude that, because this is a non-commodity relationship between two parties, we therefore have to do with a traditional ('folk') arrangement.

It cannot be denied that there are farmers who are only able to expand because they can establish such arrangements with their neighbours. In fact, these arrangements are excellent examples of what I have earlier referred to as 'interlocking projects' (see Chapter 1). The rationale of establishing these arrangements for the farmer trying to expand his enterprise might be explained with the following Chayanovian diagram (see Figure 6). Let us first

imagine that a farm household had to buy land in order to expand its production. Presupposing that this purchase is financed out of the household's savings, this means that part of the family's capital, which would otherwise have been used for consumption, is now used for productive purposes; consequently, the satisfaction of part of the family members' consumption needs has to be postponed and the corresponding curve shifts upward (this is line L in the Figure). Machinery, like ploughs, hay and silage balers, will be used to work the expanded area; these machines increase the labour productivity on the farm, which means that the drudgery curve is shifted downward. As some of these machines must probably be bought, the demand satisfaction curve rises even further (line L+M). The equilibrium point moves from X to Y. However, this is not unmistakeably advantageous for the farming household: the net income may have increased, but so has the drudgery of labour, because the capital expenditure on machinery and land will have to be earned back (cf. Chayanov, 1966: 209). If, on the other hand, the family does not have to buy the extra pieces of land, but is given the usufruct by the owners in return for keeping these fields clean for them, the demand satisfaction curve rises much less (to line M, as only machinery will have to be bought), so that the equilibrium shifts to point Z. (It is obvious that the equilibrium point is even more advantageous, Z', if purchases can be financed by means of credits.) Thus, the articulation of one's own project with those of other actors results in the most advantageous situation for the modernizing farmer: the output and family demand satisfaction are higher than at point X, whereas the drudgery of labour is lower.

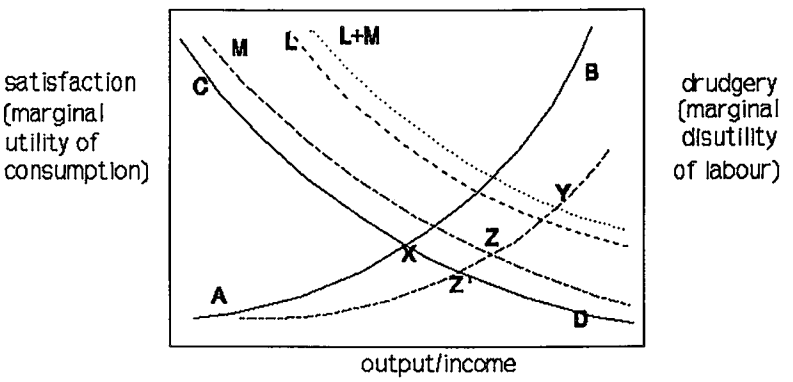

Figure 6. Land use and interlocking projects.

It is true that the minor scale on which such interlocking projects were established must have made this phenomenon hardly noticeable. But if that is so, it might just as well be an indication of the lack of a really effective demand for land.

A similar story can be told about farmers with a lot of agricultural machinery, who may decide to carry out contract work for other farmers.[24] This was the case of Joseba and two more young farmers in Zelaizabal. In the first place, this enabled them to pay off the generally expensive machinery more easily, but it also meant that these machines would be more intensively used than if they had only been used on their own fields. (Moreover, due to steep mountain slopes, heavy machinery could often not even be used on all fields belonging to the own farm.) Again, the logic of this strategy may be illustrated by means of a Chayanovian diagram (Figure 7). It often concerns machines that can only be used part of the year: Chayanov gives the example of the threshing machine (Chayanov, 1966: 211), but I shall choose the haybaler to make my point.

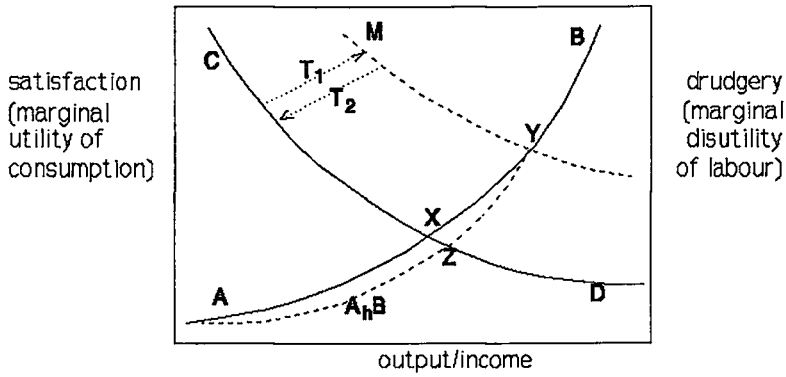

Figure 7. Agricultural machinery and interlocking projects.

The haybaler is only used a few times a year on the farmer's own fields. It enables the household to do the tiresome and time consuming tasks of hay-making much faster and easier, but the labour time gained can hardly be used more productively on the own holding. The haybaler raises the family members' labour productivity only for a short period of the year (curve A_hB in Figure 7). The purchase of this machine shifts the demand satisfaction curve upward (curve H) in T_1, for the same reasons we have explained with respect to Figure 6. The resulting equilibrium point Y will not be considered advantageous by the farm household. If, however, this household uses the haybaler to carry out contract work for other farmers, it will earn itself back:

[24] For the good order, it should be mentioned that not all expanding farm enterprises also had all expensive machinery. Even on Iriarte, for example, they called for a contract-worker when particularly heavy work had to be done.

in T_2 the demand satisfaction curve H shifts downward and the equilibrium point moves to Z. Again, from the household members' point of view this equilibrium point Z is more favourable than X or Y.

For the clients of these contract-workers the situation may be described as follows (see Figure 8). By contracting a specialized worker with machinery the labour drudgery of household members reduces (curve AB shifts downward). But as they have to pay for this service, they will have less consumptive capital at their disposal (curve CD shifts upward to S). Eventually, the new equilibrium point is more favourable, not because a higher demand satisfaction is translated into more consumer goods but into having more free time. (Theoretically, this free time could of course be used productively again by increasing the output of farm products, but this would go against the family members' original purpose of reducing their workload.) It may even be so that, as a result of mechanization, the amount of hay produced is higher than if the work had been done manually. This effect may be translated into a slight downward shift of the curve S again (towards S').

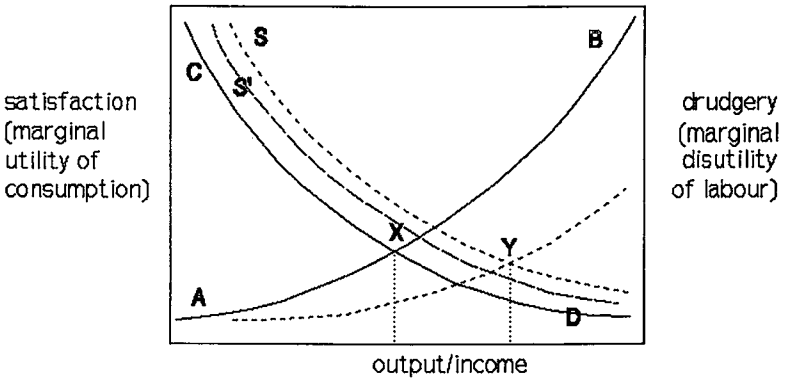

Figure 8. Labour saving through contracting specialists.

Those farmers who did contract-work for others still had to deal with the problem that the other farmers in the area all required their service in the same period, which sometimes led to priority conflicts as they were expected to attend their 'clients' before working their own lands. This problem was especially pressing in the period of haymaking, but may not have been so important in the case of silage baling, which is less dependent on weather conditions. As it turned out, this priority conflict came especially to the fore in the relationships between fathers and sons. Whereas the fathers of these young farmers would rather see that tasks on the farm were done first, their sons preferred the money they would earn by working for others and thought they could still do the work on their own farms afterwards. We may expect

these opposing views to be a constant object of negotiations between fathers and sons on these 'modern' farms.

Basque dairy farmers who are willing to expand and modernize their enterprises are thus faced with certain difficulties to realize their projects, like a hardly functioning land market and the high prices of specialized agricultural machines (that can often only be used part of the year). But they are also known to find solutions to their problems by establishing strategic relationships with other actors (farmers and non-farmers) in the village. In the next section, we will see how cultural factors may influence the generational continuity of these farms.

5.8 The future of 'modern' farms

By the end of the 1980s, farmers in Aritzmendi foresaw that no farm in the village would be continued as a full-time farming enterprise. There was one young farmer who had invested quite a lot of money in an alternative type of milk sales (selling raw milk in plastic bags - see Section 7.3), with the idea, as he had told me, to take over and modernize his parents' farm before long; nevertheless, most villagers believed (and correctly, as it turned out) that even he would give up farming as soon as he was offered a job elsewhere. In Zelaizabal, prospects were only slightly more positive: on three of the 64 cattle farms a son would take over the farming enterprise as a full-time business. Joseba of the Etxeberri farm (Section 5.1) was one of them.

Joseba's father wanted his son to realize that continuing this farm on a part-time basis eventually meant its loss as a productive unit. In other words, his 'image of the future' of a viable farm, and of his own farm in particular, only matched the prospect of a full-time successor. Joseba's plans were to work as a full-time farmer for at least the time his parents would be able to help him on the farm (and most probably for as long as his father lived), but as to what would happen in the long run, he was not sure yet. Joseba had a group of friends of his age in the village; most of them were farmers' sons like himself, but had jobs in industry and only helped a bit on the farm in the evening when they came home from work or on Saturdays and Sundays. At weekends, Joseba frequently went out with them. He had also actively helped with the organization of the local 'fiestas' in August, and he even went on holiday in summer. But no doubt he realized that once he had full responsibility for the farm, this would all be over. Now, his parents and his brothers worked a little harder when Joseba went out or took a day or a week off. (As a matter of fact, due to the amount of labour power they were able to mobilize, the owners of Etxeberri were known to finish work like hay-making or potato lifting normally a few days before other farms in the village.) But what would happen in the future, when his brothers married and left the farm and his parents were too old to be of any real help?

Farmers in this region could call in the assistance of contracted farm 'managers' in case of illness or if they wanted to go on holiday for a week or so. Although this relatively new service was not very popular yet, there was a growing number of farmers who made use of it. But that only solved the

problem of the holidays. Farming is not a nine-to-five job; in the evening or at the weekend, when his neighbours go out, the farmer may still have work to do. This consideration may also have motivated Joseba's hesitation, just as it influenced the negative decision of many other young men to take over their parents' farms on a full-time basis. But his main worry seemed to be the every-day work: he feared that it simply might become too heavy for him alone, once his parents were no longer there to lend him a hand. Consequently, for him the image of his personal future did not necessarily coincide with that of the full-time farm. This was also true for potential successors on several other modern farms I visited. In spite of bright economic perspectives, there were other factors which eventually made them decide not to follow in their parents' footsteps.

An important factor, in my view, is the phenomenon of late marriage in the Basque countryside; several decades ago, this was already mentioned by Douglass (1971, 1976) and the situation has apparently not changed much since then. It makes a big difference for the total family labour input if the successor marries at the age of 30 or even 35, as is so common on many Basque farms, or at the age of 25. I shall try to demonstrate this following Chayanov's analysis of the evolution of the farm family composition (Chayanov, 1966: 58). We take as our central unit of analysis the parents, the succeeding couple and their succeeding son (and his wife). The age difference between husband and wife of all couples is 5 years. We assume that the labour capacity of an adult (say, 20 to 65 years old) is 0.9, that of a 15-year-old child 0.7, and that of a person of 70 also 0.7; the labour input of children younger than 15 and of people over 70 is taken to be insignificant. In the following tables, the A-columns record the age of the parents, the B-columns that of the succeeding couple and the C-columns that of the second-generation successor and his wife; the labour capacity per couple or individual is given in brackets. In the last column of each table we see the evolution of the total family labour capacity. The years of marriage of the successors are underlined in these tables. (For the sake of simplicity, I will only focus on senior and succeeding couples, ignoring the remaining family members for the present. In the following chapter, I shall come back to this.)

Table 7. Family labour capacity; marriage of successor at the age of 25 (M-25)

	A	B	C	Family labour capacity
70/65	45/40	20		4.3
(1.6)	(1.8)	(0.9)		
75/70	50/45	25/20	0	4.3
(0.7)	(1.8)	(1.8)		
80/75	55/50	30/25	5	3.6
(-)	(1.8)	(1.8)		
	60/55	35/30	10	**3.6**
	(1.8)	(1.8)		
	65/60	40/35	15	**4.3**
	(1.8)	(1.8)	(0.7)	
	70/65	45/40	20	**4.3**
	(1.6)	(1.8)	(0.9)	
	75/70	50/45	25/20	**4.3**
	(0.7)	(1.8)	(1.8)	
	80/75	55/50	30/25	3.6
	(-)	(1.8)	(1.8)	

Table 8. Family labour capacity; marriage of successor at the age of 30 (M-30)

A	B	C	Family labour capacity
55/50	25		2.7
(1.8)	(0.9)		
60/55	30/25	0	3.6
(1.8)	(1.8)		
65/60	35/30	5	**3.6**
(1.8)	(1.8)		
70/65	40/35	10	**3.4**
(1.6)	(1.8)		
75/70	45/40	15	**3.2**
(0.7)	(1.8)	(0.7)	
80/75	50/45	20	**2.7**
(-)	(1.8)	(0.9)	
	55/50	25	**2.7**
	(1.8)	(0.9)	
	60/55	30/25	3.6
	(1.8)	(1.8)	
	65/60	35/30	3.6
	(1.8)	(1.8)	

Table 9. Family labour capacity; marriage of successor at the age of 35 (M-35)

A	B	C	Family labour capacity
65/60	30		2.7
(1.8)	(0.9)		
70/65	35/30	0	**3.4**
(1.6)	(1.8)		
75/70	40/35	5	**2.5**
(0.7)	(1.8)		
80/75	45/40	10	**1.8**
(-)	(1.8)		
	50/45	15	**2.5**
	(1.8)	(0.7)	
	55/50	20	2.7
	(1.8)	(0.9)	
	60/55	25	2.7
	(1.8)	(0.9)	
	65/60	30	2.7
	(1.8)	(0.9)	
	70/65	35/30	3.4
	(1.6)	(1.8)	
	75/70	40/35	2.5
	(0.7)	(1.8)	

We are now able to represent the family labour capacity on which the successor in column B can count at different moments of his life in a graph and compare the three situations with each other (Figure 9).

Succession of the holding normally takes place when the aged farming couple is between 60 and 65 years old. Successors who marry at the age of 25 will then take over the farm when they are about 35 or 40. Figure 9 shows that at the moment of successsion they can expect an increase of the family's labour capacity which will remain higher for the coming fifteen years (see curve M-25). But reality in the Basque Country is quite different. If the succeeding son does not marry before the age of 30 or 35, he will have to take over the farming enterprise almost upon marriage or perhaps even before, that is, at the moment that family labour capacity is about to go down and will remain low for the next twenty-odd years. (The average labour capacity evolution curve for this situation is represented as a thick, continuous line.) Irrespective of the economic prosperity of the holding, the drudgery of labour per person can be expected to grow after the farm has been taken over. What is more, this problem may become more acute as the size of the 'viable farm unit' (Pile, 1990: 135) increases. It is true that on expanding, modernizing farms labour productivity may be increased through mechanization, but in the mountainous areas of the Basque Country the substitution of machinery for labour is only possible to a certain extent. Moreover, a decrease of family

labour power makes it more difficult to maintain the institutional and social networks that had facilitated expansion in the first place. On a large-scale, expanding farm, the successor's prospects of increasing drudgery of labour are even greater than on a smaller holding; consequently, his motivation to continue the farm as a full-time enterprise may be proportionately lower.

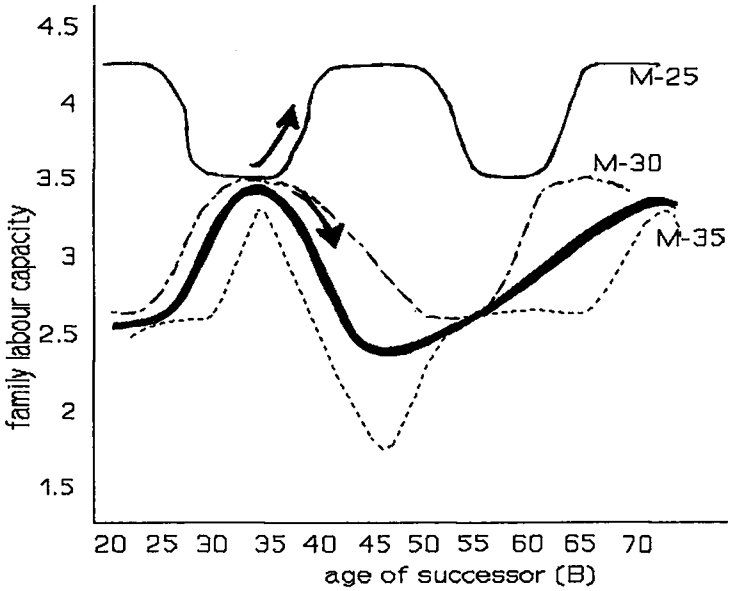

Figure 9. Total family labour input during the lifespan of successor B, according to his age of marriage.

On many farms in Gipuzkoa, the succeeding sons had not been able to find a spouse at all. Those were the farms run by aged bachelors (*mutilzarrak* in Basque), where succession would in all probability be out of the question. This phenomenon was more typical of traditional holdings, but it was also frequently found on modern farms. On Iriarte, for example, the owners had modernized even in the absence of any future perspectives - simply, as the people in the village would say, because they had no alternatives. They did not have a family to spend their money on, they lived deprived of all luxuries and just spent enough money to live on; the rest of what they earned was re-invested. But they did not even have any nephews or nieces who could take over their farming enterprise. Here the image of the future of the holding was linked in a dramatically direct way to the life-span of the owners: the farm would probably be abandoned when they died. In other such cases, a (married) brother or sister or more distant relatives were expected to inherit the farm, which would then most likely be used as second housing or, at the

the farm, which would then most likely be used as second housing or, at the most, as a part-time or hobby farm.

5.9 Conclusions

Modernizing farmers are generally forced to continue on the treadmill of increasing investment and further expansion if they want to survive. And most middle-sized holdings follow their example in an attempt not to let the vanguard enterprises get too far ahead. Both strategies, of scale-enlargement and of intensification, may lead farmers to establish more and stronger links with surrounding institutions, among other things as a way to reduce risks and in order to externalize tasks for which farming households lack the necessary knowledge or labour power. As these farm households are then likely to become more and more subject to outside prescription (from the TATE complex) of on-farm tasks, their enterprises are becoming ever more 'chained' to the treadmill. Consequently, the minimum output level of what can be defined as a viable farm enterprise is continually adjusted in upward direction.

The strategy of the 'modern' dairy farmers we have dealt with in this chapter was aimed at expanding their livestock as well as raising the production per cow. In order to realize this, land was needed for forage production, but there was seldom land for sale at a reasonable distance from the farmstead (or at least not at prices they found economically justifiable from an agricultural point of view). Labour could in general be mobilized within the household; it might however become a scarcity factor as the production level increased. Raising the household members' labour productivity demanded capital, but especially heavy machinery to work the land could seldom be used profitably on only the own holding.

We have seen now that farmers were able to get round these problems by establishing strategic relationships with others, like part-timers, aged farmers, or urban cottage owners, for whom the same relationships were equally interesting. Such arrangements enabled these expanding farmers, for instance, to use more land without having to buy it (at the most they would have to pay some lease), or to use expensive machinery in a more rational way. These arrangements are examples of what I have called interlocking projects in Chapter 1.

In general terms, we might say that farmers who meet with obstacles on the way to carry out a planned strategy mobilize the necessary resources to get round these obstacles through the network of social relationships they are part of, or which they establish to that end. But at the same time, the establishment and mobilization of this network may present them with new constraints - constraints which were either not foreseen, or were foreseen but taken for granted. The treadmill of expansion and investment is an excellent example of how a farmer's belonging to a network of interdependent (TATE) relationships constrains his decisions as to future action. As I have argued, it is extremely difficult for most farmers to 'dissociate' themselves and start doing something else. But something similar might be said about, for example, farmers who carried out contract work with their machinery for other farmers.

These contract workers found that once they had built up a network of clients, this network tended to expand and clients started to demand their service for more and more tasks. The external claims on them might bring them into conflict with the work that had to be done on their own farms. If a few of these farmers had shared expenses to buy some machines together, and had thus become engaged in another network, it became difficult for the individual contract worker to decide unilaterally to give up this activity.

I have further argued that cultural factors may interfere with the outcome of households' survival and succession strategies, especially in as far as these strategies depend on the amount of labour power which may be mobilized within the farm family. Differences in cultural outlook between a senior farmer and his succeeding son, for instance, may lead to generational tensions. Whereas older farmers identify themselves mainly with the village society, their successors have normally adopted many urban values. So while a father might first want to get the work on his own farm done, his son, who might be more money-oriented, could give priority to carrying out contract work with his machines on the land of others. It also happened that the senior farmer felt strongly that his full-time enterprise would not be continued as a part-time holding, whereas his successor had serious doubts whether he would be able to respect that wish.

As to this latter point, I have shown that as a result of late marriage in the Basque countryside (another cultural trait), the moment of succession on many farms coincides with the household's labour capacity going down. A reduction in the amount of labour power to be mobilized within the family means that the same work will have to be done by fewer people. (In Figures 6 and 7, above, this would be translated into an upward shift of the labour drudgery curve AB.) It will be increasingly difficult to carry out the necessary tasks on the farm, including the maintenance of the former interlocking projects; the eventual result will probably be that the original advantage is nullified or even turns into its reverse. This perspective may be reason enough for the potential successor to decide not to continue the parental holding as a full-time farm enterprise.

Chapter 6

'TRADITIONAL' FARMING: THE DEMISE OF THE PRIVATE TRADER?

This category is supposed to comprise the large majority of Basque farmers, but the criteria to qualify farm enterprises as traditional are quite ambiguous. In the following Sections 6.1 and 6.2, I will present the cases of two holdings that are believed to be involved in traditional activities, and that basically have it in common that they sell their farm products on a private basis, without the interference of any marketing organizations. It is particularly the fate of the hawkers of fresh milk which will be explored in the course of this chapter.

6.1 Beko-etxe: easy does it[25]

In 1989, there were three people living in this small farm in Zelaizabal: Ignacio (61), his wife Pilar (54), and a 31-year-old son, who had a full-time job as a construction worker and only helped his parents a little after work and at weekends; their other four children lived in town. Pilar had inherited the farm from her parents: "My parents left me no money when they died, but a farm where I could work for a living." They kept 5 Friesian dairy cows and 7 calves to be fattened. The cows were milked by hand and produced less than 40 litres of milk a day; half of the daily production was used to make cheese. While her husband was busy feeding the cattle and cleaning the cowshed, Pilar did the housework, prepared the meals, worked in the kitchen garden and fed the pig and the chickens. Together they worked in the forage fields and the meadows. They only had a small mowing machine. Most of the daily work was done by hand or with the help of a mule, but in summer they paid a contract-worker (Xabier of the Antolar farm, see Chapter 8) to bring in the hay.

Until 1957 they sold their milk to a few private, female milk traders in a nearby town, who used it to make butter. When the dairy cooperative Gurelesa started functioning, those milkmen and women disappeared and Pilar and Ignacio had to determine whether they should sell their milk through Gurelesa henceforth. Ignacio decided to wait: "Let's first see if others get rich by selling to the cooperative." As this did not happen, Pilar began to make cheese, which she had learned from her mother. Why had they not tried to sell their milk directly to urban consumers, as so many farmers did in those days? Pilar: "I've never learned to drive a car; I really do regret that now." She used to make 3 cheeses a day: one of a kilo and two smaller ones of about a pound, which were sold once a week on the market in town to a relatively stable circle of clients. She only used half of the daily milk production for

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[25] For part of the information about this farm, I rely on fieldwork data gathered by Veerle van den Broek (1992).

cheese-making; the whey and the rest of the milk was fed to the calves.

> "Making more cheese means more work. You may earn a bit more than when you feed the milk to the cows, but you never know if you can sell all that cheese. Apart from that, you can sell a calf that has been fattened with whey when it's only 13 months old instead of 15" (V. van den Broek, 1992:33; my translation).

Since the end of the fifties, they had had about the same number of cows, five or six; only from 1971 to 1984, when Ignacio worked in a factory and later as a woodcutter, the livestock was reduced to 4 cows. In that period the family needed the extra income to finance the education of their children. Ignacio still received a small unemployment benefit in 1989.

With respect to one of the most modern holdings in the village, Pilar observed: "Yes, they have a lot of money, a beautiful new house, and everything is well organized, but they also have an awful lot of work; they hardly have any free time." Their own evaluation of income, free time and labour intensity was quite different. They worked less efficiently, but in a more relaxed way. The work in the fields with their mule could take ages, but they did not seem to mind. A high income and a lot of luxury had never been important for them, they claimed. What they really found important was their independence as to production and commercialization. As to consumption, they preferably ate their own products, in part because it was cheaper, but mainly because "only then you know what you're eating." According to Pilar, her clients knew that she sold them exclusively natural products; for instance, she only added natural rennet to her cheese (obtained from the rennet stomach of lambs), unlike most cheese factories which she accused of using chemical rennet and adding potatoes and bacon to make their cheese heavier and tastier.

Pilar believed that the only possibility to maintain the viability of the small farms in the region was the creation of small-scale production cooperatives: several farms that put their lands together, bought their machinery collectively and sold their products as one enterprise. However, she had never dared to propose that idea to other farmers, because "they would think that I'm only a woman and that I rather fancy myself." Apart from that, she said, "farmers here will never work together successfully, because they distrust each other too much. We're too proud: we think that we can do things better alone than together. It's a pity, but that's the way we are: if some farmers come up with a good initiative, we're always afraid that others get more out of it than ourselves." They had little hope for their own farm. About ten years ago, they already knew that none of their children would become a full-time dairy farmer, so they had never invested in the expansion of the holding. Nevertheless, "as long as we're healthy, we'll keep on working on the farm. Maybe also a little because of the money, but most of all because this is our life. If I can't work anymore, I'd rather die" (ibid.: 35). The only son who still lived on the farm saw it as his responsibility towards his parents to maintain the farmstead, but he would probably only keep some beef cows. There were some vague plans to modernize the living-quarters, and he was expected to help paying off the mortgage. His decision to actually keep on living on the farm in the future depended on whether he could find a wife who would be

willing to live there as well.

Seven years later, and on the instigation of some of their children, they were renovating the cowshed and had also begun to rebuild the house. Their idea was to keep 5 cows of a beef-producing breed with their calves. Pilar had given up cheese-making: both she and her husband were getting older and could not work that hard any longer, she explained, and moreover "the market is worse now; there's a lot more competition than before; and it seems that we will all soon have to put labels on our cheese." Their son still lived with them on the farm; they did not expect him to get married soon.

6.2 Eguzkitza: wealth but no future

In 1988, the main activity of the family household of this farm in Aritzmendi was the hawking of some 200 litres of milk on the streets of two small towns at about 5 kilometres from the village. This was normally done by the owner, Martin (63), and his 20-year-old son Julen. Julen was the youngest son and the only one still living on the farm; three of his four older brothers lived in villas they had built on their parents' land.

From the 1950s until 1970, they used to sell all their milk to the dairy cooperative Gurelesa. They did not have more than 8 cows in those years. The reason they began to sell milk from door to door was, according to Martin, that "the cooperative only paid us 30 pesetas a litre, but with two hours of hawking on the streets you got 60 pesetas." By and by, the number of clients grew, which enabled them to expand their livestock. They eventually had 22 dairy cows. There was no competition among the dairy hawkers in town, as they all had their own route, which was respected by the others; moreover, hawkers in the same town would charge their clients more or less the same price per litre. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1980s it had become more difficult to sell, which was attributed to the anti-propaganda of doctors and to the fact that most urban residents now preferred to buy milk in the shops and supermarkets, together with the rest of the shopping. Julen: "At present, we charge our clients 78 pesetas a litre, but in the supermarket you can sometimes get milk at 65 pesetas, and of different types, like skimmed milk; whereas our milk contains a lot of fat..."

They had recently begun to reduce their livestock again: there were only 15 cows left in 1988. Martin was getting older and his wife had serious problems with her legs. But the most important reason for this reduction was that none of their sons would continue dairy production upon succession. For some time they had thought that their fourth son would take over the holding. He had studied agronomy and had helped his parents for a few years. But he left the farm and the village rather unexpectedly. Rumours in the village had it that he had met an urban girl who owned her own house and was not willing to live in the country. He now lived with his girlfriend in town and ran a café with a friend of his.

After that, Julen was expected to stay and live on the farm, but his parents knew he would also try to get an off-farm job. So they sold most of the cows, gave up hawking and passed their clients on to the only hawker left

in the village (of the five dairy hawkers that had lived there two years earlier). Julen did a one-year technical course and started working as a mechanic in a small factory. When I spoke to him again in 1996, he told me he had married a year before. After having lived in a flat in town for some months, Julen and his wife had decided to come and live on the farm with his parents. His wife had an urban background; nevertheless, "she didn't object to living on the farm, although she had her doubts about living with my parents. But she's quite happy now. The only condition was that she didn't have to do any farmwork." Julen's father received a pension. He still had three cows to keep the fields clean and to raise a few calves that would be slaughtered for home-consumption; but the most important reason for keeping these cows, said Julen, was that his father would have something to do. The pastures around the farm buildings were used to let the cows graze, but the dispersed meadows farther away were leased to other farmers. None of them, however, had used these fields to expand their livestock.

6.3 Progressive marginalization

In spite of their differences, the two farms described above would be regarded as traditional holdings by most people. However, it normally remained obscure what criteria scientists, policy makers or respondents in the field used to qualify a farming enterprise as traditional. These criteria were seldom made explicit and might vary from one person to the other. From my own observations, I deduce that a qualification as 'traditional farm' was generally attributed to holdings that to some extent corresponded to the following descriptions:

a) The holding was characterized by its small-scale production and low level of mechanization.

b) Expansion of the holding and economic efficiency were not believed to be the main objects of the farming household.

c) Household members were occupied with what were seen as obsolete production or commercialization activities.

d) Institutions were kept at bay.

e) Continuation of farm production was highly unlikely.

If one of these factors applied to a holding (say, small-scale production), this might not be regarded as enough to call it traditional; conversely, a traditional farm did not necessarily bear all these elements in it. Moreover, the attribution of these characteristics to a certain farm was not in all cases that straightforward. For example, if a farming couple alleged that they valued their independence and a relaxed way of working higher than earning a lot of money and being tied to all kinds of institutions, one could conclude, and quite correctly perhaps, that their holding scored high on factors b and d. But it might also be their way of rationalizing their incapacity to achieve a higher living standard or that they had been forced to leave the dairy cooperative because they could not meet new demands for capital contribution. Furthermore, a farming enterprise might score high on one factor but low on another. Policy makers and economists, especially, tend to regard personal instead of anonimous market relations as something that does not go with

'modern' farm management, and even more so if the products sold are not subject to all kinds of controls. In the Basque Country, activities like milk-hawking or selling home-made cheese without officially recognized quality labels were therefore often believed to be something of the past.

According to this standard, the Eguzkitza farm, like most other farms where direct milk sales were the main activity, could be considered a traditional holding. On the other hand, a quick calculation shows that the family's monthly (gross) income was far from 'backward'. In 1988, they sold more than 200 litres a day, twenty-six days a month (every day except Sundays), at 78 pesetas a litre; consequently, their income was over 400,000 pesetas a month, which was more than double the average income in Basque society.[26] (This is of course a gross income from which production costs should be deduced. But farmers who sell all their milk to the dairy factory need many more cows and/or a higher production per animal to reach a comparable income level as these hawkers, so their production costs can be assumed to be even higher.)

On the other hand, the example of the Beko-etxe farm shows that some farm households really did make a different evaluation of their remuneration-drudgery balance, at least in their discourse (see their comparison with modern farmers). They accepted a lower income in return for less drudgery and stress; yet, they considered farming just as much their way of life as most 'modern' farmers would do. In previous chapters I have argued that the minimum acceptable standard of living for the farm family and the corresponding (minimum) level of output are in part socially determined and in part prescribed by external institutions, more than they are dependent on the household's consumer/worker ratio. Conversely, I would suggest that on farms whose owners consciously withdraw from TATE relationships or keep aloof from urban norms on living standards the c/w ratio influences the family's labour input level more directly. On Beko-etxe, Ignacio had a few off-farm jobs during the years he and his wife had to spend extra money on the education of their children.

Most bachelor farmers also accepted lower than average income levels. They had no family to take care for, no children who had to go to school, so they lacked these motives to strive for more wealth. In general, their holdings were among the ones that villagers would mention as the most traditional farms.[27] It seems plausible that marriage and children draw the holding closer to a living standard which is the norm in the wider society, but the example of Beko-etxe demonstrates that this does not happen in all cases.

If farming activities on a particular holding were being 'phased out', either because there were no children to follow or because none of the children was

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[26] In 1995, the average income in Euskadi was esteemed to be around 200,000 pesetas per month. In 1988, this must have been much lower.

[27] In a small number of cases, bachelor farmers were able to develop their holdings into more 'modern' enterprises, as we saw in Chapter 5. From what I observed, I venture that this might happen when such a farm was run among two or three bachelors together who, apart from further investments, lacked any alternatives to spend their money on. We might call this 'modernization by default'.

willing to continue the farm as a productive unit, that alone was seldom enough for observers to label this holding as 'traditional' (after all, I mentioned in Chapter 5 that succession on many modern farming enterprises could not be taken for granted, either); but in combination with any of the other factors, it could reinforce their judgement.

I propose looking at so-called traditional farmers from another angle, namely as actors who witness their own marginalization; this process of progressive marginalization is taking place at different levels and these farmers have to find solutions to it if they want to assure the reproduction of their holding. In this approach the criteria cited above, although somewhat ambiguous, can still play a role, but are not determining for the definition anymore. By marginalization I understand the process through which certain (groups of) actors are pushed to the fringe of social networks relevant to them (which range from concrete entities, like cooperatives or political groups, to less tangible networks of clients or fellow villagers), where their room for manoeuvre as well as the interaction density between them and people in the centre of these circles are very much reduced. By describing the farmers of this chapter as 'actors who witness their own marginalization' I also want to bring out the importance of these farmers' own perception of their reducing room for manoeuvre. In the early 1980s, for example, the members of the Eguzkitza farm probably did not see themselves as marginalized. It was not until restrictions were imposed on purchasing non-pasteurized milk and their clients began to change their consumption habits that these hawkers began to become aware of the threatening marginalization. In the rest of this chapter I will focus primarily on dairy hawking as an example of a marginalizing economic activity, since for several decades this has been the main alternative for sales through the milk cooperatives.

In Chayanovian terms, the rationale of dairy hawking (or private trading in general), as opposed to delivering milk to the dairy factory, can be described as follows (see Figure 10). As the farm household is able to realize a higher price for each litre of milk, the demand satisfaction curve CD shifts downward to C_1D_1. But the household members' labour input needed to deliver the milk directly to the consumers is higher than when the milk is delivered to the factory. Consequently, the labour drudgery curve AB shifts upward to A_1B_1. The resulting equilibrium point Y is more favourable than the original equilibrium X. The total output may be lower than in case of delivery to the dairy factory, but since we have to do with a distinct market where higher prices are in force, the total family income may be just as high or higher than in the original situation. We can even go one step further. It sometimes happened that the family took up private trading because one of the children had not been able to find an off-farm job or had become unemployed. This form of job creation within the family did not lead to an increase of the total labour drudgery of the household; hence, the corresponding curve was not displaced and the equilibrium point Z was still more favourable than Y.

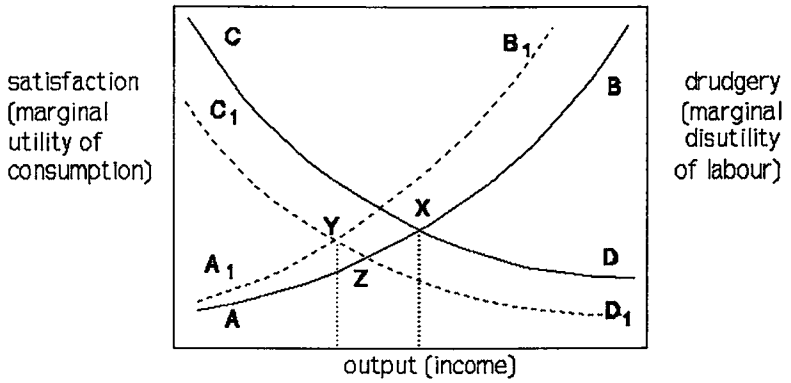

Figure 10. Marginal utility curves for private trading.

A good example of a process of marginalization within an organization can be found in the functioning of a small dairy cooperative in the Deba Garaia region in the early 1980s; part of this process has been discussed in van den Broek and van der Schoot (1983). When the cooperative LANA was created in 1960, its aim was to defend the interests of the many small farmers in the region. At first the cooperative grew rapidly, then a short period of stability set in, and since the early seventies membership numbers declined again. Parallel to the reduction of the number of farmers associated to the dairy factory, the amount of milk the remaining members delivered to the cooperative increased considerably. In the course of a decade, over 50% of the members had stopped delivering milk, while the total dairy production to be processed more than doubled due to the concentration of huge production volumes on a few big farming enterprises. In 1983, the cooperative had 75 dairy farming members; 20% of them delivered no less than 80% of the total volume that the factory received from all of its members (ibid.: 13-16). The management and many big farmers began to see the bulk of small milk producers as a drag on the cooperative's further evolution. According to the principle of 'one member, one vote', members who hardly delivered any milk had an equal say in the cooperative's policy as those farmers who provided the factory with the main part of its total volume. Moreover, transportation costs were considered to be higher than necessary as a proportionally insignificant amount of milk had to be collected on so many small farms. Some big farmers openly said that small farmers had to leave the cooperative. The managing director regretted that he had no power to decide who could and who could not be a cooperative member; otherwise, "for the sake of economic rationality" he would have reduced the cooperative's membership number to half. Apparently, farmers were also confronted with this opinion at cooperative meetings, for as one small farmer observed: "On one of these

ocassions, from what the manager told us I deduced that we were hindering the development of the cooperative"; shortly afterwards he resigned as a member. In the early 1980s, many farmers left when the cooperative demanded the installation of refrigerated milk tanks on all associated farms and when, a few years later, the remaining members were asked for extra capital contributions.[28] Some of those farmers started selling their milk directly to urban consumers. In spite of their low production volume, they could still obtain a satisfactory income as a result of higher selling prices than by delivering to the dairy factory. However, in the course of the following decade, dairy hawkers here as well as in other regions were confronted with other processes of marginalization.

According to a report written by order of the Basque Administration (IKEI, 1990), the Department of Public Health, aiming at the eradication of still existing cases of brucelosis among the population, saw it as one of its objects to ban the commercialization of non-pasteurized milk that did not meet sanitary requirements. In order to understand how many dairy farms would be affected by such a policy we have to make the following calculation. The IKEI report mentions that there were in the three provinces of the Basque Autonomous Community 898 farms with five or more milch cows that hawked their milk in milkchurns, or with corrections for missing data: some 1300. In Gipuzkoa alone, there were 443 farms; applying the same correction factor: 641. If we compare this with the 1989 figures on the total number of dairy farms of similar size in this province (2201, according to Table 4, Chapter 2), we have to conclude that by the end of the 1980s almost 30% of the dairy farm enterprises with five or more dairy cows sold their milk directly to the consumers.

As to the demand side, more than a quarter of the households in the province of Gipuzkoa used to consume preferably fresh milk by the time the IKEI report was written. In Basque villages with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants this even held good for 44% of the families. The consumers of raw milk seemed to be much more satisfied with the quality and price of their product than those who consumed pasteurized or sterilized milk. More than 85% of the people who regularly consumed fresh milk were convinced of its high quality; only 25% believed that this type of milk could produce diseases. These results suggest that consumers would not be very susceptible to warnings of doctors as to the possible pathogenic character of non-pasteurized milk. Nor would they understand a government policy that forbade its commercialization on that ground. The IKEI report advised the Administration to design a policy that would offer alternatives to part of the dairy hawkers (for instance, permitting and supporting the sales of fresh milk

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[28] Benvenuti, quoting Gouldner, speaks of 'reciprocity imbalance': "So, for instance, farmers' cooperatives which have originally come into being thanks to the support of comparatively greater numbers of *small* farmers do not reciprocate for the function once exerted in their respect by these farmers. In fact, through the implementation of a set of constantly adapted and sharpened selective institutional rules, they tend to favor in an increasingly explicit way larger farmers more than proportionally with respect to small farmers" (Benvenuti, 1975: 60, note 8; emphasis in the original).

in plastic bags): such a policy would satisfy both the hawkers who were able to make the change-over and those clients who wanted to continue consuming raw milk in the future, thus enabling the Administration to show its good will. Some years before this report came out, the Administration had already started to implement a policy which forbade hospitals, old people's homes and the like to consume unpacked and non-pasteurized milk (see Section 4.2). This prohibition meant that dairy hawkers who delivered to these bulk consumers suddenly lost an important part of their market and consequently saw their income from farming decline.

But there were also more and more individual consumers who stopped buying fresh milk. These people may not have been motivated by fear of contagious diseases, but the more so by worries about the high fat content of farm milk and the dangers of a diet of too much cholesterol. The consumption of skimmed milk increased rapidly. But the most important reason for the decreasing consumption of fresh milk was that former consumers switched to consumption of, predominantly, sterilized milk for reasons of convenience. Of many urban couples both husband and wife worked outside, which made it impossible for them to stay at home and wait for the dairy hawker.[29] Sterilized milk can be stored for a long time, even up to several months, which makes it possible to buy milk only once a week or once a fortnight, and this milk is preferably bought in the supermarket, together with all the other household products needed. The IKEI report mentioned that from 1988 to 1990 the number of consumers of fresh milk had gone down with one-third.

No doubt, an important factor which influenced this downward tendency was the changing composition that the hawker's circle of clients had often undergone over the years. Decades ago, many of these clients had themselves been of rural origin; they might even have been of the same village as the hawker. The hawker not only provided them with milk and other farm products, but also with the latest news and gossip about the village. That is, the network around this hawker was not only based on commercial but also on social ties. For these consumers this hawker was the umbilical cord with the village they had left. But the children of these clients grew up in town; their relationship with the hawker was no longer based on common background and nostalgia. And with the industrialization of the 1960s and 70s in the region, many small towns in Gipuzkoa had experienced the immigration of thousands of people from poorer areas in Spain; many of them also started buying fresh milk from the hawkers. Joseba once remarked that "nowadays almost all of our clients are immigrants." The younger clients and immigrants did not identify with the hawker's fate in the same way as the first clients had done: as the social element had virtually disappeared from the relationship of the hawker with most of his clients, the latter were sooner inclined to shift to other products if they considered that circumstances had changed.

In passing it may be noted that changing consumer habits not only affected the consumption of fresh milk, but also caused a decline in the sales

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[29] Indeed, according to the IKEI study, the typical buyers of raw milk were housewives older than 50, who had received little schooling and had no outside jobs (IKEI, 1990: 42,43).

of the regional dairy factories. For decades, these factories had almost exclusively produced pasteurized milk, for that was the type of milk that Basque consumers, that is those who did not consume raw milk, preferred. Pasteurized milk is of higher quality than sterilized milk, but can only be kept fresh for a few days. In the 1980s, many people still believed that the Basque dairy cooperatives would hardly be affected by competition from other countries of the European Community: as pasteurized milk was too perishable, imports would necessarily be restricted to sterilized milk - for which, it was thought, there was no market in the Basque Country. Hence, when consumers, mainly for reasons of convenience, began to buy more sterilized dairy products, pasteurized milk experienced a spectacular loss of market share, which forced the regional dairy factories to increment their production of sterilized milk. The logical consequence was that these factories had now become more liable to competition from outside. Thus, an apparently minor change in consumer habits had a great impact on the whole regional dairy market.

Farmers who experienced a reduction of their room for manoeuvre often saw themselves as victims of a conscious policy of agricultural institutions; a policy that was believed to be aimed at favouring big farmers more than smaller ones and at protecting organized marketing channels over private channels of commercialization that could not be that easily controlled by the Administration. As to the shift in consumption habits of individual consumers, most hawkers affirmed they could understand the motives behind it, but many also partly blamed it on the anti-propaganda against fresh milk of doctors and the Department of Public Health. The result of all this was that the 'natural' distrust of farmers towards institutional policies was only reinforced and in a few cases turned into outright animosity.

It is this distrust towards institutions that are no longer experienced as defending the (small) farmers' particular interests which breeds the proverbial cunning of these farmers: they begin to see it as legitimate to cheat on the Administration and even on the cooperative they once helped to create (this is what Scott has termed 'everyday forms of peasant resistance'; Scott, 1985, 1986). Farmers gave me some striking examples of the tricks they had played on institutions. One of them explained how he had injected a few worthless cows with turpentine during an anti-tuberculosis campaign so that they seemed to be infected and he could claim subsidies to buy imported Friesian cows. On another farm the owners told me that they had demanded compensation from the dairy cooperative when part of their holding had burned down - "just to see what would happen..." The cooperative sent them a few trucks of hay and paid the wood to rebuild the farm, "so we stripped the cooperative of quite a lot of money then." In case the farm's heir had an off-farm income, farmers might temporarily replace his name in the succession contract by that of another son who earned considerably less, thus becoming entitled to receiving higher subsidies or to pay lower interests on loans.

That discontent among farmers was principally translated into individual actions of protests was in part due to the earlier mentioned political sensitiveness of a topic like dairy hawking. More important, however, is that these farmers did not all experience the negative consequences of Administrative measurements and market developments at more or less the

same time; this does not favour collective actions of resistance (cf. Scott, 1986: 14).

Farmers who are facing progressive marginalization but who do not want to give up farming may either do their best to hold out as long as possible or try to shift to some more viable alternative. The following section will present examples of both strategies.

6.4 Resisting marginalization

Landa-berri

The family household of this farm in the Deba Garaia region consisted of 4 people in 1996: the aged farming couple (82 and 68) and their children Nekane (32) and Mikel (29); three older sons were married and lived elsewhere. Already sixty years ago, the farmer's mother had sold raw milk from door to door in a small town nearby and his wife Maite took over from her in 1954. In those days they still had the farm on lease, but ten years later they were able to buy the holding, thanks to Maite who managed to persuade enough relatives and friends to lend them the money they needed. For more than two decades, they did not have more than six cows, but in recent years they had been trying to expand. Around 1990, they had 6 milch cows and 6 beef cattle; six years later, their livestock had grown to 36 head: 9 dairy cows, 7 heifers, 7 beef cows and 13 calves. They wanted to keep some of the heifers in order to raise the total milk production even more.

Many years ago, Mikel and his mother sold the milk in town, but he did not like this work: he preferred working on the farm. That is why Nekane replaced him: in the morning, before she went to work (she had a job as a lawyer for an agricultural organization), she first helped her mother. They used to sell about 80 to 90 litres a day and charged their clients 100 pesetas a litre (in 1996), whereas the dairy cooperatives did not pay farmers more than 40 pesetas. Apart from having some 50 individual clients who consumed 1 to 3 litres a day, they also sold 10 to 15 litres to a well-known hotel; at weekends this might even be as much as 100 litres a day. Originally, Maite's sister and brother-in-law, who also had a dairy farm, used to sell milk to that hotel; when they started to reduce their production for lack of continuity (they had 10 children, but no one wanted to take over the holding), they passed most of their clients on to Maite's family (Figure 11).

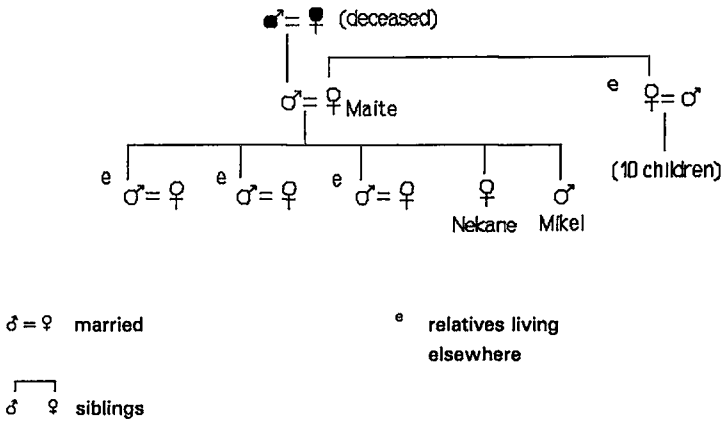

Figure 11. Genealogy of the Landa-berri family, including Maite's sister and brother-in-law.

Why were customers willing to pay 100 pesetas for a litre of raw milk while they could get sterilized milk in the supermarkets for only 70 pesetas? Nekane explained: "Because people who are familiar with it notice a big difference. But many people have never tried it. The Administration says it's getting more and more difficult to sell, but my experience is that if you made a bit of propaganda, it would even be possible to sell more." They had more clients now than in the past: "There are customers who buy milk for normal consumption in the shops or the supermarket, but who prefer fresh milk to make croquettes or desserts and things like that. However, we've also lost some clients: some have died, and others said they had to watch their weight or they had to cut down on cholesterol." The number of hawkers who sold their milk in the same town as them was gradually going down, but there were still five left in 1996.

In the 1970s, most of the farming enterprises around Landa-berri had been given up; some had been sold to urban people, a few had been totally abandoned. Nekane observed: "In part you can say that this has been our luck, for we could use their lands; if three farms had continued here, we would have had to make do with less. On the other hand, thanks to us there's still some agricultural activity in this valley." Mikel used to clean the fields of six of these neighbouring farms; he could keep the forage in return and only in one case did he have to pay lease. He had two tractors of his own. Together with two other farmers in the same area he had bought several agricultural machines in the last five years: a hay-baler, a silage baler, a hay tedder and a fertilizer sprinkler. With some of these machines he sometimes carried out contract-work for other farmers. His brothers, who all had their own jobs, often came round in the evenings and at weekends to help him in the fields or when construction work had to be done. The family had plans to build a new house behind the farmstead and use the old farm as a cowshed and for

storage.

As to the future, Maite was convinced that her youngest son would continue the farm: "Either with a girlfriend or as a bachelor, but Mikel will stay on the farm." In the long run, he would probably specialize more in cattle of a beef-producing breed, as that was less labour-demanding and responded better to his preferences. But for the time being, the family did not want to give up their hawking activities, being their most important source of income. Nekane and Mikel thought that one day they might be forced to start selling their milk in plastic bags, as a result of stricter sanitary regulations imposed by the Basque Department of Public Health. There was another reason why they would try to continue selling milk in town as long as possible, according to Nekane: "You can't tell my mother that she should stop hawking. Though she suffers from infirmities, it's her life: she loves selling and she's very good at it. But we realize that she won't be able to work this hard much longer."

Iturmendi

After his military service, Aitor began to work full-time on his parents' farm, a few kilometres outside the village of Aritzmendi. They had 16 cows then, but 9 had to be sacrificed during an anti-tuberculosis campaign. Ten years later, in 1988, their livestock consisted of 22 dairy cows and 7 calves that were kept on 8 hectares of pasture land. The farm work was done by Aitor, who was 30 years old by then, and his parents. Aitor's wife did not have a rural background; she worked as a nurse in a nearby old people's home and never did any agricultural tasks. Aitor had become a member of the association Lurgintza in 1985; he was also active as the regional representative of the farmers' union EHNE.

Just as his grandmother and his parents had done in previous decades, Aitor hawked the milk of their cows in town. But he thought it might be wiser to start selling to Gurelesa, as consumption of raw milk was gradually declining. In 1980 he had still sold about 180 litres a day on the streets, but in 1988 this had declined to 140 litres. His main problem was the fluctuation in sales: in summer, when many of his clients went away on holiday and those who stayed consumed less, he could often not sell more than half of what he used to sell in winter. In 1990, when he finally gave up hawking, he was not able to sell more than 110 to 120 litres.

Until then, Aitor had delivered the milk that could not be sold in town to a dairy factory from a neighbouring province, because "in case of irregular delivery, they pay more than Gurelesa". But when he gave up hawking, he decided to sell all his milk to Gurelesa, not only because its milkprice was higher in case of regular deliveries, but mainly because he considered that Gurelesa's economic stability was being guaranteed by other institutions: "They're being supported by the Department of Agriculture and the banks; there are lots of people working there; and most dairy farmers depend on them. They won't let such an enterprise go bankrupt that easily." He had to pay an entrance fee of half a million pesetas to become a cooperative member (125,000 pesetas being paid at once while the remaining part was deduced in small sums from the litre price for the milk delivered); and being a member he

was no longer allowed to sell his milk otherwise than through the cooperative.

Since Aitor had become a cooperative member he had leased 12 hectares of land, which meant that his total surface of meadows and pastures had more than doubled. As a dairy hawker he had earned a lot more per litre of milk than now that he delivered to Gurelesa; in order to compensate for this loss of income he had to increase his total milk production. In 1988, his dairy cows produced an average of 4,100 litres per cow per year, still 1,000 litres short of the Lurgintza norm. But eight years later his production per cow had risen to more than 5,600 litres per year and equaled the norm on the readjusted Lurgintza scale. He had also bought three more cows, but the old cowshed did not allow for any further expansion, so the only solution was to build a new one. Lurgintza had calculated that, in order to pay off the building costs and obtain an average income out of farming, Aitor would have to expand his livestock to 48 head. His short-term plans for the future were therefore to have the new shed built before the end of the year and then gradually buy the more than 20 milch cows needed that would make this investment profitable. "That's the choice you have: you either increase the livestock to an acceptable number or you have to close the tent and quit."

He realized it would be extremely difficult to face the debts. Ten years earlier, when he had married, he had had a new house built next to the farmstead where he went to live with his wife; they still had not finished paying off that mortgage either. "At this moment, I wouldn't have an income with the number of cows I have. It's as clear as that. If my wife didn't have her own job, I wouldn't be able to maintain the cows; I would have to find work elsewhere..."

Although both his parents, in spite of their age (Aitor's father had become 66 in 1996), still worked as hard as possible, their labour input was noticeably lower than several years before. Being aware that their help would soon be of little avail to their son, they had a particularly gloomy outlook on the holding's future. Aitor: "When I was 20 they encouraged me to continue on the farm, but now they say that it might have been better if I had found a job in industry."

Marginalized farmers' resistance capacity

Dairy hawking provided these holdings with an extra margin that the farmers who sold their milk through the cooperative lacked - a margin that hawkers believed enabled them to resist adverse market conditions better than their non-hawking colleagues. Generally, hawkers were also convinced that in case of massive dairy imports from other European countries they would be able to hold out longer than the regional dairy industries. As one of the hawkers I interviewed observed: "If imported milk is sold at 50 pesetas a litre, we can't keep on selling our milk at 70 pesetas, of course. But if necessary, we'd sell at 40 pesetas a litre. We wouldn't gain anything then, but foreign companies would not be able to hold out very long either. We can use this whole margin that the cooperatives cream off of their members." This observation implicitly recognizes that dairy hawking household families would temporarily have to

go into self-exploitation in order to survive. The hours that household members spent on selling the milk to their clients would not be remunerated. On the other hand, a regional dairy cooperative facing foreign competition would also have to reduce its consumer prices if it did not want to lose part of its market and the consequences of such a policy would sooner or later be passed on to its members.

Hawkers were aware that their survival capacity depended furthermore in no small measure on the faith of their clients in the quality of fresh milk. We saw before that buyers of fresh milk generally seemed to be more convinced of the quality of the milk they consumed than those who used to buy factory milk. In interviews, hawkers would frequently contend that their clients' faith was completely justified. Most of them were absolutely convinced that their milk was far superior to the milk that passed the dairy factories, and some would go so far as to criticize the "industrial manipulation" of the milk that reached the consumer through the cooperatives and the shops.

> "What you buy in the shops isn't real milk. The factories pay the farmer 40 pesetas for a litre of milk, then they add goodness-knows-what-products to it and they sell it at 80 or 90 pesetas."
>
> "How is it possible that the cooperatives are able to bring four or five different qualities of milk on the market, all with different prices? This obviously depends on the amount of water they mix the milk with..."[30]

One or two hawkers, however, realized that their clients' loyalty might not be entirely based on the quality of the milk offered to them, but could equally be motivated by the fact that many 'lifelong' clients found it difficult to tell the farmer frankly that they would rather not have his milk any longer.

Hawkers did not only establish close relationships with their clients, they were also generally involved in loose networks with other hawkers who sold in the same town. If one of them incidentally needed an extra 50 litres of milk, for example, he or she could easily obtain it for a friendly price from any of the others. They also came together sometimes to discuss the prices that they would charge their clients: they realized that competition would only undermine the stability of their client networks. The number of consumers of fresh milk was gradually going down anyway, but at the same time more and more dairy farmers gave up hawking, as well. The remaining hawkers, being part of the hawker network, could take over the clients of the ones who had disappeared, which gave them new opportunities to hold out somewhat longer. Some even managed to increase their production volume. Nevertheless, all must have realized that they were, so to speak, exhausting their period of grace.

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30) Conversely, the manager of the dairy factory Gurelesa, citing the results of analyses carried out in two Gipuzkoan municipalities in the late 1980s, claimed that it was the quality of the milk sold by hawkers that often left much to be desired; the analyses had demonstrated that in several cases their fresh milk had been watered down.

The following table gives an idea of the reduction of the amount of milk that was sold through hawking in the years from 1988 to 1994. In 1988 almost a third of all milk produced in Gipuzkoa was still sold directly to the consumers, while six years later this was only little more than a tenth.

Table 10. Commercialization of milk in Gipuzkoa, 1988-1994. Sources: Gobierno Vasco, 1989, 1995.

	through hawking	to dairy factories	total production
1988			
in 1000 l.	41,786	70,561	134,661
in %	31.0%	52.4%	...
1993			
in 1000 l.	16,346	93,671	118,540
in %	13.8%	79.0%	...
1994			
in 1000 l.	12,858	92,709	113,305
in %	11.4%	81.8%	...
⌂ 1988-1993	-60.9%	+32.8%	-12.0%
⌂ 1993-1994	-21.3%	-1.0%	-4.4%
⌂ 1988-1994	-69.2%	+31.4%	-15.9%

The lower part of the table is perhaps the most revealing. Whereas the amount of milk delivered to the dairy factories increased with more than 30% in the course of six years (in spite of falling back slightly from 1993 to 1994), the total quantity of milk sold by hawkers declined with over two-thirds in the same period; in only one year, from 1993 to 1994, hawkers in Gipuzkoa lost more than 20% of their market.

If a farm family is forced to give up their current agricultural activities, the future of the farm as a full-time enterprise depends on the household's capacity to change over to other, more profitable, activities. A holding can be considered truly and permanently marginalized if it lacks the capacity to shift to more viable activities or if this capacity is ignored. Such capacity can not be expected of an aged farming couple without any successors and close to retirement; they normally prefer to hold out while continuing their present activities. Major changes are only brought about when there is a successor willing to continue the holding as a productive enterprise. The holding's landed property, its capital assets and the labour power present are only partly of influence here; the way in which the potential successor defines his task as the future owner of the farm determines how these production factors will actually be used.

6.5 Changing norms on succession

Traditionally, succession on Basque farms took place according to the so-called *mayorazgo* principle. The oldest son was held to be the single heir, and he was expected to continue his parents' holding, unless he was impeded by a physical or mental handicap (see Gibbon and Curtin, 1978, for a similar pattern of succession in Ireland). Incidentally, parents deviated from this norm if one of the other sons was clearly more capable of running the farming enterprise than his oldest brother. All through his teenage years, the successor was being prepared for his future tasks; the other children knew they would have to leave the family holding upon marriage; if they did not marry and stayed on the farm they would become entirely subject to the successor. When the development of regional industries caused a drain on rural labour power, the mayorazgo principle came under pressure. One of the most sailient consequences for succession was that many farms were continued by precisely those sons who were not fit to do anything else (see also Greenwood, 1976: 124, 149), that is, the ones who had remained on the farm while their smarter brothers tried to find a job in industry.[31] In later years, following changes in the law on succession (ibid.: 148), it became common for successors to give their brothers and sisters who left the holding their own share of the farm's value. Since the 1980s, a fourth form of succession has become more important. It could be observed that on more and more holdings it was no longer the oldest or the most capable son or the one who had failed to get a factory job who took over the parents' farm, but the son, or sometimes also the daughter, who was the last one among the children to marry. In these cases, the successors had not been consciously preparing themselves for their future task, trying to increase their formal knowledge on agriculture and to gain relevant experience in order to be able to run a farming enterprise successfully, but had simply waited too long to get married and were now faced with the double perspective of having to maintain the farmstead and taking care of their parents until their death. Julen of the Eguzkitza farm (Section 6.2) voiced this relationship between succession and commitment as follows: "I will take over the holding, but my brothers will also get their part out of it. We have already stipulated the amounts of money I'll have to pay them. However, the farm won't be divided in equal parts: I will get considerably more. But on the other hand, I'll have the responsability of looking after my parents."

It should be mentioned here that although these different forms of succession emerged one after the other, new forms did not displace former ones, but different forms existed side by side in the same region. Nevertheless, a certain tendency could be noted. The mayorazgo principle, in spite of still being cultivated as the normative ideal by many farmers, had in practice almost become a dead letter. The phenomenon of succession by the 'least qualified' son seems to have been primarily confined to the generation of the massive rural outflux. As to the remaining forms of succession I argue

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[31] This was an appreciation not only of scientists and extension agents, but also of farmers in the region.

that we can detect a twofold development in recent years: succession by the most capable son is predominantly taking place on full-time, modernizing farming enterprises that either aim to expand or to achieve a higher added value per product through quality production; while on farms that are supposed to become further marginalized, succession, though seemingly following more arbitrary standards (as not one child in particular is expected to succeed), frequently responds to the rule that the last child to marry will take over. Causality is not always clear in these cases; it is more likely that the succession pattern and the farm's status and foreseeable development determine each other mutually. That is, on a modern, expanding farm one of the sons would normally be expected to qualify in order to take over, but the example of the Iturmendi farm (Section 6.4) shows that it is equally possible that a motivated and capable successor is able to convert a marginalizing holding into a more prosperous one. On the other hand, it often occurs that none of the children actually wants to continue the farming enterprise so that marginalization becomes inevitable, but it also happens that all children 'wisely' try to leave an already marginalized holding as soon as possible.

I would contend that vocation plays a more determining role in the explanation of differential development patterns of farms than is generally recognized in socio-economic analyses.[32] Although it is not a concept that can be easily operationalized, vocation has, in my view, to do with the importance the farm's owner or successor attributes to the maintenance of the family holding and with his being prepared to make sacrifices to achieve this aim. Or in other words, a successor's vocation is somehow reflected in his lifestyle and in the extent in which he derives his identity from being the owner of farm X. This may suggest that the presence or absence of vocation can only be revealed after frequent interview sessions and longitudinal observation of someone's attitude, but in practice it frequently turns out to be less complicated. It is often quite obvious if farm family members, who could also have chosen more easily attainable alternatives, have taken considerable pains to maintain their holding. We saw this for example on the farm Iturmendi, where Aitor had decided to build a new cowshed and almost double his livestock, knowing that this would increase his indebtedness, and with his parents telling him that he should have taken an off-farm job. The situation on the Landa-berri farm was not very different. The youngest son, Mikel, had taken over his parents' dairy farm, but with the idea to specialize in beef cattle in the long run. His sister Nekane had her own job as a lawyer and representative of an agricultural organization, but every morning she used to help her mother selling their farm products in town before she went to work; and her mother, too, in spite of her age and her ailments, still participated as much as possible in the hawking activities and all other work that had to be done. They continued dairy hawking and even took over clients of other hawkers who gave up in an effort to safeguard their high income as long as possible, thereby trying to provide the farm with a firmer financial basis for

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[32] The implication of this argument is not, of course, that an analysis of the structural factors that may influence succession on farm holdings would be less meaningful; on the contrary, these structural factors may determine a potential successor's vocation to a large extent.

the future. It is also interesting to note that both Nekane (of Landa-berri) and Aitor (of Iturmendi) were very active members of the farmers' union EHNE. Aitor had been the union's regional representative for several years, whereas Nekane had taken part in many national and international congresses on behalf of EHNE. It seemed as though they had translated the EHNE policy of defending marginal farms into some sort of a personal commitment.

6.6 A 'marginalized' future

The strategy of modern, big farmers is to invest and expand; the consequence of the treadmill (cf. Section 5.5) is that for them progress has become the condition for survival. The characteristic feature of probably the majority of the owners of marginal farms, at least of marginal full-time holdings, is that they lack the means or the motivation to invest. On the other hand, the family members may produce little, but they normally consume even less. They spend very little money on luxury goods and hardly ever go out. This is the reason why so many small-scale, marginalized farms have survived to these days. As an elderly farmer's wife said, speaking about the farmers of her generation: "They don't go out, so they don't spend any money. On Mondays they go to the (livestock) fair in town - and that's it. It's only recently that they organize a dinner party now and then; and the old people sometimes make a trip that is subsidized by the Town Hall." But the times have changed. The urban consumption culture has become an ever more powerful point of reference for rural youth; it is therefore highly unlikely that future successors will accept a situation of survival through economizing on consumer goods.

As to the labour capacity on marginal farms that are taken over by the last married child we can be short. In most cases, though not in all, the last son or daughter to marry is also among the youngest children of the farming couple. So obviously the age gap between the owners and the successor is wider than if one of the older children had succeeded. If, for example, in a family of three children the first two marry at the age of 30 and leave the farm, the family labour evolution curve, indicating the total family labour input on which the eventual successor (i.e. the youngest child in this case) can count, will be situated under the corresponding M-30 curve in Figure 9 (see Section 5.8). This fact may be an extra motive for the successor to abandon the idea of continuing the farm as a full-time enterprise, if he or she had not already done so a long time ago.

Marginalized farms will no longer be as massively abandoned as they were in the not so remote past. I pointed out in Chapter 3 that it had recently become quite in vogue for people in town to have a house in the countryside where to spend the weekends and the holidays. And sometimes farms that were located not too far from the urban centres were bought and renovated by townspeople for permanent occupation. This contributed to the revaluation of farm ownership in the eyes of the rural population. Moreover, there are definite advantages to living on the farm over migrating to town, as Julen of the Eguzkitza farm explained: "I can keep on living where I've lived all my life; I know the people here; and I don't have to spend a fortune on buying a house in town."

The successor on a marginalized farm is likely to occupy his or her inherited property first and foremost as a rural place of residence; this successor is normally one of the children (assigned by chance rather than by the parents), or in the absence of children, a nephew, a niece or another close relative. The new owners will in all probability not continue such a holding, which they regard as unprofitable, as a full-time enterprise.

6.7 Conclusions

The marginalizing milk-producing farms, where the household members find it increasingly difficult to assure their reproduction as agricultural enterprises, are suffering the negative consequences of the tendency to concentration which is taking place in the Basque dairy sector. Their marginalization can only partly be attributed to Euskadi's incorporation into the European market, but is principally due to developments within the region itself. As for dairy hawkers, the loss of market share they experienced was the result of, on the one hand, the restrictions imposed by the Basque Administration on the purchase of their milk and, on the other, the changing consumption habits of their clients.

Nevertheless, for private traders of farm products the rationale of their strategy had long been evident. By selling their milk (or cheese) directly to the consumers, with whom they often established long-term economic and social relationships, these farmers received a much higher price per litre than what they would be paid by the factory. Hawking enabled many small and medium-sized farmers to earn a reasonable income with fewer cows (and thus with lower forage and mash costs and spending less time on care of their cattle) than those farmers who sold their whole milk production to the dairy cooperative. During the first years of the factory's existence, they found that they were really better off than most cooperative members, as the latter had to conform to all kinds of institutional requirements. Yet, in later years most hawkers also became members of the dairy factory, because this gave them the opportunity to get rid of that part of the milk production they could not sell on the streets. They incorporated, so to speak, the dairy factory into their hawking strategy - but the consequence was that their farm management became more subject to external prescription (in the 1980s, for example, all members of Gurelesa were told to install a refrigerated milk tank).

A dairy farmer can only decide to sell the greater part of his production directly to the consumers if a number of conditions have been fulfilled. First, there has to be enough labour power on the farm to combine the diversity of on-farm tasks with personally marketing milk or cheese on the streets of a nearby town. Second, mobility is essential; the farm family has to have at least one car and the hawker needs to have a driving license. (This is less important if the products are sold at one place, like the urban market: if one only has to travel to town, one can make use of public transport.) Third, one of the household members must be willing to hawk and he or she should be good at it. It should be stressed that all these conditions have to be fulfilled simultaneously: there are numerous examples of women who had been more than willing to hawk but who did not have a driving license, while their

husbands did have a license but felt they "were no good at hawking".

The hawker's average client was a middle-aged housewife with little schooling, who distrusted industry-made foodstuffs which might contain chemicals and who valued the regular social contacts with the farmer who provided her with milk, sometimes some vegetables or eggs, and often the latest local news. Hawkers made sure they attuned their activities as much as possible to their clients' wishes, doing what was necessary to live up to their confidence - and fostering their clients' distrust of factory milk. Again, we see how projects of different actors interlock. And it also becomes clear that interlocking projects not only involve mutual *economic* interests, but may also satisfy social or psychological needs (we will see this aspect return in the following chapter).

But the hawker-client network is subject to socio-economic and cultural influences that gradually cause it to fall apart. Among young married couples it is common that both partners have a job, which means there is no one at home to wait for the hawker. The increasing popularity of low-cholesterol products, moreover, leads to a change in consumer habits. Especially younger clients and immigrants feel less committed to the hawker's calling and find it therefore less problematic to break the relationship unilaterally and thus 'dissociate' themselves from the hawker's network.

The hawkers' resistance to further marginalization may take on different forms. They may eat into their capital, lower their consumption level and try to hold out until their retirement. They may manage to take over the clients of other hawkers who have stopped, which hopefully puts off for a few years the moment they themselves are forced to give up. Or they can try to switch over to a more viable alternative.

Perhaps only some older farmers accept survival through economizing on consumption as an acceptable option - after all, they may have been forced to do so several times in their lives. But this certainly does not hold good for their successors, whose point of reference is rather the consumption pattern and lifestyle of urban contemporaries.

I have pointed out that a kind of dual succession pattern has come into being in the Gipuzkoan countryside. I also indicated that on a farm which is taken over by the last child to marry (generally one of the younger children) the age gap between the senior farmer and the successor is greater than on a farm that is continued by one of the oldest siblings. Referring to Figure 9 in Chapter 5, I therefore suggest that the mobilization of enough family labour upon succession is even more problematic in the former than in the latter case. As I mentioned in Section 5.8, though, when I calculated the total family labour capacity during the successor's lifespan, I only took into account the senior and succeeding couples while ignoring the presence of any other family members. We shall now try to complete our insight. Let us therefore reconsider the differences in succession patterns between the Etxeberri and the Eguzkitza farms (Sections 5.1 and 6.2, respectively). When Joseba, the oldest son on Etxeberri, was about to take over the parental farm, there were still three younger brothers living on the holding; they all had their own jobs, but as long as they had not married and gone to live elsewhere, they were expected to help in the byre or on the fields when necessary. On Eguzkitza, the youngest son would succeed; his four older brothers had all married and

left the farm. Three of them lived nearby and often lent a hand, but only because they felt like it. Their first responsibilities were to their own families now. There did not exist the same authority relation between the successor and his brothers as on the Etxeberri farm. Thus, we can conclude that for a farm enterprise where the successor is an only child or where his siblings have left the holding, the validity of the family labour evolution curves in Figure 9 (Section 5.8) goes unchallenged. Conversely, if at the moment of succession there are still a few younger siblings living in, the decrease of the corresponding curve will be mitigated or postponed several years.

When the senior farmers realize that they have failed in their attempt to enrol one of the children in their project of full-time succession, they normally refrain from high-cost investments. Many a farm enterprise that is becoming more and more marginalized will be taken over by the son or daughter who marries last and the holding will be continued on a part-time basis. Only if the successor is highly motivated to continue the farm as a full-time enterprise, if he has spent years preparing himself for this task and is therefore seen by both his parents and his siblings as the most suitable candidate for succession, he will look for ways to realize his objective. Might he decide to deliver his entire production to the dairy factory henceforth, he would then have to increase his production considerably in order to maintain a comparable income level. It may be hypothesized that this will force him to an, initially, accelerated participation on the treadmill of investment and expansion. If the ex-hawker experiences the effects of the family labour evolution curve at the moment of succeeding to the parental holding, it will hit him even harder than others.

A problem for full-time successors is that their wives often have their own (urban) jobs which they are seldom inclined to give up after marriage in order to help their husbands on the farm. On the enterprises of hawkers, where farm management has always hinged much on the division of labour between husbands and wives as to animal care and distribution of the product, this may make existing labour constraints even more acute. Conversely, on holdings where all the milk is sold to the dairy factory it may be less problematic; the literature suggests that farmers' wives do not enter the cowshed or the fields very often: female tasks are usually rather relegated to the domestic sphere here (cf. de Rooij, 1994: 73). In the case of the ex-hawker who has started to produce for the dairy industry, and therefore has to make extra investments, the off-farm income of his wife may make things easier. On the other hand, however, he loses his right to apply for cheap credit if his wife's income turns out to be higher than what can be earned by the farm enterprise.

The hawker who feels forced to change may also try to continue his hawking activities in another, more modern way, namely by selling his milk in plastic bags, officially recognized by the regional Administration. In the following chapter I shall deal with the activities of a group of hawkers who promoted their fresh milk as a quality product and who managed to create a niche for it on the Basque dairy market.

Chapter 7

PRODUCTION OF 'QUALITY': THE EPHEMERALITY OF THE NICHE

Most farmers would contend that their products meet the quality criteria that prevail in that part of the market in which they move themselves. This holds good for the hawkers of fresh milk (or for the producers of cheese), who claim to offer their clients an entirely natural product, free from any chemical adulteration. And it is equally valid for those who deliver all their milk to the dairy; after all, the factory only accepts their milk if it conforms to strictly defined requirements, like being free from any pathogenic germs, having a certain fat percentage, and so on.

However, the farmers belonging to the category we will deal with in this chapter distinguish themselves by having made the quality of their products the pivot on which their production and marketing strategies hinge. A quality concept may either be based on objective or subjective elements, or on a mix of both. We shall see that those farmers who wish to be called quality producers usually strive to 'objectify' the quality of their merchandise by means of officially recognized distinctives (labels, etc.).

7.1 Jauregi: the complex organization of family labour

Pedro and his twin brother are the oldest of the eight siblings. They were only 16 when their father died in 1970. The farm where they lived was run by their grandfather, though; their father had worked in transport. The grandfather kept 4 or 5 cows of which the milk was sold to the dairy cooperative; the production of cider provided an extra income. In 1976, five brothers decided to continue on the farm; they used to combine their agrarian activities with their study or an off-farm job. They started with 10 cows but that number gradually increased, especially when, two years later, a dairy hawker who gave up his farming activities offered them to take over his round. They then began to sell most of their milk directly in town, mainly to individual consumers but also in a few shops; what could not be sold in one day was delivered to the dairy factory. Soon they were also able to create new circles of clients in surrounding villages.

Despite their successful start, these five young men were not able to generate enough incomes for everyone, so one after the other they had to take up other activities. The oldest son, Pedro, took over and developed the cider branch of their holding by fitting part of the farmstead up as a small restaurant. Cider farm restaurants, which had once been quite popular among farmers in several regions of the Basque Country, had virtually disappeared for many decades; since the end of the seventies, some had slowly reappeared and they had immediately regained their popularity, but now among an important part of the urban population as well. The Jauregi farm was among the first agricultural enterprises to make the most of this new trend. Cider

processing and the sales of bottled cider were done by Pedro himself, but during the busy 'cider season', the months of January and February, when his restaurant was full almost every evening, his brothers and sisters always assisted him.

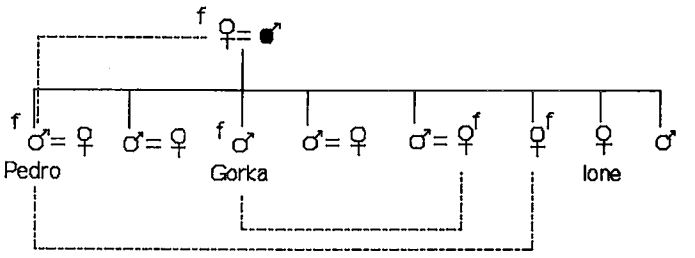

Figure 12. Genealogy of the Jauregi family.

After Pedro's twin brother had finished his military service, he had begun to work for an industrial company and only helped on the farm in the weekends. The third one, Gorka, had initially followed his example, but after five years he decided to return, and since then he has worked exclusively on the holding. For a couple of years, he worked together with his fourth and fifth brother, but the latter left when he was offered a job on an institute for agricultural training. The following two children are daughters. The first one had worked in a shop in town, but since 1991 she has helped her mother in the kitchen of her brother's restaurant. The other daughter, Ione, was employed by a professional association of farmers, for which she carried out milk quality checks on hundreds of holdings in the region. Their youngest brother had set up his own business: he had bought agricultural machinery, employed two men, and carried out contract-work for the Provincial Council and for farmers in the area.

In 1985, a small group of hawkers in the neighbouring province of Bizkaia had begun to sell their milk in plastic one-litre bags. A formal association, called *Baserriko Esnea* (Basque for 'farm milk'), was created to promote their initiative; its object was to persuade the Basque Administration to legalize this way of marketing fresh milk. The initiators also contacted hawkers in Gipuzkoa who might be interested. Gorka and his brother were among the first to join Baserriko Esnea; Ione was asked to become the association's spokeswoman in the province. Becoming a member implied two things: paying an entry fee of 50,000 pesetas and buying a packing machine. Somewhat later, they also bought a refrigerator, which facilitated their work a great deal. It meant that they did no longer have to pack the milk immediately before

they went to sell it, but could pack at any moment of the day when they had some free time; the bags were stored in the refrigerator until the following morning. Hawking was done between 7.30 and 9.30 a.m.

At first, they sold their bags of milk to the same individual consumers and shops they had also delivered their unpacked milk to, but soon afterwards, in an attempt to rationalize their hawking activities, they reduced their sales from door-to-door; individual clients were told that from then on they could find the milk bags of the Jauregi farm in the shops in the neighbourhood. This was a big mistake, as Ione explained: "We lost a considerable part of our clientele, and we've not been able to get these clients back. In fact, we showed them the way to the shops where they could get any milk they wanted. Yet, most of the clients we continued to visit at their homes still buy our milk. This is something that all members of Baserriko Esnea have noted: if you sell them your milk personally, at the door, consumers find it a lot more difficult to tell you they don't want your milk anymore." These clients feel 'forced to buy', as she called it.

When Gorka and his brother began selling through Baserriko Esnea, Gurelesa let them know that the cooperative would not accept their surplus production any longer, so henceforth they had to sell their surplus to another dairy factory in a neighbouring province. Moreover, Baserriko Esnea members were soon confronted with the consequences of the same Government measure that had also deprived 'traditional' hawkers of their most important clients: the prohibition on the purchase of non-pasteurized milk by certain institutions.

In 1993, and after years of struggle with the regional Administration, several farmers belonging to Baserriko Esnea finally qualified for a so-called Health Certificate; this was reserved to those dairy hawkers who fulfilled certain conditions that would reduce the risk of contamination of milk by viruses and bacteria to a minimum. Its main implication was that hawkers in possession of such a Certificate were allowed to sell their fresh milk to shops and institutions again. In view of this, the cooperative Gurelesa, which had become part of the unified regional dairy factory Iparlat, changed its policy, too: Baserriko Esnea members could deliver their surplus production to the factory. The Jauregi farm sold 400 litres to Iparlat and 200 odd litres on the streets in 1996; around 1990, they had still been able to sell 300 litres in town, while another 300 litres were sold to the factory.

In December 1995, Gorka's brother also left the farm; he had been contracted by one of the Associations of Mountain Farming (see Section 3.3) for clearing mountain roads and collecting dead cattle. Since then, Gorka has had to run the farm on his own. But even worse was that at about the same time he had to undergo two operations which would practically keep him out of the cowshed for at least six months. This forced him to take on a young man to feed and tend the cows. Hawking was done by the wife of Gorka's fifth brother; she had just been offered a job, but had decided to refuse it in order to help her brother-in-law out. Gorka himself seemed to be quite motivated to continue, although he recognized that hereafter he would probably have to contract someone permanently, as the work was more than he could tackle alone.

Only Gorka and his two sisters still lived on the farm, together with their

mother. The others had married and lived elsewhere. Most of the eight brothers and sisters were engaged in work related to agriculture; but even though the activities of some of them were carried out on the farm where they were all born, these were seen as economically independent jobs. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from helping each other when help was needed; most of the time this was done without being paid for, but recently they had established financial remuneration in two concrete cases: one, for helping their oldest brother in the restaurant during the 'cider season', and two, when Gorka asked his youngest brother, the contract-worker, to help him with his machines.

7.2 Creating a niche

We mentioned earlier (Section 5.4) that processes of incorporation and institutionalization generally lead to the externalization of tasks that were thus far carried out on farming enterprises; and also farm labour itself becomes subject to external prescription. As a consequence, the farmer's craftsmanship, his specific ability to 'govern' the production and reproduction processes on the farm, is to a large extent rendered useless. The family farm loses its relative autonomy, being reduced to no more than just another link in the highly industrialized food production chains (van der Ploeg and Ettema, 1990).[33] This has important consequences, both for the quality of the product that reaches the consumer and for the remuneration of the farmer. Quality, according to van der Ploeg and Ettema, becomes something that, through all kinds of technological interventions and/or chemical additives, is added to the product at the end of the production process; or it is derived from the green image that more and more foodstuffs are provided with by the producer or in the shops, which thereby attempt to meet the preferences of a growing number of consumers for natural and healthier products. The farm household loses income as part of its potential margin is creamed off by intermediate processing and marketing institutions (in the dairy farming sector, for example, the milk factories and retailers).

According to Muller, it is often precisely in disadvantaged areas that alternatives arise for traditional ways of production and commercialization; what these alternatives tend to have in common is that farmers manage to overcome structural drawbacks by realizing a higher remuneration for their labour (Muller, 1987: 460). Crucial is that farmers regain or consolidate their grip on the commercialization of their products; which means that they are able to control all stages their products are going through, from the byre or the land to the moment they are delivered to the consumer. Other initiatives (see van der Ploeg and Ettema, 1990) concern the promotion of products that have maintained their own, 'intrinsic' quality, i.e. the quality which through the farmer's knowledge and craftsmanship is added during the production process (instead of being artificially attached to them at the end). Speaking

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[33] This line of argument runs in no small measure parallel to Braverman's analysis of the degradation of industrial labour (Braverman, 1974).

about Europe, we are dealing with products whose production is generally restricted to specific regions; the locally generated knowledge about methods of production, processing and marketing is decisive. These products, and the way they were produced and sold, usually already existed in these regions, but disappeared or were marginalized when the industrialized food production chains became dominant. Many of these products are now being 'rediscovered' and, ironically enough, the quality producers whose methods of production and commercialization were long seen as outdated, are now referred to as 'rural entrepreneurs' (Muller, 1987), and 'pioneers' of innovating farming processes (cf. van Broekhuizen and Renting, 1994).

We saw that in the Basque Country 'traditional' hawkers of fresh milk, by selling their milk directly to their clients instead of to a dairy factory, had long managed to secure an acceptable income (and in some cases, much more than that) with a relatively small number of cows. In recent years, and through a variety of circumstances (see Chapter 6), they were faced with a declining number of clients which motivated many of them to give up hawking or even get out of farming altogether. In 1985, the association Baserriko Esnea was created. The object of this association, which had about 40 members in Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia by the end of the decade, was twofold: recovering the market for fresh milk and warding off the threat of a definitive ban on hawking. Farmers could only become members if they had participated in the latest Health Campaign (the anti-tuberculosis/brucelosis campaign among cattle) and accepted regular quality tests of their milk, which would be carried out by a government sponsored cattle breeding association; furthermore, milk had to be sold in plastic bags, so farmers needed a packing machine. A few years later, the possession of a cold-storage room became compulsory, and associated hawkers were also advised to distribute the plastic bags in refrigerator vans. The whole idea behind all this was that the non-pasteurized milk of Baserriko Esnea members would reach the consumers in optimal conditions, free from pathogenic germs. This way, the association tried to induce the Basque Administration to legalize the commercialization of fresh milk in plastic bags. As the spokeswoman of Baserriko Esnea in Gipuzkoa explained:

> "We want to present fresh milk as a quality product, a product with all its properties. Different from pasteurized or sterilized milk and appreciated by the consumer. You can then also ask a higher price for it."
> [Ione, I/89]

The negotiations that were held with the regional Departments of Agriculture and of Public Health did not have the intended result. Farmers associated to Baserriko Esnea used to complain that every time they thought they had fulfilled all conditions for legalization, the Administration came up with new requirements, which in their eyes were only artificial obstacles enabling the regional Government to put off a final decision. Especially the relationship with the Department of Agriculture was a strained one, according to representatives of the association. The Vice-minister of Agriculture explained the Department's policy as follows:

> "Baserriko Esnea may be an alternative for a few farms, but not for the whole dairy sector. (..) We tolerate them, but we don't support them. It's a commercial problem: we support the strongest commercial structures, projects that are valid for the whole sector, that is to say: the dairy cooperatives - and not today Baserriko Esnea and tomorrow ten other organizations."
> [Urrutia, Department of Agriculture, Basque Autonomous Government; VII/90]

In spite of their complaints, farmers thought it wiser to satisfy the conditions imposed by the Administration than to oppose them. Eventually, this strategy of 'pragmatic compliance' was successful: since 1993, Baserriko Esnea members who met the conditions stipulated by the regional Department of Public Health could apply for a Health Certificate. Possession of a Certificate meant that they did no longer have to fear prohibition of their activities; besides, it allowed them to deliver their fresh milk to groceries and cake shops, and to institutions like hospitals or old people's homes. With such a certificate, hawkers were also allowed to sell their fresh milk otherwise than in plastic bags. What had happened, though, was that in some ten years of struggles and uncertainties membership had fluctuated: some new people had joined, but a greater number had left the association; membership had gone down to 35 in 1996. It was hoped that by the end of that year all associated members would have a Health Certificate.

Farmers belonging to Baserriko Esnea had thus been able to create an economic 'niche' for themselves (cf. Bennett and Kanel, 1983: 225), i.e. a sector of the market where their specific productive and commercial activities had an almost exclusive validity and could therefore hardly be affected by competition from outside.

Baserriko Esnea's spokeswoman emphasized the importance of a Health Certificate for the association's members, not so much because the possession of a Certificate would suddenly mean a growing number of new clients, but because it permitted them to concentrate on a part of the market where they expected better opportunities. Hawkers usually valued the personal relationships with their clients: after all, a happy customer is a loyal customer. But hawking is also a rather time consuming activity. Now, the plastic milk bags of Baserriko Esnea have an important advantage over the milk sold in milk-cans by 'traditional' hawkers, namely that they can be left in the halls of flat-buildings where your clients live or in nearby shops. However, many Baserriko Esnea members had experienced that they had lost clients when they left the bags of milk for them in nearby shops instead of delivering these bags personally from door to door. On the other hand, there was a growing awareness among Baserriko Esnea members that the number of regular buyers of fresh milk was decreasing anyway - and for the same reason as traditional hawkers were losing clients: more and more people found it easier to buy their milk together with the rest of their shopping in the supermarket. Supermarkets and groceries were not a good alternative, because the bags of fresh milk had to compete with different brands of pasteurized and sterilized milk there. But in bars, coffee houses and frozen food shops non-pasteurized milk was preferred over factory milk for making

croquettes, pies, and all kinds of béchamels and other sauces. (In fact, I was told that even in the years these shops were officially forbidden to use fresh milk, many of them used pasteurized or sterilized milk for ordinary consumption, but illegally bought a few litres of fresh milk every day to make snacks.) When Baserriko Esnea hawkers spoke about regaining and consolidating the market, they referred mainly to these places. Moreover, several associated farmers began to sell an increasingly important part of their total production to the dairy factory Iparlat; this had recently become possible for hawkers with a Health Certificate.

For many years, the dairy cooperative Gurelesa had refused to accept milk from Baserriko Esnea members: as soon as they started to sell fresh milk in plastic bags they were notified that the cooperative would no longer accept their surplus production. They were thus forced to feed this milk to the calves, to sell it to a cheese factory in a neighbouring province, or to make cheese themselves. The association's spokeswoman blamed it on this policy of Gurelesa that membership in Gipuzkoa had always remained so much lower than in Bizkaia: only 25% of the hawkers belonging to Baserriko Esnea lived in the former province. The manager of Gurelesa explained that the cooperative had initially accepted the milk of these farmers, but that some of them had abused the cooperative's confidence.

> "They convinced shopkeepers to accept more bags than they would be able to sell. 'Never mind, what you can't get rid off, I'll sell to the cooperative', they said. These bags of fresh milk had laid there on the shelves all day. Just imagine what these shopkeepers and their clients might come to think of our dairy products. We had to stop this."
> [Larrea, Gurelesa; XII/89]

Some Baserriko Esnea members believed that Gurelesa's policy was meant to deter hawkers or cooperative members from joining the association, in an attempt to ward off the threat of future competition from Baserriko Esnea.

Now that recently the milk of hawkers who were in possession of a Health Certificate was accepted by Iparlat, some of them had even begun to sell more milk to the factory than on the streets. Farmers associated to Baserriko Esnea were thus in command of two outlet channels: direct sales, which provided them with a higher income per litre, and the dairy factory, which assured them the purchase of the rest of their milk. Shifting from one channel to the other, according to market opportunities, they were able to make the best of both worlds.

The long period of insecurity had demotivated some of the association's first members. Others, with apparently more faith in the successful outcome of the struggle over official recognition, had expanded considerably. Two contrasting examples will be discussed in the following section.

7.3 The cases of Iriondo and Garibai

Iriondo

When Baserriko Esnea was founded in Gipuzkoa, Iñigo Zubieta had become its first president in this province. He was 32 years old in 1988, his parents were almost 60, and together they ran one of the biggest dairy farms in Aritzmendi: 35 milch cows and some 10 heifers. Iñigo's wife came from another village nearby where she had her own hairdresser's shop.

Formerly, Iñigo's mother and sister had hawked milk in town in the traditional fashion, going from door to door with milk-churns. But soon after Iñigo took over hawking from them, in 1985, he began to sell their milk in plastic bags. He sold more than 200 litres a day in town, most of it in groceries, butcher's shops and bakeries; in the halls of several flat buildings he left 5 or 6 bags of milk and only a few bags were delivered personally to individual clients. In summer, when sales went down considerably, he used to sell an important part of his production to a cheese factory in a neighbouring province.

When I asked him whether he believed his way of commercializing raw milk would be successful in the future, he answered that this depended on the people's consciousness: Basque people should consume regional products instead of products from elsewhere. He realized that more and more people bought pasteurized or sterilized milk and skimmed dairy products, but he qualified this as 'fashions'.

> "Our clients know what they buy. Milk directly from the farm has one big advantage: it contains no preservatives nor additives. The dairy factories, on the other hand, obtain their milk from different farms and they have to add all kinds of chemicals to make that into a non-perishable, homogeneous drink."
> [Iñigo, VI/96]

Nevertheless, he recognized that he would not object to delivering all his milk to the dairy factory provided it offered a good price "and this price were less subject to sudden fluctuations than it is today".

In 1991, Iñigo left Baserriko Esnea and gave up milk hawking. For two years he worked for an agricultural service cooperative, set up by farmers of six villages in the region, where he carried out contract-work with specialized farm machinery on behalf of the associated members. But again he left, allegedly because he did not have enough work to earn a reasonable income. He returned to the farm once more and began to help his parents, who had maintained most of the cows but now sold all their milk to the cheese factory. In 1995 he became a mechanic in a nearby car factory, where he was still working when I met him a year later; in the evenings, he followed a course to get the necessary diplomas. He spent the weekends on his parents' farm, but during the rest of the week he and his wife used to live in the village.

This was a relatively modern farm, not with so much land, but with quite an extensive livestock. Iñigo had bought a packing machine and had been able to introduce his fresh milk in a lot of shops while maintaining many of his individual clients as well; in fact, he was generally believed to be the only

young farmer in the village who would continue his parents' farming enterprise - although in 1988 some villagers had already told me they expected him to leave if he were offered a factory job. Why did a farmers' son with apparently good economic perspectives nonetheless decide to give up farming?

> "A farmer's life may not be very hard, but he is very much tied to his work. The family farm, especially a dairy farm... I compare it with being a prisoner in Martutene.[34] If you are able to run your farm among two or three young men as a kind of cooperative, you can have a few days off once in a while, but on these small farms here you can never earn enough to sustain two families."
> [Iñigo, VI/96]

His parents, who were both over 65 then, still kept some 25 dairy cows. Although Iñigo had advised them to sell half of their livestock and take things easier, they tried to maintain production on a reasonably high level. They had obviously decided to continue farming as long as possible, so that their son had something to fall back on in case he lost his present job. Iñigo himself also seemed to take into account this possibility:

> "I don't want to give up the farm completely. Nowadays, they don't give you a permanent job anywhere, so who knows...? You won't get rich on the farm, but you have at least enough to subsist."
> [Iñigo, VI/96]

When Iñigo had given up hawking five years before, his round of clients had been taken over by two brothers, also Baserriko Esnea members, who ran a family farm together.

Garibai

When Iñaki and Antxon became members of Baserriko Esnea, in 1988, they were both about 30 years old. They had always sold milk in milk-churns to individual customers in town, but the plastic bags enabled them to introduce their fresh milk in shops as well. Before, they had delivered the surplus production to Gurelesa and the cheese factory mentioned earlier, and they simply continued doing so after they associated to Baserriko Esnea. The cheese factory made no problem of this, but Gurelesa let them know that their milk would no longer be accepted. However, they were able to convince the dairy that their selling milk in plastic bags was only a temporary strategy and that they eventually intended to deliver their whole production to the cooperative.

In winter they produced some 700 litres of milk a day which was normally all sold on the streets - an extraordinary amount if we take into account that most hawkers found it difficult to sell more than 200 litres. Of the 500 litres they produced in summer, they managed to sell only half in town, while the

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[34] Martutene is the name of a well-known prison in San Sebastian.

rest was delivered to the factories. Hawking was generally done by Iñaki and his sister Amaia; meanwhile their parents and Antxon fed the livestock of approximately 40 head and did other farmwork. Amaia was married and she and her husband, who was a farmer's son but had a job in industry, normally lived on the Garibai farm; only in summer did they spend one or two months on the farm of her parents-in-law. With a simple comparison, Iñaki demonstrated the importance of being able to sell their milk to shops (both in terms of the amount of milk sold and the reduction of labour input this implied): while Amaia delivered 100 bags of milk to individual customers in one hour, he only needed half an hour to leave 400 litres in some butcher's and baker's shops.

Iñaki and Antxon were carrying out a kind of small-scale land re-allotment scheme of their own, selling land that lay far away from the farmstead or on mountain slopes (but that was often of good quality) and buying back parcels adjacent to other fields of their property. They realized that in purely economic terms they lost money in these transactions, but hoped that this was more than compensated by having larger pieces of mechanizable land closer to the farm. Many of the parcels they bought were full of pinetrees or thornbushes. They had the machinery to clear these fields themselves, which was more profitable than having that done by a contracted company. According to Iñaki, "people in the neighbourhood who first said we were crazy now admit that we've gained by it".

When Iñigo of the Iriondo farm gave up hawking, Antxon and Iñaki took over his clients. They built a big cowshed, expanded their livestock, but at the same time reorganized the commercialization of their milk. In 1996, they still used to sell 400 litres in town on average; the major part of their production, however, about 800 litres a day, was delivered to the cooperative. Antxon had married and Iñaki was believed to get married soon; Amaia and her husband lived elsewhere. Consequently, before long there would be two young families living on the farm, together with the aged parents.

7.4 Exigencies of the trade

Looking at the cases in Sections 7.1 and 7.3, we could ask ourselves what it is that makes a niche successful. Obviously, a niche is successful if the agents operating within the niche are able to perform sucessfully. While dealing with the former question from this perspective, I shall rely largely on Muller (1987), whose article about the so-called 'exploitant rural' provides a comprehensive discussion on the generation of quality products (or what are presented as such) in disadvantaged areas like the Basque Country.

Muller states that diversification rather than specialization is the norm on most 'exploitations rurales'. Perhaps, with a bit of good will, the Jauregi farm might be seen as an example of a holding where family members carried out a variety of activities; these activities had originally been more or less integrated but some had gradually become more independent of the others. Elsewhere (van den Broek, 1990) I have given an example of a farming enterprise, a small-scale cooperative, where diversification of products and activities was chosen as a strategy to create enough farming jobs for all of its members and

at the same time become less dependent on changing market developments; the cooperative members did not only have dairy cows and autochtonous Pyrenean beef cattle, but also kept hundreds of sheep, both for their lambs and to provide milk to make cheese, they made and sold their own bread, there were rooms for rural tourists, etcetera. As yet, however, diversification of activities is not the rule on most Basque farms where quality products are generated. As for Baserriko Esnea members, they normally ran farm enterprises that had specialized in the production and commercialization of raw milk, without having any sidelines of importance.

The generalization of Muller's statement is, in my view, debatable, at least when referring to quality production and the personal commercialization of the products. Both the generation of quality products and their commercialization by household members themselves are much more labour demanding than bulk production and delivering the products to some marketing association. If the mobilization of farm labour is problematic anyway, which is the case on most holdings in the Basque Country, farmers are simply forced to concentrate on few, but highly remunerative, products and activities.

The comercialization strategies of producers of quality are aimed at those categories of clients that are searching for products of a specific quality (or "qualité particulière", in Muller's words; Muller, 1987: 471). What Muller does not mention, however, is that this makes these producers become highly dependent on the personal whims of their customers and on their preference for fashions. Baserriko Esnea members had noticed this when consumers who had always preferred their milk for its 'naturalness' started to buy sterilized milk for reasons of convenience.

Muller then states that producers of a quality product frequently create a formal organization in order to protect their niche, to shield it from competition from outside, and to have it recognized as a valid alternative among other, more established, forms of production and commercialization. The case of Baserriko Esnea shows that recognition by other institutions within the relevant regional or national context, in particular the Administration, may be problematic if there exist competing organizations that already count on official support. If despite the existing difficulties the Baserriko Esnea members persisted in their attempts, it was because they assumed that their economic future was to a large extent dependent on the legalization of their alternative by some authoritative body. Just like all other hawkers they experienced the gradual desertion of individual clients. But when their way of marketing was finally legalized, the associated farmers could apply for a Health Certificate which enabled them to concentrate their commercial activities more on bars and frozen food shops and the like, where their fresh milk was especially appreciated for making snacks, desserts and sauces. Official recognition had been a precondition to displace their client network to a sector of the market that offered them better guarantees for the future. A positive side effect was that this reorientation proved to be highly time-saving, as well, since just as many litres of milk could be delivered to some of these establishments in a relatively short time as to a great number of individual customers in a few hours. This was important for the farmers in question, as it bridged the gap between two conflicting goals of many quality producers, namely the (time-consuming) personal commercialization of their

products and the desire to reduce the labour input of household members. (That a strategy of labour reduction may also undermine the survival capacity of the farming household specialized in the generation of quality products will be explained in Section 7.6.)

The success of quality producing enterprises does not exclusively depend on family members' farming skills *per se*. As we are dealing here with activities which normally demand an extra input of labour and time of household members, it is essential that they are able and willing to carry out the necessary activities to produce and commercialize the quality product(s) around which the niche is built. Capability and, especially, willingness have a lot to do with the family members' vocation. Apart from vocation, we will see that creativity is important to turn quality production into a success.

In spite of their specialization, Baserriko Esnea farmers should be able to carry out several tasks that are irrelevant to most producers who deliver to the dairy factory. Muller speaks of 'pluricompétence' (1987: 467). Apart from producing milk, associated farmers have to watch more personally over the quality of their product, through hygienic methods of milking and packing, than cooperative members whose milk is tested in the factory; besides, they should be good salesmen and women. They are especially the demands on the commercial capacities of members of the household that is focused on quality production which tend to dominate all other activities (ibid.: 466; cf. also Mendras, 1970: 151, 152, and 226). Through establishing direct links with their clients, producers not only 'pocket' the margin that is otherwise appropriated by intermediate institutions, but also intend to convert the specific quality they attribute to their products into a better price. It is therefore important to maintain good relationships with one's customers and to give them the feeling that the quality of the product and additional services offered are better tailored to their particular wishes than anything else on the market.

It is important to note that most of the hawkers of raw milk, not only the members of Baserriko Esnea but also the traditional hawkers, are women. "Women are better able to establish and maintain social relationships with clients than men," some of my respondents said. In general, only if the (male) farmer was single, if his wife had her own job, or if she was physically unable to walk very long and climb up and down the steps in flat buildings, did he do the hawking himself. It was certainly no coincidence that on the Garibai farm Iñaki delivered the milk in a few shops, while his sister Amaia did the distribution among their individual customers, who were mainly housewives.

The willingness of family farm members to carry out the tasks that are necessary for the production of quality is a more direct function of their vocation for farming as opposed to alternative labour preferences. We saw how Iñigo of the Iriondo farm initiated new projects with apparent enthusiasm, only to give them up after a while for other ones. Future labour shortage on his own farm, or lack of work and thus income when working for the machinery cooperative, in themselves might have been good motives to start looking for more viable alternatives. But what really made him decide not to continue on the farm if he could avoid it was that he had 'suddenly' discovered how much farm labour resembled imprisonment. About Iñaki and Antxon of the Garibai farm, who had taken over his clients in town, he

remarked: "They've run into great debts; when they're sixty, they may say 'Now we can start living'. But life is short and should we live like slaves then? Not for me!"

The willingness to work hard and invest so as to turn quality production into a success is in no small measure determined by the prospects of future viability. These prospects depend mainly on the amount of family labour power that can be mobilized upon succession. This is where the farms Iriondo and Garibai differed. Iñigo's parents still maintained an enterprise of about 25 head of cattle in order to provide their son with a good economic basis to survive, in case he was forced to return to the holding. But Iñigo must have realized long ago that sooner or later he would have to do all the farmwork alone, the more so because his wife had a full-time, off-farm job. Conversely, the brothers Antxon and Iñaki of Garibai would continue the holding together. As a result of the infrastructural improvements and the expansion of the livestock, their farm would soon generate enough income to sustain two families.

Apart from being able and willing to work harder and having the vocation to make sacrifices when needed, the possession of a certain creativity is necessary to make the household's performance successful. This creativity particularly concerns the way in which producers are able to define the quality of the product to be commercialized.

7.5 Quality: a social construction

Farmers who deliver their milk to the dairy factory are in the first place interested in its fat and protein level and the bacteriological composition, as these are the criteria the factory uses to judge the quality of their product. Conversely, for the dairy farmer who sells his products directly to his customers, quality is the complex of properties of the product that respond adequately to the particular wishes of the consumers; quality is thus a social construction, something that is defined in the interrelations between producer and consumer. What distinguishes the dairy hawker from the one who delivers his milk to the factory is, to use an industrial metaphor, that he should not only be his own Product Manager, but also develop his abilities as a Marketing Manager.

Quality producers who want their products to compete effectively with products that have undergone industrial processing will generally follow a strategy that is based on highlighting the 'naturalness' of their product, its being 'free from chemicals', or 'home-made' (*etxeko* in Basque);[35] competing products are depicted as factory-made, unnatural and the result of artificial manipulation. This is how hawkers of fresh milk managed to enrol consumers into their client network (added to the other elements they were able to offer them, such as a common background and the latest local news).

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[35] Muller speaks here of 'tricks' the farmer uses to maintain the 'look fermier' (farm look) of his product (Muller, 1987: 468).

Their anti-propaganda against the dairy factory played on the widespread aversion among Basque people to the chemical treatment of foodstuffs, an aversion that was projected onto most farm products that had been industrially processed. These hawkers (including Baserriko Esnea members) were quite effective in convincing their clients that pasteurized and sterilized milk had been chemically adulterated. To counteract this image, the cooperative Gurelesa organized excursions for school-classes to the dairy, so that at least the children could see with their own eyes what processes milk had to go through in the factory. The former president of the cooperative complained that "there is an enormous lack of knowledge about these things among Basque people; even the teachers of these children often have no idea what pasteurization really is about."

If these hawkers wanted to have their way of marketing non-pasteurized milk officially legalized, they had to conform to a number of criteria (concerning inspection, hygienic treatment, etc.), established by the regional Department of Public Health. Those who did were offered a Health Certificate. This official recognition had no influence on the behaviour of their individual clients, but opened up a new market of customers in the catering industry.

As a matter of fact, awarding a product which satisfied formal quality criteria an officially recognized label did not necessarily lead to its greater acceptance by the public, as many consumers, especially elderly people, considered a label on a farm product to be the proof of its factory origin. Sheep-farmers in the region had more experience with labelled quality products than cattle breeders. Ewe-cheese made by shepherds who grazed their sheep in the mountains around the village of Idiazabal had traditionally had a very good name, but lost part of its prestige, when it became known that some traders sold cheese that had been imported from other regions in Spain as original Idiazabal cheese on the Basque market. A sheep-breeders' association, supported by the Basque Administration, turned the tide: the brand name Idiazabal was officially registered, with its own *Appellation d'Origine* ('Denominación de Origen' in Spanish), and the use of the corresponding label was restricted to cheese that was locally produced with milk of the autochtonous Latxa sheep-race. Nevertheless, for many years consumers had little faith in this product: on local markets and agricultural fairs, shepherds belonging to the association found it generally easier to sell cheese without than with the quality label. The former president of the association explained how he managed to fool suspicious consumers:

> "On fairs, I lay the cheese with Idiazabal labels on one side of my stall and on the other side, especially for these people, the same cheese but without any labels, often together with some pieces that have not come out too well; the worse the appearance of the cheese, the more authentic some people think it is."

Some time after the members of the sheep-breeders' association brought their cheese on the market with the Idiazabal quality label, the cheese department of the small dairy cooperative LANA (see Section 6.3) began to make ewe-cheese which also conformed to the necessary requirements and could thus be sold with the same hallmark. Although the name LANA was explicitly mentioned on cheese sold by the cooperative, and only on their cheese, this

confusion with labels may have been another reason why so many consumers thought that all labelled cheese was factory-made. However, to complete the picture, it should be mentioned that the Idiazabal cheese with its quality label had become a generally accepted and esteemed product in supermarkets, gourmet shops and restaurants.

Consumers obviously attributed another meaning to the label than it had for the shepherds. Whereas for the latter it was a means to demonstrate the authenticity of their product, their potential clients suspected they were offered a product that had undergone chemical manipulation. That such a discrepancy of definitions is not restricted to labels, but may also arise as to other manifestations of quality becomes evident in the following case. This concerns a dairy farmer who had his own pasteurization machine and converted all his milk into yogurt, curd and cheese; his products were sold in many shops in and around the provincial capital. Now, curd that was produced by dairy factories was generally sold in little earthenware mugs, an imitation of the way farmers traditionally used to sell this product to consumers. But this farmer had begun to use plastic cups, being a much more hygienic way to distribute the curd:

> "In restaurants, people normally use these mugs as ashtrays once they've finished their desserts. Housewives use them temporarily to keep their soap, oil or chlorine in. Due to their irregular surface, it's almost impossible to clean these clay mugs thoroughly. They have a few pesetas deposit, and when you get them back, you can often still see or smell what they contained."

To his disappointment, his innovation turned out to be anything but a success, as consumers preferred the traditional mugs, which they saw as more authentic.

> "I sell a natural product, but because it's sold in plastic cups, it doesn't have such a natural appearance - and that's what seems to count most for consumers. So now we're forced to start selling our curd in the traditional, but less hygienic, clay mugs again. That's what they ask for..."[36]

To say that in both these cases the consumers became the victims of their own ignorance, is but one way of phrasing it. Quality is not only something that can be objectified by means of hygienic, chemical or pathogenic parameters, it is just as much something which is given shape in the interaction between farmers and their clients. In these two cases the producers' client networks were based on a definition of quality that both parties (producers and consumers) had agreed upon. When this definition was tacitly reconstructed by the producers, it led to the desertion of many of their clients. These consumers adjusted their behaviour to how they interpreted the new quality status of the product they used to buy, not in accordance with the quality itself. In the eyes of the producers, the deserting clients went

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[36] More recently, some factories had started to sell curd in plastic cups with an 'earthenware' design. These were accepted more easily by most consumers.

therefore against their own, 'objective' interests.

In the cases of both Idiazabal cheese and Baserriko Esnea milk, some consumers dissociated themselves from the producers' client networks when the definition of quality was readjusted. But the new quality definition turned out to be meaningful for clients in another part of the outlet market: supermarkets and restaurants in the case of Idiazabal cheese, bars and shops for Baserriko Esnea milk. A redefinition of the bond on which a social network is based may thus lead to the desertion of actors that form part of it, but also to the displacement of the network as such.

7.6 The ephemerality of the niche

It is true, as Muller (1987: 471) observes, that strategies of quality producers often hark back to traditions that existed in the region. But I have shown that it is not simply the maintainance of traditional activities that 'does it'. Success is frequently the outcome of a strategy of 'turning tradition upside down'. This is true for the Baserriko Esnea alternative which managed to adapt the traditional activity of milk hawking to generally accepted, 'modern', standards with respect to the hygienic treatment of food. Folk criteria as to the quality of this farm product were thus linked to objective criteria, like its bacteriological composition and fat and protein content.

Farmers (and also shepherds, as we have seen) created quality products which they wanted to see officially recognized and maybe protected against unlawful competition. Dairy farmers associated to Baserriko Esnea and in possession of a Health Certificate had warded off the threat of a prohibition of their activities by the regional Administration and had managed to open up new (or lost) markets. The point is, however, that quality labels, official certificates, and the like may have become prerequisites for farmers to survive in an environment that is more and more ruled by bureaucratically established standardized norms, but hardly appeal to the average consumer. And the chances are that once this consumer does take them into account when purchasing agricultural products, he does not know how to distinguish between one label and the other. This is what had happened with the Idiazabal hallmark several years ago.

But the same case demonstrated something else: as soon as objective quality norms for a product are established, in particular if they are disconnected from the farmer's craftsmanship, the generation of such a quality product is no longer necessarily the monopoly of individual producers.[37] Industrial competition may also become more likely as a result of labour saving strategies of farmers. We saw that the production and commercialization of a quality product is generally more time consuming and

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[37] De Roest observes that even the famous Parmezan cheese, still produced predominantly in small-scale farmer-run cooperatives, is facing competition of a more industrially produced variety. As the quality of the latter cheese variety is somewhat lower, its possibilities to replace Parmezan cheese are limited. Nevertheless, the author warns that minor changes in quality between both varieties might lead to quite radical shifts in consumer preferences (de Roest, 1990).

labour intensive than producing an 'average' product that is subsequently delivered to an intermediary marketing institution. As this is so, it is not surprising that quality producers, once the experimental stage has been passed, intend to reduce their drudgery of labour, both through the introduction of technological improvements in the production process and the rationalization of commercial activities.[38] As soon as quality products can be produced and sold in a more routine manner, industrialized production by institutions beyond control of the pioneers may be expected. Hence, farmers who created their own economic niche where they expected their chances for survival to be greater than outside, may thus be confronted with industrial competition after all. It is in this context that I hypothesize the ephemerality of the niche where craftsmanship is superseded and labour is routinized.[39] This is not to say, of course, that the disintegration of the niche is inevitable. It merely implies that quality producers have to take this possibility into account and anticipate on it while designing future strategies.

The quality production strategy can be illustrated with the following Chayanovian diagram (Figure 13). The generation of quality products normally asks for investments; demand satisfaction has to be postponed and the corresponding curve CD is pushed upward (to curve I). Furthermore, household members are usually forced to intensify their labour input (hence, the upward shift of curve AB). Baserriko Esnea members, for example, had to invest in a packing machine and all kinds of measurements through which the hygienic treatment of their product would be guaranteed; on the other hand, their labour input rose as a result of the filling of the plastic bags and, most of all, their hawking activities. But farm households are only willing to do these investments and to accept a higher drudgery of labour if in return they can expect a higher remuneration of their efforts. This is realized through a better price for their product. Consequently, the demand satisfaction curve falls to P; the equilibrium point Y is more favourable than X. As in Chapter 6 (see Figure 10), the total output is lower than upon delivery to the dairy factory, but the eventual income level of quality producers lies higher. Farmers may try to routinize their production and marketing activities in order to reduce their labour drudgery; the result is represented through the arrow R. (Of course, traditional hawkers did not have to do the investments referred to, so for them the demand satisfaction curve was situated even lower, which implies their equilibrium point was more favourable than that of Baserriko Esnea members and farmers belonging to the dairy factory. But their alternative

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38) As women seemed to be more willing to maintain networks of individual clients (men would even argue that women were better socially equipped for it), we may expect the rationalization of networks to be first and foremost a 'male' preference.

39) In the Netherlands, there are several examples of farmers selling regional quality products on the holdings themselves. Time and labour spent on commercialization are thus kept within bounds and need not be further rationalized. And as total volumes are normally rather limited, industries are less likely to be interested in these markets. Selling quality products on the farmyard is also done on a small number of holdings in Euskadi (an example can be found in van den Broek, 1990). The strategy may work quite well for the commercialization of non-perishable goods, such as cheese or wool, but obviously not to sell fresh milk.

lacked any long-term perspectives.)

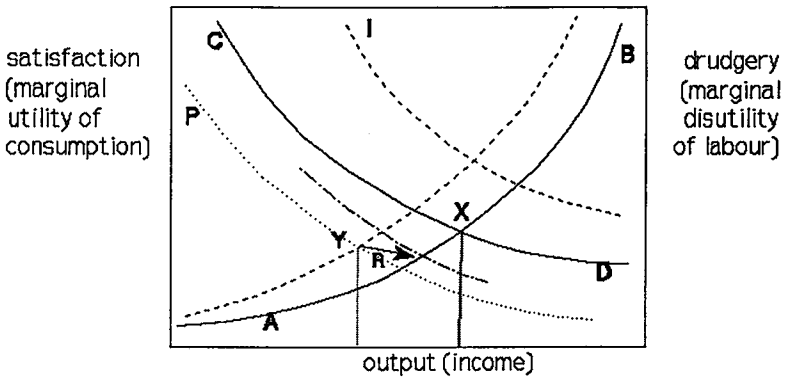

Figure 13. Quality production and interlocking projects.

Following this line of reasoning, we might ask ourselves if, upon rationalization of the production and marketing of fresh milk, there would be a real impediment for dairy factories to sell the same product just as well. That this question is not without any foundation was demonstrated during an interview I had in 1996 with the former Minister of Agriculture of the Basque Autonomous Government and present member of the Board of Directors of the dairy factory Iparlat, J.M. Goikoetxea (cf. also Chapter 4). Due to what he referred to as the propagation of the 'Tetrabrik culture' among Basque consumers, that is their preference for packed and sterilized products, pasteurized milk had lost an important part of its market share. He explained that the dairy factory Iparlat, as part of its policy to regain a portion of the market lost, had recently asked the regional Government to create a Basque quality label for pasteurized milk.

> "Why did we decide to focus on pasteurized milk and not on the certified milk without thermic processing? First, because milk that has undergone thermic processing does not need to be supplied daily - daily supply is one of the major inconveniences of the consumption of fresh milk. And second, - and in spite of the appreciation of the fresh product, the product which has not been subject to high temperatures - because the market for skimmed and semi-skimmed milk is growing. We cannot ignore this market; if we only used pasteurized or fresh milk to make full-cream dairy products, our market would become smaller and smaller."
> [J.M. Goikoetxea, Board of Directors of Iparlat; VII/96]

Apparently, the people in charge of the dairy factory had considered the commercialization of non-pasteurized milk, but they had rejected the idea on account of the product's fat content and perishability. Its fat content is not always an impediment, though - on the contrary, it is seen as one of its main advantages by consumers who need fresh milk to elaborate desserts and sauces. And other regular consumers of fresh milk do not seem to mind its higher percentage of fat either. There is definitely a market for non-pasteurized milk, but its potential importance for the dairy depends on its size, its stability, and the possibility to shorten the time in which this milk reaches the consumers. The perishability of the product is its greatest handicap, something it has in common with pasteurized milk. But new procedures had been developed to keep pasteurized milk fresh for about five days, which implied that it had become a lot easier to buy and store than in the past (though by no means as easy as sterilized milk yet). And new systems of distribution of this kind of milk have to be established, so that it reaches the consumers faster than through the present distribution channels. Although it may still sound rather speculative, I would argue that these developments make commercialization of fresh milk by the dairy industry more likely.[40]

7.7 Conclusions

Baserriko Esnea was presented as an alternative, both for dairy cooperative members who felt increasingly marginalized within their organization, and for traditional hawkers who saw their market shrink ever more. Farmers had associated with this network of professionals in order to safeguard the future of their network of clients. The attempts of Baserriko Esnea to create a niche for the marketing of good quality fresh milk were initially ignored by the

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40) If the scenario of the commercialization of fresh milk by the dairy factory should become reality, the question remains which farmers will have to deliver this milk. The milk of the majority of the dairy cooperative members cannot simply be resold as fresh milk, since their methods of milking and storing (in the milk tank) are not virus and bacteria free; so far, this has been no problem, because their milk is all pasteurized or sterilized. Traditional hawkers are not eligible either, as their installations are seldom more hygienic. The only suitable suppliers would be the dairy farmers with a Health Certificate. The truck of the cooperative could collect the fresh milk on the farms, deliver it to the factory where it would be packed (if this had not already been done on the farms), and distribute it in shops, restaurants etcetera, the same or the following day. What advantages are there for the farmers? The distribution of their milk will be done by the factory, which saves them quite a lot of labour; but the price per litre they get paid will be lower than when they did the hawking themselves. They should be paid more than the average cooperative members, as their milk is of higher quality, due to the investments they have done in the past and which have to be paid back. Halfway the 1990s, the general pattern seemed to be that Baserriko Esnea members delivered most part of their total production to the dairy factory for which they received more or less the same price as other cooperative members; the price they were paid for the milk they sold directly to their customers was about twice as high. In the (hypothetical) future situation, the price per litre for their whole production, though probably higher than what other dairy farmers delivering to the factory are paid, will depend on the importance the factory attributes to non-pasteurized milk for safeguarding its own position on the market. The economic niche of Baserriko Esnea members will then have given way to a situation of mutual dependence between them and the dairy factory.

relevant Basque Government departments, a policy which Baserriko Esnea members qualified as 'passive obstruction'.

After many years, the Baserriko Esnea alternative was officially recognized by the Department of Public Health of the regional Government. Hawkers whose farm enterprises fulfilled the required conditions were given Health Certificates which allowed them to sell their non-pasteurized milk in commercial establishment; a favourable side-effect was that from then on the dairy factory Iparlat (formerly Gurelesa) accepted their milk, too. These developments led to an important displacement of the hawkers' client networks, which was also brought about because the number of individual consumers continued to decline.

Traditional hawkers also combined direct sales on the streets with selling their surplus to the dairy factory. But they had been forbidden to deliver to institutions and shops and gradually lost their individual clients as well, whereas their position within the factory, as a result of their relatively low and irregular deliveries, was a marginal one. In contrast, Baserriko Esnea members focussed predominantly on direct sales to shops and restaurants, while trying to keep their individual customers as long as possible; at the same time, they strengthened their position within the dairy factory by expanding their production and delivering an ever-increasing part of it.

The new situation which enabled these hawkers to enjoy the best of both worlds (high prices for part of the milk produced through direct sales and a reliable marketing channel for the rest of their production) was the outcome of a conscious strategy that had resulted in the establishment of multiple interlocking projects.

The commercial activities of quality producers often demand more technical and social skills of them than of the average producer. Apart from the standard requirements that everyone has to fulfil, they have to meet the sometimes highly specific quality criteria of institutions belonging to their own 'circuit' - which means that they may, deviously, get caught on an alternative treadmill after all (cf. Mak, 1996: 122). The social skills of quality producers include (1) the awareness to detect changes in consumer preferences and (2) enough creativity to attune one's offer to the clients' wishes. Moreover, social skills are needed to effectively motivate parents, children, siblings and so forth to cooperate in carrying out all the tasks that have to be done. This is important on most farms, but the more so on quality producing enterprises, where labour intensity is generally higher than on other holdings.

Precisely because quality production and the maintenance of client networks is highly time consuming and labour intensive, households are more inclined to focus on specialization than on diversification of their activities. For the same reason, household members will try to reduce their labour input through the routinization of production and the rationalization of their marketing activities. I have argued that this development makes industrial competition more likely. I therefore hypothesized the ephemerality of the niche for individual producers of quality products.

Chapter 8

'PART-TIME' FARMING: FACTORY, FARM AND FAMILY LABOUR

In line with Chayanovian tradition, I see the family farm as a more or less organic whole in which household members develop divergent strategies that serve to reproduce the holding. These strategies may concern scale-enlargement, intensification, or an orientation to crafts, trades or off-farm labour - whereby that combination of activities is chosen which, upon weighing income and labour drudgery against each other, results in the most favourable equilibrium point.

However, in the distinction between full-time and part-time farming the power of labels and the imperative character of typologies can again be noticed. If farming is, by definition or by default, understood to be the household's full-time dedication to profitable, agricultural activities, farm enterprises where reproduction of the household is realized exclusively through agricultural labour are automatically, in analysis and policy, set against those where this happens through a combination of farming and non-farming activities. Barlett (1986) observes that part-time farmers are generally seen either as small farmers who have not been able to continue a full-time holding or as rural residents who pursue a high-quality lifestyle and who are not in the first place interested in running an economically profitable enterprise. From this point to labeling part-time farmers as inefficient or not seriously involved in agriculture, is but one step, and confronting them with the corresponding policy consequences, another.

The distinction, according to the degree of exclusivity of the agricultural basis for the reproduction of the family farm, becomes even more debatable if we watch the problems that social scientists experience when determining exactly what farms should be regarded as part-time (see Section 8.1).

With all these critical observations in mind, I shall nevertheless discuss part-time farming as a separate category, mainly because this category is time and again referred to in the discourses of policy makers, full-time farmers and representatives of farmers' unions - and usually in a negative sense. Moreover, through a medium-sized, well mechanized part-time enterprise, counting on the labour input of several family members, the organization of labour within the farm household will be further analyzed.

8.1 A definition problem

In her comprehensive study on part-time farming in the Basque Country, Miren Etxezarreta (1984) describes the part-time farm as an agricultural enterprise where neither the head of the farm nor any of the other family members is exclusively engaged in agricultural activities. However, this definition is a little problematic. Those farms where, for example, the head has a full-time factory job and the farm is run by his wife and parents, or where the future heir,

waiting for the moment to take over the farm, is working in industry while investing his wages in his parents' farming enterprise, would normally be regarded as part-time farms by fellow farmers as well as by the regional Administration, but should be excluded from this category if we follow Etxezarreta.

Gasson (1986: 365) distinguishes three classes of part-time farms: those where "farming is the main source of the household's earned income", those "with some farm earnings but another main income source" (also called 'spare time' farms), and the holdings that are kept "for motives of amenity or residence rather than profit" (or 'hobby' farms). In Gasson's view, farms where sons and daughters take up an off-farm job also belong to the part-time farming category. The problem here is that she does not make any difference between (potential) successors and other children; thus, the modern dairy farm Etxeberri (see Section 5.1), where four sons worked in construction or industry in 1996, should also be considered a part-time enterprise as long as those sons do not marry and leave the farm.

An analysis in terms of pluriactivity does not automatically overcome the shortcomings of the above 'part-time farming' definitions. For Eizner (1985), for example, 'pluriactivité' includes complementary farm activities like honey or cheese making, direct sales of farm products ('vente directe'), or rural tourism. And also Hetland, who defines pluriactivity as "the diversification of activities carried out by one household on and off the holding in order to secure the household's economy and welfare" (Hetland, 1986: 385), mentions on-farm activities like fur farming or tourism as one of the possible forms. In these cases, I would rather speak of diversification; the terms part-time farming and pluriactivity may then be reserved for those situations in which off-farm income is involved.[41]

De Vries (1995) uses a somewhat different notion of pluriactivity, based on a more limited definition of the relevant unit of analysis. Recognizing that not all family members with an off-farm job hand over their entire income to the household, she takes as her unit of analysis, not the whole farm family household, but "only those members of a household (..) that actually contribute to the continuity of the (farm) enterprise and the household" (de Vries, 1995: 8; my translation), that is the head of the farm and his (or her) spouse, together with their successor (if there is one) and his (her) spouse; she then defines pluriactivity as "the phenomenon that the head of the farm and/or his spouse, or the heads of the farm and their spouses, carry out paid activities outside the farming enterprise or non-agrarian activities on the farm" (ibid.). Her definition of pluriactivity is based on a differentiation within the household family (between senior and succeeding farming couples on the one hand and the rest of the siblings on the other) which is similar to the one I have suggested myself (see Chapter 1). It avoids the major shortcomings of other definitions cited above and has the added advantage of linking up well with what the 'people in the field' understand by part-time farming. This is the definition which therefore suits my own discussion of the phenomenon best. I

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[41] Hetland even speaks of pluriactivity if farmers receive a pension (cf. Hetland, 1986: 387); a term like 'multiple incomes' would be more suitable here.

will not adopt the term pluriactivity, though, but stick to 'part-time farming', since this was also the generic term ('agricultura a tiempo parcial') used by farmers and policy makers in the research context.

Basque farmers do not only classify their own or another farm as a part-time enterprise if the head of the farm has a job in industry, but also if the son (or occasionally the daughter) who is believed to continue the farm as a productive enterprise earns an off-farm income, while his parents work full-time on the holding. However, if in the latter case the son has a factory job but is not expected to use the farm as anything more than a rural dwelling in the future, the holding will be regarded as a full-time enterprise until the moment of succession. The heir's willingness to continue the farm as a productive unit is normally measured in terms of his (or her) visible labour input on the farm and of how much of his (her) off-farm income is invested in the farm economy. Which farming enterprises are regarded as part-time and which as full-time holdings is socially defined and often based on the subjective judgement of the respondents. (Consequently, these respondents do not always agree when asked whether a specific farm should be seen as a part-time or a full-time enterprise.)

In its policy on subsidies and credits for the agrarian sector, the Basque Administration also took into account the on- and off-farm activities of both the 'old' and the 'young' farming couple. According to the criteria in force, for example, if a successor had an off-farm income that was higher than what the farm yielded, his parents would not be eligible for credits at low interest rates. The same occurred if it was the successor's wife who had an income that was higher than the farm's revenues. Noteworthy was that in the latter case neighbouring farmers would normally not consider the holding a part-time enterprise. Again, the explanation must be sought in what fellow farmers probably perceived as her insignificant labour input on the farm and her low contribution to farm investments.

8.2 Becoming a part-time farmer

The reduced extension of the farm enterprise (too small to employ the family members) and an insufficient income from agricultural production (not enough to guarantee the reproduction of the household) were mentioned in Chapter 2 as push factors that motivated farmers to look for a job in industry. Pull factors were the existence of dispersed industrialization, causing a demand for labour in small-scale industries in rural areas, and of relatively high wages in industry, in comparison with the remuneration of the hours worked in agriculture. An important condition to make the combination of agricultural activities with an off-farm job feasible was the modernization of transport and infrastructure. Access roads to farms had normally been asphalted and on most farms there was at least one car.

Most of the time, farmers who had found a job in industry continued to work outside for the rest of their productive lives, but some, like Ignacio of Beko-etxe (Section 6.1), had an off-farm job only to bridge a period of extra expenses, after which they continued their farm on a full-time basis again.

The following short farm histories give an idea of how some farmers who

had begun to work in industry in the sixties and seventies had adapted to their new situation.

> When José (45) was about 18, there were his parents, his grandparents, himself, and seven brothers and sisters living and working on the farm. They had a mill and used to sell the calves of their 5 or 6 cows. His brothers and sisters all left the farm and his grandparents died. When he married he took over the holding from his parents, but his wife did not want to live there. So José bought a flat in the village and found a job in industry, but after his work in the factory and at the weekends he spent most of his time on the farm, where his parents still lived. In the 1980s, they still had some 5 cows plus their calves and an apple orchard.
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> When he started working in the factory, Luís (about 65 when I spoke to him) replaced his four Friesian cows by the same number of Swiss cows. The latter do not yield as much income but they need less labour and health and birth risks are lower. According to Luís, the wisest thing a small farmer could do was combining farm work with an off-farm job: you can cultivate most of your food in your own garden which allows you to spend your wages on more luxurious things. You do not have to live in a flat in the village, and instead of hanging around in bars you can do a bit of gardening (thereby saving money instead of wasting it...).
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> After his mother's death, Pedro worked on the farm with his father and three brothers. They had 4 or 5 dairy cows and just as much land as today. When he married and took over the holding (his brothers had already abandoned the farm), he found that the farm alone did not yield enough income to live on. He joined the dairy cooperative but that did not really solve his financial problems. By the end of the 1950s, being still a young man of about 25, he found a job in industry. His wife worked very hard to keep the farm running. They managed to increase the number of milch cows to 8. Pedro claimed that all that he was able to save from his wages was invested in the farm.

These farm histories highlight a few differences regarding the strategies of part-time farmers and the importance they attributed to maintaining the farm as an agricultural enterprise. On the whole, two dominant models of part-time farming could be distinguished in the 1960s and 70s. In the first model, farm production was drastically reduced and its orientation on the market very much restricted when the head of the household began to work in industry. Many farmers reduced their dairy livestock, while others gave up milk production and replaced their dairy cows by beef cattle; the latter need less looking after but still keep the fields clean. Often, hectares of fertile pasture land were converted into pine plantations. Land that was not used productively was seldom sold to other farmers. The farmer's factory wages provided the family with enough money to live on and to pay for some consumer goods and improvements in and around the house that raised their standard of living. The family lacked the means or the motivation to bring the farm economy back on its original level. In the second model, both the farmer

himself, after his work in the factory, and his wife intensified their labour input on the farm. The off-farm income enabled them to accumulate capital and invest in cattle, the cowshed and light agricultural machines. Production remained on more or less the same level or was even raised. There even happened to be different ways to accomplish this: the farmer might invest most of his factory wages in his farming enterprise, or he might try to reinvest the income yielded by agrarian production.

Most part-time farmers and their families continued living on the farm, but others decided to settle in a nearby urban centre and only visited the holding once a day or a few times a week, just enough to keep an eye on it and give the animals a little extra fodder.

In the 1980s, there was a wider range of farm machinery available and most part-time farmers had the average 'package' of milk tank, milking machine, small tractor plus plough, field chopper, and mowing machine. Their level of mechanization exceeded that of many small-scale, full-time holdings. Again, there were differences among these part-time enterprises, from those where machines were in the first place meant to make farm work lighter and do things faster, to other holdings where they were used to increment farm production.

All in all, according to critics, there can be little doubt about it that part-time farming allowed the maintenance in agriculture of many small-scale holdings that would otherwise have disappeared; thus, the phenomenon is said to contribute to the obstruction of agricultural development.

8.3 The bad reputation of the part-time farmer

Not only in the Basque Country do part-time farmers have to face the negative judgement of rural development planners or modernizing farm owners. According to Zurek, part-timers in the Federal Republic of Germany are also "as a rule, discredited, often discriminated against and at best ignored by policymakers, scientists and administrators" (Zurek, 1986: 377). Gjelten (1984) gives a few examples of criticism of part-time farming that his Spanish respondents came up with. For instance, full-time farmers seemed to fear that part-timers would undermine farmers' political power as a result of their low participation rate in agricultural unions; industrial workers and their unions thought the presence of part-time farmers in industry might push the wage rate down, as the latter were supposed to accept lower wages than others. Planners seemed to be especially negative:

> "They say that the part-time farmer cultivates his land less carefully, is slower to adopt new technologies, is less efficient, and in general produces less than his full-time counterpart. Moreover, his decisions about which type of agriculture to practise will be motivated by time concerns rather than commercial concerns; the widespread practice of part-time farming could lead to an excess of those crops that are produced easily" (Gjelten, 1984: 41).

Similar criticism was also recorded by Eizner (1985: 111) with respect to part-time farming in France.

If a farmer accepts a full-time job in industry, the labour input on the farm of the other household members, especially the farmer's wife, is believed to increase considerably. Etxezarreta (1977, 1979) states that a part-time farmer, after his eight hours in the factory, usually works another seven hours on the farm, while his wife is engaged an average of 10.5 hours a day in agricultural activities, combining these with her domestic tasks - a situation she characterizes as an "intense deterioration of the quality of farm life" (Etxezarreta, 1977: 247). She also investigated what items part-time farming households spent their money on (see table 11; Etxezarreta, 1984) and comes to the conclusion that in general more money is invested in obtaining a higher living standard than in the purchase of means of production.

Table 11. Use of family savings; percentage of farm enterprises (in relation to the total number of investigated part-time farms) that invested in the mentioned categories (Gipuzkoa). Source: Etxezarreta, 1984; summarized.

house	durable consumer goods	machinery	buildings, installations	car	land	other
74.5	100	100	55.8	99.2	19.6	17.1

Almost all farm households in this category invested in durable consumer goods and the buying of a car, and many also spent money on improving the rural dwelling. As to 'productive investments', we see that fewer farmers spent money on the stables and outbuildings and only one fifth of them invested in the purchase or improvement of land. (The category of machinery is treated as an exception.)

Modernizing farmers among my own respondents mainly used to criticize part-timers for their supposed unwillingness to sell or lease land or their entire holding to other farmers who might be able to make a more productive use of it. The idea that part-time farmers impeded agricultural development also prevailed in both farmers' unions EHNE and ENBA. The former president of EHNE expressed this as follows:

> "Imagine me and my brothers would all start working in the factory. We would build our houses on the fields around the farm, perhaps keep a few cows and some sheep - and we would control this mountain. As a means of subsistence this whole area would be lost. Our children would also have to go and work in industry, for they would not be able to earn a living here."
> [Aldasoro, EHNE; IX/88]

Criticism of part-time farmers is, in my opinion, not always justified. Much of it is based on generalizations that are copied time and again and that eventually obtain the status of unchallenged truths. To begin with, criticism of different authors is sometimes mutually exclusive. One cannot state, for example, that household members on a part-time farm generally work far too

many hours, and at the same time maintain that as a consequence of part-time farming we may expect an overproduction of those products that demand little labour input. Some points of critique may also be outdated. Incidentally, it may still happen that farmers plant pinetrees on meadows or pastures, but this certainly does not occur as extensively as in the 1960s, and part-timers are not the only ones who must be held responsible for this. It is true that few part-time farmers would be willing to sell their land to other farmers, although we should keep in mind that this unwillingness is just as widespread among full-timers. On the other hand, my experience is that part-time farmers frequently lease scattered fields somewhat farther away from the farmhouse to large-scale farmers who normally use it for forage production. If this does not happen more often, it is because there is not a generalized, effective demand for land among modernizing, full-time farmers (see Section 5.6).

A minority of part-time farmers in Spain was said to belong to agricultural unions. If the same can be said of the Basque Country, such a low participation rate should hardly come as a surprise taking into account that neither of the Basque farmers' unions considered the defense of the part-timers' interests a priority (putting it mildly).

Etxezarreta's claim that most part-time farmers use their savings for consumptive rather than for productive investments is open to debate. Table 11 only indicates what percentage of part-timers invested in each of the categories mentioned, but not what percentage of their savings was actually spent on these different items. Part-time farm households normally have more savings and thus their choice of what to spend the money on is wider. It is possible that they first spent money on durable consumer goods, a car and the house and only later on farm buildings, machinery and land - whereas small-scale full-time farmers, who depended exclusively on the holding for their income, would give priority to more 'productive' investments. Moreover, the whole distinction between productive and consumptive investments is debatable. Investments in the house or in durable consumer goods may be part of a strategy to convince a future spouse to come and live on the farmstead or to content other family members. On a part-time holding, which in the absence of the head of farm depends on the labour input of spouse and next-of-kin, this is particularly important. And finally, Etxezarreta's own data show that on all part-time holdings investments were made in machinery. Technological improvements on the farm do not only help to save time, but can also reduce physical efforts, which is important on part-time farms where women or children may have to take over some of the heavier tasks that were formerly only done by men. What cannot be ignored is that many part-time farmers probably would not have realized such investments if they had continued working full-time on their holdings, either because they would have lacked the financial means, or because there would have been no need to do so.

Part-time farmers are accused of being less efficient and less progressive in adopting new technologies than their full-time colleagues. Yet, it is important to specify here with what category of full-time farmers the comparison is made. The main fallacy in much of the criticism against part-time farms is that they are, often implicitly, set against the reduced group of

modern, large-scale farming enterprises. As a result of this comparison, part-time holdings are almost invariably pictured as less productive, less efficient and not as innovation-minded as they should be. However, just as among full-timers, I would argue there are also important differences among part-time farming enterprises: as to their scale, their level of production, orientation on the market, readiness to adopt new technology, and so forth. These differences can be attributed to infrastructural and economic factors, like orography, plot dissemination, the condition of farm buildings, and the level of agricultural income and factory wages, as well as to social factors, such as family composition, age of household members, educational levels, job preferences, and power relations within the family. In this context, one might recall Cavaco's conclusion (in a study about part-time farming in the region around Lisbon) that "work off the holding by the household head or other members of the family unit does not necessarily imply under-use of productive resources, lower production per hectare, or lower productivity. Nor can this form of agriculture be regarded as the single or indeed main cause of the general stagnation of the agricultural sector" (Cavaco, 1985).

It is my contention that much of the criticism referred to can be traced back to the normative belief that part-time farming (just as 'traditional' farming) is hindering agricultural development. Such a perspective obscures the rationale of farmers themselves for their strategies.

In the following section, I will discuss the case of a farm where total revenues from agriculture increased when the future successor decided to take up a factory job, both due to the fact that other family members made up for the loss of labour force by intensifying their own labour input and because the introduction of new technology made it possible to reach a higher level of labour productivity.

8.4 Antolar: technology and family labour

When I visited this farm in the summer of 1989, the family household consisted of 8 people: Xabier (31) and his wife Edurne, their two young children, Xabier's parents and a younger sister and brother. An older brother and sister had both married and lived in towns nearby. Xabier's parents, who were still the official owners of the farm, were close to retirement; many years ago, it had already been decided that Xabier would inherit the holding and not his older brother, as the latter had left the village as soon as he had found a good office job elsewhere.

They had 13 dairy cows producing some 340 litres of milk per two days, which was all sold to the cooperative Gurelesa. Xabier also kept 14 beef cattle in the mountains. When Xabier had started working in industry, six years before, he wanted to work in shifts so that he would be better able to combine his job with his tasks on the farm. The work on the land was mainly done by Xabier, his younger sister Lorea (28) and their mother, whereas Edurne did most of the household; their father had problems with his shoulder and seized any opportunity to get out of doing too much work. Xabier's youngest brother, who was only 20, also had a factory job, but used to help on the farm in the evenings and at weekends. Lorea had a job of two hours a

day that provided her with some money and, just like her younger brother, she could keep her income for herself. Xabier invested most of his earnings in the farm. In recent years, he had bought several new machines and by the end of the 1980s he was considered to be the farmer with the most modern agricultural machinery in Zelaizabal and the surrounding villages.

All agreed that it had principally been because of mother Maria, her tenacity and zest for work, that the farm had prospered.

Maria

Maria was 63 in 1989, her husband two years older. When they married and she came to live on the farm, 39 years ago, there were two oxen and 5 Swiss cows on Antolar. The cows used to have one calf a year each, which were sold after a few months; Maria's mother-in-law made a cheese a day and sold them, together with some surplus farm products, on the weekly market in a nearby town. Maria: "I came from a farm where we had 8 dairy cows and my mother earned more money than my family-in-law. Two years passed, but I saw that we didn't have enough money. We had two nice calves, so I convinced my husband that we should sell them and buy a milch cow back. My father-in-law got angry: 'How on earth can you start selling milk?' But the following year we did the same, and the next, and by and by we progressed, and so finally we began to live." She also kept a few sows and started to breed piglets for which she prepared the mash food herself. The calves of the dairy cows were raised on the farm and then all sold after 14 to 16 months. In those days, cows were usually bought outside. "Only recently, through good quality artificial insemination, farmers have begun to raise heifers in order to replace their cows. Try to buy a good dairy cow today, it'll cost you more than a month's salary."

Maria's work on the farm consisted of feeding the animals, working in the kitchen garden and the forage fields, haymaking in summer, and the commercialization of eggs and chickens in town. They had always sold the milk through Gurelesa. Maria would have preferred to sell directly to consumers in town, but she did not have a driving licence. If she wanted to go to the market on Saturdays to sell her farm products, she had to go by bus, like so many farmers' women.

Twenty years ago, they were the first farmers in the village to buy a milking machine. They had some 10 cows by then and needed to buy several pieces of land. When Xabier was 16, they sold the oxen and bought a small tractor. Maria: "Xabier, unlike his oldest brother, didn't want to study - but he loved the farm."

Xabier

When Xabier was 12 years old, his father asked him to help him milk the cows, but Xabier only accepted if his father bought him a bicycle. Two years later he wanted a moped, and again he got what he asked for. "We did this, because we saw that he wanted to continue on the farm; when he was 14, he was already very strong and worked more than us," according to Maria. When he left primary school, he went to an agricultural school for two years

and after that, he bought a number of sheep of which he sold the lambs. He got his driving licence when he was 18, and then had to do his military service. When he came home again, his brother-in-law, a sales manager in a factory in a nearby town, offered Xabier a job, but his parents were against it. Maria: "We thought it would mean the end of the farm. Now I feel sorry that we stopped him: it's a lot of money he earns every month!" When he was 25, he finally accepted. The same year, he also married Edurne.

When Xabier started working in the factory, they had 12 dairy cows on the farm. Xabier had sold his sheep and kept 5 beef cows, instead. But then, during an anti-tuberculosis campaign, it turned out that several cows were infected, so their whole livestock had to be sacrificed. They had to start all over again. The provincial Administration gave subsidies to farmers who had to buy new cows, but estimated that 5 dairy cows were enough for an old couple with a married son working in industry. Nevertheless, they replaced all the cattle they had lost. Maria: "How much milk can you get from 5 cows? With the cows we have now (in 1989), we earn as much money on the farm as Xabier in industry."

After a few months, Xabier started working in three shifts which enabled him to work longer hours on the farm. He also began to work for other farmers with his machines and this work intensified when he bought a bigger tractor, three years later, and a hay-baler. He also had a big plough and a modern mowing machine with which he often worked for others. In 1989, he had more than 25 regular clients in the region. According to Xabier: "There are many farmers who have a small plough, but with the one I have the work is done much faster. And as for the hay-baler, few farmers make haystacks nowadays, they all prefer bales. On most farms there's more money and you see that people prefer paying some money in order to work less." In the time he worked for other farmers, he could also have done more tasks on his own farm, but he preferred the extra income. "While we're drinking a cup of coffee or having siesta, he goes away for an hour or so to bale or plough," said Lorea. Moreover, "when he has to work somewhere else, he knows that at home there are two people who'll do the work that he would've had to do," she added, referring to her mother and herself.

Lorea

Lorea regretted that she had left school when she was only 14 years old; later, she felt that it had been partly because of this that she had hardly had any opportunities to leave the farm. She had a small income from a part-time job and for the rest of the day she worked in and around the house. She helped her sister-in-law with the household, her mother in the garden and the fields and her brother in the mountains and with the haymaking. She hardly had any fixed tasks, but normally did what she was told to do by her mother or Xabier. She often had to work with the small farm machines, something she quite enjoyed, and she was the only one who, in the absence of her brothers, was able to handle the big tractor. However, she had never wanted to learn how to milk the cows. This was her father's job and she feared that, once she had learned, she would have to do that as well.

She worked hard, but on the other hand she could sometimes sunbathe

for more than an hour in the afternoon, or go shopping in town in the morning, without anyone criticizing her for that. About her work on the farm she said: "I wouldn't want to do this work all my life. I wouldn't marry a farmer, or in any case, I wouldn't continue living on the farm." Her ideal was to get married, have children and 'live her own life'. She and her boyfriend were looking fore a suitable flat in town and within a year or so she expected to get married and leave her parents' holding. Her mother considered a wedding and her own house to be Lorea's remuneration for so many years of hard work. Lorea said that after her marriage she would probably visit the farm regularly in order to help her parents: "When I know that they are busy making hay, for example, I would not go shopping." But she would not do the same for her brother. Lorea's major complaint was that her brother did not value all the things she did. This also became evident when I asked Xabier, in the presence of the other family members, what things they would have to change on the farm, when Lorea and their younger brother married and left, and how they would manage. He answered: "They don't help in the cowshed. As for the forage fields, we'll get rid of part of the maize and the beans. And haymaking is something I can do practically alone with the machines. Anyway, they only help a little in summer; in winter there's hardly anything to do here. And remember that within a few years my son can help as well."

Nevertheless, they all recognized that they would have to reduce the number of cows in the future. Xabier said he first wanted to pay off his debts, which would cost him a few years (they had rebuilt the whole farmhouse that year), and then he would get rid of the dairy cows and only keep beef cattle in the mountains. His sister and brother would leave, and within five years or so he did not expect his parents to be able to work as much as they did then. "If you work in shifts, you can hardly combine this with milking times. Only once every three weeks, when I work from 10 pm. to 6 am., could I milk the cows at regular hours. But with my income and some beef cattle we'll have enough to make ends meet. And I would of course continue working for other farmers with my machines."

In 1996, there were 7 people living on the farm: Edurne and Xabier had had another daughter, whereas Lorea and her younger brother had married and now lived somewhere else. They had 13 dairy cows and 6 heifers and kept 11 beef cattle. Their total milk-yield had also increased (although their production of 580 litres per two days was somewhat flattered due to the fact that several cows had given birth in the same period; in winter, total production would be below normal). Xabier had bought a bigger pick-up cart and, together with a cousin of a neighbouring farm and Joseba of Etxeberri (see Section 5.1), a machine to make silage bales. Xabier did even more contract-work for other farmers than before. Edurne: "All farmers seem to have modernized so much; nobody wants to work, they all make bales. Xabier and Joseba have so much work, both with the silage and the hay baler, that they can't keep up."

Maria did not keep pigs anymore. But she still worked in the garden and the forage fields and went to town once a week to sell eggs. She also had to milk the cows, because the health problems of her husband had aggravated. In summer, Maria and her husband did not work as much in the hayfields as

before. Therefore, Edurne had to do this heavy work more than in the past. She also had more things to do in the house and sometimes helped her mother-in-law in the cowshed, though she could not milk the cows (as a matter of fact, when she married Xabier, she had made the condition that she would not have to learn it). Lorea visited them almost every day to lend a hand. And their youngest brother used to come and work every weekend, and even on workdays he frequently helped them in the evenings.

Two years ago, Maria and her husband had been on holiday to the Mediterranean coast for two weeks, and in 1995 Edurne and Xabier and their children had been there for a few days, too. The problem was that the employees in the factory where Xabier worked had to take up their holidays in July, when there was a lot of work to do on the farm. If they wanted to go away, it could not possibly be for more than a long weekend. It would have been better, they said, if they could have had a week off in September, when the haymaking season was over; their parents, with the help of one of the other children, would have been able to do most of the tasks without working much harder.

8.5 The social organization of family labour

The following factors were of influence on the social organization of family labour and particularly on the allocation of tasks among household members:

- Gender. On the Antolar farm, Edurne ran the household, Maria and Lorea (with the help of Maria's husband) worked in the garden and the forage fields, Xabier and his younger brother (with the help of Lorea, and in the haymaking season with the help of everyone else) did all the work in the meadows and the pasture fields, and Xabier (sometimes with the help of his brother) used to work in the mountains. This was a pattern that was also valid for most other farms, which gives the impression that we have to do with a cultural trait. Keeping in mind figure 5 of Section 5.7, the distribution of gender related labour on the farm may be sketched as in Figure 14. The work in the cowshed, pigsty, stables, etc. was normally done by both the farmer and his wife. In relation to this, it must be noted that they were normally the men who worked with agricultural machines, whereas the women worked with non-mechanical tools (Lorea was known in the village for being an exception to this rule!).
- Physical abilities. We saw that Maria's husband, due to his health problems, could only carry out a limited number of tasks, and even Maria herself found that some work was becoming too strenuous for her.
- Knowledge and ability to carry out the tasks successfully. Xabier's parents, like so many aged farmers in the region, did not know how to work with most of the agricultural machines, and now that Lorea did not live on the farm any longer, the work in the fields often had to wait until Xabier was back from the factory. On a neighbouring farm, the son normally worked on his tractor, while his father still used to cut grass with a scythe and transport it on a cart pulled by a mule.

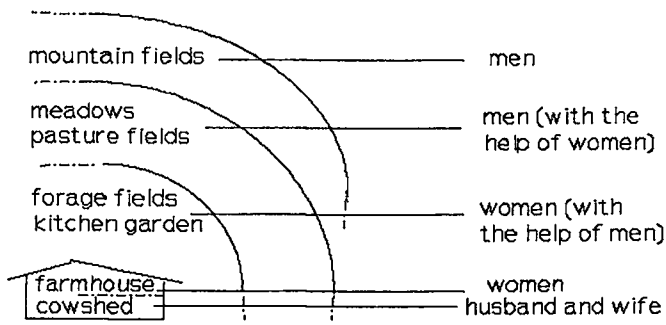

Figure 14. Gender related task allocation

- Personal preferences. One's dislike towards a certain task may, for instance, be translated into what we could call 'strategic ignorance': Lorea and Edurne refused to learn how to milk the cows so as to avoid having to do this work. On the other hand, Lorea could work with the mechanical field chopper for several hours, and in the burning sun (a much heavier job than milking the cows for half an hour!), and nevertheless say she enjoyed this work. She derived a certain status from her work with machines and it also enabled her to escape outside control for some time.
- Drudgery versus leisure. It was accepted that Lorea, after having done very strenuous work the day before, had the 'right' to lie in the sun for a couple of hours. And when Lorea and her younger brother still lived on the farm, they frequently went out at the weekend and used to go on a short holiday in summer. Conversely, it seemed to be an accepted fact that the farm owners and the succeeding couple were more tied to the holding; Maria and her husband and Xabier and his family had only recently begun to take a few days off.
- Authority and task autonomy (the power to influence other people's or one's own task performance). Maria and Xabier decided themselves which tasks had to be carried out and in what order; for them, design, execution and control of their work were concentrated in one hand (de Rooij, 1992). Whereas Lorea's work could best be characterized as "a complex of unrelated and disembodied tasks dispersed over the entire production process" (de Rooij, 1994: 73); often, others decided what tasks she had to do. The difference between having one's own 'labour domain' and doing 'work of the second order' (ibid.) determines to a large extent one's job satisfaction.
- Expected remuneration. For most people, this remuneration is not only measured in terms of money; other factors such as recognition for the tasks they carried out, the personal satisfaction of having done a certain job particularly well, or being able to take relevant decisions related to one's task performance are equally important.

One thing this discussion shows is that at the level of individual household members it is far too simple to depict Chayanov's subjective evaluation of labour drudgery and remuneration in terms of physical exertion versus money and goods. These family members do make such subjective evaluations, though not only confronting two, but a whole gamut of dimensions. For individual actors, drudgery and remuneration are social constructions (defined in relation to 'relevant others', such as rural peers or urban reference groups); they are made up of a variety of elements and mean different things to different people. If we accept that household members make similar evaluations as to their personal projects as the undifferentiated farm household does according to Chayanov's model, the individual actor's evaluation of drudgery and remuneration could graphically be represented as in Figure 15, that is as clusters of curves (in theory, one for each constituent element) intersecting with each other, whereby the equilibrium is not just one point but a rather diffuse area of intersections.

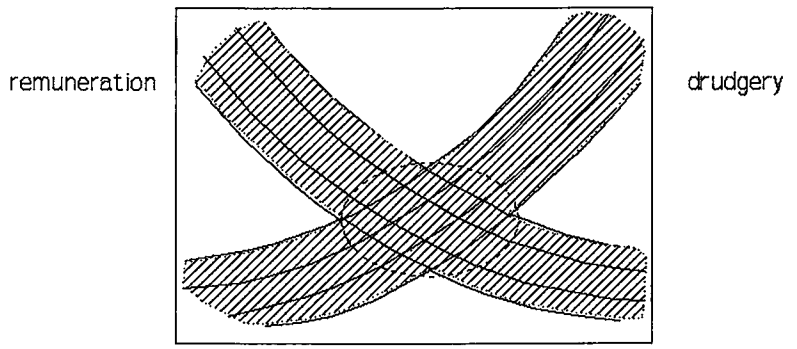

Figure 15. The actor's equilibrium of subjective evaluations.

The mobilization of the internal network by the senior farmer or the successor, and thus the social organization of labour on the farm, comes about through negotiations among family members over the personal projects individual members aim to realize, projects that are outlined on the basis of the 'area of equilibrium' of each member's subjective evaluations. This area can be seen as a metaphor for the actor's room for negotiation versus others. And it is the outcome of these negotiations which eventually determines to what extent family members are prepared to carry out farm household strategies.

If we accept that the eventual pattern of family labour organization comes about on the basis of negotiations among these family members over their personal projects and preferences, it should be noted that these negotiations are seldom explicit. Over the years, family members have learned to 'read the

arguments of others between the lines'; preferences have become taken for granted and struggles over work to be carried out ritualized. For this reason, the organization of family labour, which is in principle short-time and liable to be changed as a result of new negotiations, is often surprisingly stable (so much so that we may indeed speak of 'patterns').

I have argued before that social skills are important for farm heads (senior farmers or their successors) who need to enrol other household members into their projects in order to turn their farming strategies into a success. The farmer's authority alone is not sufficient to guarantee the mobilization of enough labour power within a society where there are several labour and thus income alternatives available for family members. For girls even marriage may be a possibility to break away from their father's or brother's authority, as the Antolar case shows. The farm heads' own labour input radiates a strong moral influence on their next of kin. On Antolar, Xabier and Maria worked so hard that it was felt they had the right to expect similar efforts of the rest of the family. It meant, for instance, that Xabier could tacitly count on his relatives to exert themselves a little more when he had to work somewhere else with his machines. In other words, contract-work, like all other interlocking projects that demand the withdrawal of labour from other farm tasks, is only possible thanks to the organization of family labour.

It should be recognized, of course, that the example of the Antolar farm can not easily be generalized to other part-time holdings. The case suggests that raising production to a considerably higher level, comparable to that of modern enterprises, was only possible if two important conditions were fulfilled. One, there had to be enough family members on the farm who were able and willing to work harder when their brother or father was working in the factory. And two, one of them should be able to handle the most important machines, or the part-time farmer's working hours should allow him enough time to work with the machinery himself. Big investments, for instance in a hay or silage baler, were only profitable if the farmer could carry out contract-work with the machines on fields of other holdings. And that was only feasible for a part-time farmer who worked in shifts, as this allowed him to dedicate roughly two-thirds of a full-timer's working day to farm work. A part-timer who had a regular eight-to-six job would barely have enough time to work on his own farm. Important was also that shift-work was relatively well-paid, better than an ordinary job, which made it easier for the farmer in question to bear the expenses of such investments. One or two contract-workers sufficed to meet the demands of farmers in a village, so that a specialization in contract-work would only be a viable strategy for a few of them.

8.6 The rationale of part-time farming

In most cases the expected difficulty to earn a living exclusively with farming makes a farmer decide to find an off-farm job, but many a time this decision is also taken in spite of favourable economic perspectives. One of my respondents explained: "My parents' farm is a full-time enterprise with excellent profitability. The income you can get out of a farm like my parents'

you could never earn in industry, no matter what titles you have. The problem is that you're too tied down by your work. That's why my younger brother, who's going to take over the farm, will find a job outside and just keep a few beef cows."

As to the reasons for part-time farming, I would argue that there has been a shift from economic motives in former decades (1960 to 1980) to predominantly social motives in more recent years. In the past, farmers with an income from agriculture that was too low to guarantee the reproduction of the farm used to take up a job in industry in order to increase their total income level. Occasionally, the income from farming remained higher than factory wages, which were seen as supplementing farm revenues, but more often the main part of the family's income was earned in industry. A farmer's principal motive for trying to find off-farm work was money. As one of these farmers said: "I saw that more and more friends who worked a few hours in industry earned a lot more than I did - so then I decided to find a job, too."

The evaluations of young farmers nowadays can best be illustrated through the following dialogue I recorded between Edurne and Xabier of the Antolar farm:

Xabier: "People here will probably continue working on the farm. But the worst thing as to farming, in my view, is that you have to work on Saturdays and Sundays.

Edurne: "And the money. (..) You alone earn 200.000 pesetas a month in the factory. In order to get the same income out of farming, we have to work the six of us. And that's how it is on all farms. (..) One of the sons on the M... farm doesn't have more than 80.000 pesetas a month in the factory where he works, but if he stayed on the farm, his father would never be able to pay him that much."

Xabier: "If you work hard on the farm, you can earn quite a lot of money. But it's too tied. (..) Young people nowadays go out on Friday evening and come home late at night; on Saturday morning they wake up late or they have a siesta after lunch - and in the evening they go out again. They come home on Sunday morning at 6.00 or 7.00, when their father has already begun to milk the cows. That's no way to run a farm! (..) On work days, everybody works without protesting, but on Saturdays and Sundays... At five o'clock your friends go out and you want to go with them."

Edurne: "And if you don't go out with your friends, you'll just become another bachelor, like so many farmers' sons. (..) Look at my brother. Maybe his girl-friend doesn't want to go and live on the farm. (Edurne's brother was about to take over his parents' farm; HvdB.)

Xabier: "He's got a lot of cows and he doesn't have any debts."

Edurne: "No debts, but he can't buy a new tractor either, even though he needs one."

Xabier: "He can't? But he could buy a new car, couldn't he? As a farmer, you buy a tractor before you buy a car, I'd say. But he bought a new car so he could go to town with his girl-friend once a week."

Edurne: "He's 24. What should he have done? Buy a new tractor and not go out with his girl-friend?"

[Antolar, X/89]

Let us follow the line of reasoning of the son who succeeded to a small or medium-sized (and even on many a large-scale) holding in recent years. He knew that if he stayed on the farm, his father would never be able to pay him as much as what he would earn having a factory job. He might accept this situation knowing that one day the holding would be his. His attitude towards work and free time had to be in accordance with was generally expected of a future farm owner and he would no doubt be subject to his parents' criticism if his behaviour was considered inappropriate or irresponsible. But at the same time he realized that if he did not go out every once in a while, it would be difficult to meet a girl who might be willing to become his wife; there was a real danger he would remain a bachelor.

If he had a girl-friend, and especially if she had an urban background, she would probably find it hard to accept that he sometimes had to give priority to working on the farm over going out with her. More than once he might be tempted to sacrifice farm interests rather than put his relationship at stake. Being in charge of the holding, he would only be able to get a good income out of farming with a large herd and working almost day and night, preferably with the help of other people, like his parents and his wife. But it was a well-known fact that more and more women had their own job and that very few were willing to give up their career in order to help their husbands on the farm. The prospect that years of hard work and little free time, earning an income that perhaps at best equaled industrial wages, might put pressure on his marriage was not very promising either.

No wonder, that on succession many farmers' sons continued a full-time holding as a part-time enterprise. This was true in almost all cases where prior to succession they already had a job in industry.[42] The major part of the household's income was earned in the factory, whereas the farm sometimes yielded a smaller income (this is what Gasson, 1986, calles 'spare time farming'). Very often, however, there was no substantial income from farming at all; in those cases, the farm's contribution to the household economy lay mainly in the family's savings on food (this is termed 'hobby farming'; ibid.).

Hence, in the 1960s and 70s the majority of farmers who chose to combine their farm holdings with a job in industry did so in order to satisfy income needs. This motive may still have played a role for farmers in more recent years, but social motives have become much more dominant. Mainly as a result of the growing contacts between town and countryside and the ever greater influence of the mass media, leisure has become a highly appreciated good among farmers and their wives. The emulation of the urban consumption

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[42] That is also in line with Gasson's observation (for England and Wales) that "the switch from full to part time farming may occur at the point of succession, when full time farmers hand over to sons who do not relinquish their off farm employment" (Gasson, 1986: 373).

pattern also implies, for example, going out now and then and having a few weeks off in summer. This is hardly compatible with running a full-time dairy farm.

As a matter of fact, a greater preference for more free time and fewer hardships can not only be detected among part-time farmers. On many farm enterprises, both full-time and part-time, I observed that the owners were quite willing to pay for the services of a contract-worker so as to avoid having to do the heavy work themselves. In Zelaizabal, of the more than twenty farms where Xabier regularly carried out contract-work two-thirds were full-time holdings. In general terms, we may conclude that, due to the penetration of urban values in the countryside, the need for farmers (and not only for those of the youngest generation) to satisfy their preference for leisure has increased considerably.

8.7 Part-time farming: a long-term solution?

The literature shows that in several countries part-time farmers form a group with a high rate of turnover: that is, full-time farmers become part-timers, other part-time farmers give up and leave the sector, and people with an urban background buy a holding and combine their job in industry with some agricultural production (Gasson, 1986: 370-372). In Gipuzkoa the incidence of city dwellers entering the rural sector, not just as weekend or holiday visitors, but settling permanently on a farm while maintaining their work in town, was still insignificant. Nevertheless, regional policymakers had probably better anticipate an increase of this phenomenon in future years.

In the 1980s, Etxezarreta claimed that there were hardly any indications of the existence of second generation part-time farming in the Basque Country (Etxezarreta, 1984). There was also evidence in both the Federal Republic of Germany and in England and Wales that "part time farmers are less likely than full timers to have successors" (Gasson, 1986: 369). The situation in the Basque Country, however, seems to have changed. I would argue that there seems to be enough evidence to hypothesize a tendency from full-time to part-time (i.e. spare-time) farming, and from the latter to hobby farming.

My own findings with respect to succession on full-time and part-time farms are based on more or less extensive information (gathered in 1989) about 38 holdings in Zelaizabal (see Table 12). Of the 12 part-time farms, 4 were run by aged, childless couples or old bachelors; 3 holdings were expected to be taken over as spare-time or hobby farms; and on 5 farms the children were too young to be able to say anything about succession yet. As to the 26 full-time farms, 7 would have no successors in the first line; 6 would probably be continued as hobby farms and 8 as spare-time (or hobby) farms; 5 were supposed to be taken over as full-time enterprises, although in some cases the possibility of part-time succession was held open. (In 1996, it turned out that only 3 farms in the village would be continued as full-time enterprises.)

Table 12. Generational tendency in dedication to farming.

	expected dedication for the following generation				
in 1989	full-time	spare-time	hobby	no succession	unknown
full-time	5 (3)	8 (10)	6	7	-
part-time	-	3		4	5

The information about part-time holdings is probably too scarce to draw any conclusions, but the data on full-time enterprises suggest a tendency towards part-time or hobby farms in the following generation. However, this is not to say that we are witnessing a stage-wise evolution towards the final proletarianization of these farmers. As yet, there are no indications that, for example, hobby farming brings a household closer to the eventual abandonment of the holding. Some plots may be leased to other farmers but hardly ever is all the land sold. It can not be entirely excluded that in times of economic recession and rising unemployment figures these part-time holdings are again developed into full-time enterprises.

Nowadays, full-time or part-time farmers who give up most of their agricultural activities seldom abandon the farmstead; together with the adoption of a more urban leisure pattern, they have learned to appreciate their living in the countryside (see Chapter 3). Thus, for the coming years we can expect a reduction of the percentage of full-time farmers, whereas the group of part-time and hobby farmers will grow, probably not only as a percentage of the total farming population, but also in absolute numbers.

Zurek goes so far as to state that in developed societies, "part time farming will be the only long-term solution to keep (disadvantaged rural areas) functionally and structurally intact to the benefit of its inhabitants and of the whole society" (Zurek, 1986: 383). Mendras makes the observation that in France, in the 1960s, part-time farming was generally believed to be the preliminary step towards the farmer's final abandonment of the agricultural sector - but twenty years later already more than fifty percent of the farm holdings turned out to be run by part-timers. (See for a similar development in Sweden: Persson, 1983.) If this is so, Mendras says, "should we not revise our knowledge and design a policy on pluriactivity, instead of still treating it as an exception to the norm?" (Mendras, 1987: 334; my translation). In view of what I have said before about the expected changing composition of the farming population in Gipuzkoa, I think the same question may be asked as regards the agricultural policy in the Basque Country.

The incidence of part-time farming need not be as negative for the evolution of full-time enterprises as is often assumed. After all, part-time farmers are often more willing to lease (though not to sell) some plots of land to expanding farmers than the many aged full-timers. On the other hand, however, it is far from hypothetical that in the long run the growing number

of part-time farmers will lead to an excessive popularity of those production lines that demand relatively little labour input (Gjelten, 1984; see Section 8.3), for example different breeds of beef cattle. It might be worth investigating how the consequent production increase would affect farmers who specialize in those products.

8.8 Conclusions

The definition of the part-time holding as used in this study is that of a farm enterprise where either the senior farmer (occasionally his wife) or his successor has a paid job outside the farm; in the case of the successor it is further assumed that the greater part of his off-farm income is invested in the holding, and that his labour input is of considerable influence on how the farm is run. In this I have adopted the, in my eyes, most correct definition of the phenomenon from the literature, and tailored it to the Basque situation in such a way that it also dovetailed with the 'folk-understanding' of part-time farming.

I have then argued that there is a fundamental fallacy in the implicit comparison of the part-time farmer with the modern full-timer on which much of the criticism against the former is based: that he does not make efficient use of his means of production and is little innovation-minded. The category of part-time holdings is highly differentiated: among them there are many small-scale, marginal farms, but also some quite modern enterprises. In the case of the Antolar farm, we saw how much labour and capital Xabier put into the farming enterprise, albeit perhaps not so much into dairy cows, but mainly into machinery and contract-work. Such a pattern of allocation of resources was only possible for a minority of part-timers. What it amounts to, though, is that he as well as most other part-time farmers have been able to create a farming enterprise which is maintained and reproduced in combination with off-farm earnings. And, as they say themselves, they have had to do this normally without being able to qualify for most of the financial support that full-time farmers are entitled to. Already twenty years ago Greenwood pleaded for cautiousness as to the interpretation of part-time farming. At a time when most observers in the Basque Country stressed its negative consequences for the structure of regional agriculture, he wrote about the phenomenon of farmers having an outside job that: "Rather than being a necessary sign of agricultural collapse, it may indicate a strong commitment to agriculture on marginal farms" (Greenwood, 1976: 206). Although some of the criticism concerning part-time farmers may be correct, in general it does not apply more to them than to most average full-timers.

The reason why many farmers, or their successors, are no longer willing to continue their holding on a full-time basis has changed over the years. Formerly, their decisions were mainly based on economic considerations: they saw that they could earn more in the factory than on the farm, and by working less. Nowadays, social motives are dominant. From the moment they leave school to the time that they actually have to decide in what form they will continue the parental holding, farmers' sons have a long time to compare their own situation with that of their peers in the urban sector; and many of

them realize how difficult it will be to emulate the latters' consumption level and especially their leisure pattern when working exclusively on the farm (the more so if it concerns a dairy farm).

Apart from the treadmill of investment and expansion I referred to in the earlier chapters, I would argue there is another treadmill, one of relative deprivation - whereby this deprivation concerns both material and immaterial consumer goods. This social treadmill even affects those who managed to withdraw from the techno-economic treadmill and is therefore, I believe, much more coercive than the latter.

If on a part-time farm only the husband has an off-farm job, his wife will normally have a greater responsibility for the holding, which grows with the productiveness of the enterprise: having a semi-independent labour domain, her decision power as to how the farm should be run is likely to be stronger than that of the wife of, for instance, a full-time dairy farmer. However, this will seldom be a strong enough motive for the future spouse of a young successor to opt for a career in farming.

Potential spouses of farmers, including those with a rural background, generally make higher demands on the family's lifestyle than in the past. Many of them have their own jobs and are not easily inclined to give them up upon marriage. A successor who does not want to remain a bachelor knows he had better respect these wishes. (Possible consequences of this development will be discussed in Chapter 9.)

The preliminary conclusion should be that, seen in the light of farmers' personal evaluations, running a part-time enterprise often guarantees the farm household the most flexible labour system. During the active period of household members they enjoy the advantages of both their participation in the industrial sector (wages, social securities, building up an old-age pension) and farm life (savings on food, knowing what you eat, a relatively cheap dwelling, living in healthy surroundings).

In this chapter, I have furthermore dwelt upon some points concerning the labour organization of the family household, which do not exclusively apply to part-time farm enterprises. In the first place, we have seen that children who have married and now live elsewhere generally still help on their parents' farm at times when the extra labour is needed, particularly during the hay-making season. (We saw this on the Antolar farm, but also earlier on Landa-berri and Eguzkitza, see Chapter 6.) The distinction we have made before between the senior and succeeding couple, on the one hand, and the other siblings living on the farm, on the other, should be extended to those siblings living elsewhere. These three categories can be distinguished according to their decision power concerning farming strategies and the labour and capital input into the farm enterprise that is expected from them.

Secondly, I have hinted at the relation between the organization of labour on the family farm and the maintenance of external social networks. The articulation of the personal projects of household members, on which the social organization of family labour is based, is influenced by factors like the rural norms on the gender-based division of labour and on intra-family power relations, the individual qualities of household members (their knowledge and physical capacities), their personal preferences and motivations: this articulation comes about in the interface between rural and urban cultural

values. The farmer's management qualities as to the mobilization of family labour can be inferred from his capacity to steer the articulation in such a way that all household members experience, to a greater or lesser degree, a positive balance of remuneration and drudgery in relation to their own, personal projects. That is how he manages to enrol the other members of his family into the overall farming strategy. Only if the labour of family members can be effectively mobilized when needed, is it possible to establish and maintain external social networks. On the other hand, it may partly be because of these networks that the farm enterprise is able to function successfully - and that is what the farm head may need to continue to mobilize enough family labour power.

PART III

O baserritxo artuko dezu, biotz barrenetikan min,
eskerrak mirik ez dezu eta, ezin dezu gaur itzegin.
Zenbat famili azi dezuen, Jainkuak bakarrik jakin,
orain bakarrik uzten zaituzte, ondotik danak aldegin.

(O farmstead, you'll feel pain in your heart,
fortunately you don't have a tongue and today you can't speak.
Only God knows how many families you have raised,
and now they leave you alone, they are all leaving you behind.)

The late *bertsolari* José Miguel Iztueta 'Lazkao Txiki'
(cited in *El Diario Vasco*, 6 February 1993)

Chapter 9

LEISURE, MARRIAGE AND THE COMMON PROJECT

In Part II, I discussed the farming strategies of different types of farm households in relation to the corresponding mobilization of external social networks and the organization of family labour on those farms. In this chapter I shall deal more particularly with strategies that successors devise to ensure that conditions for succession coincide with their own personal projects as to the future of the holdings (or, put differently, to make sure that their image of the future of the farm overlaps the image of the future of Self). These conditions for succession mainly concern (1) the possibility of mobilizing enough resources (particularly labour) to enable the successor to have the lifestyle he aspires to, and (2) finding a spouse who does not object to living on the holding.

9.1 Money, labour and lifestyle

In former years, when male primogeniture was the dominant form of succession on Basque farms, the successor did not bother to ask himself whether or not his images of the future of Self and the farm coincided: as the oldest son his position as sole heir to the holding was seldom challenged. He had been prepared for his tasks for years, and his being the future owner (or tenant) of a farm with landed property assured him a considerable status within the rural community. The aspiration to reach the status of farm owner often motivated younger sons, who knew they had no chance of inheriting their parents' holding, to get a job as a farm-hand (*morroi* in Basque) on a farm with only daughters, where they would then work for many years in the hope to marry one of these daughters and eventually take over the parents-in-law's farming enterprise.

But this all changed quite drastically. When the industrialization of the Basque Country asked for more and more workers from the countryside, farming became identified with rusticity and ignorance; the farming population felt looked down upon by townspeople. In recent years, the picture may have become more balanced: urban residents began to see the advantages of a healthier way of life and living in a natural environment, while the nationalists among them recognized the important role the farming population had played in maintaining the Basque language and cultural heritage to our days. But on the whole, the air of superiority with which the rural population was sometimes treated by especially people from the provincial capitals showed that among many townsmen and women the image of the farmers as uncivilized and backward people still prevailed. Several times I observed that farmwomen who went shopping in town thought it very important to be extremely well-dressed, well-coiffured and made up, so that they would not be identified as 'countryfolk'.

But also the way townspeople were perceived by the rural population changed over time. Formerly, the term *kaletarrak*, or 'streetfolk', which

farmers attributed to all those who did not live on the farmstead, "had pejorative overtones of poverty and rootlessness" (Douglass, 1976: 47). But since the industrialization boom, the urban workers with their relatively high incomes for which they had to work much less than the average farmer became a more positive point of reference for young and old farm residents. More and more farmers started to combine their agricultural labour with a job in industry. In more recent years, it was no longer just the urban people's income level (or 'living-standard', in a more restricted sense) which appealed to farm residents, but also their leisure pattern and general lifestyle. The implications of this were particularly important for the sons (or occasionally daughters) who would succeed to their parents' holdings. Many a farmers' son, knowing his future life as the owner of an agricultural enterprise would be rather different from that of urban youth, definitely did not want it to be worse.

I argued in Chapter 6 that a dual succession pattern had arisen: expanding, modernizing farm enterprises were inherited by the most capable and motivated sons, whereas succession to those holdings that were believed to become marginalized in the near future depended on the last son (sometimes daughter) to marry. I also mentioned that there was no clear causal relationship between the structure of the farm and the form of succession. Succession was rather a 'dialectical' process. If the parents realized that none of their children was sufficiently motivated to continue the holding as a productive business, they would gradually phase down the enterprise, so that marginalization became inevitable. Conversely, if one of their sons had expressed his desire to continue the farm on a full-time basis, they were likely to do their best to invest in new machinery and infrastructural improvements. All the same, miscalculations could not always be avoided, as the example of the Iriondo farm showed (see Section 7.3).

If a successor had no intention to continue his parents' farm as a productive enterprise, but only occupied the farmstead as a dwelling-place while having a full-time job in the industrial sector, he was unlikely to experience many impediments to emulate the lifestyle of his urban colleagues. He had a relatively high and fixed wage, legally established holidays, and normally not such an extensive livestock that it would tie him to the holding day in and day out. For successors who intended to continue the farm as a fully productive business it would be far more complicated to model their consumption and leisure pattern on that of their urban reference group. They would have to mobilize enough labour power and attune this effectively to the work to be done if they wanted to go on holiday or have a free Sunday every once in a while. In order to maintain their income on an acceptable level they should at the same time keep up with the treadmill of expansion and mechanization (or concentrate on labour intensive quality production, but this made it even more difficult to imitate urban leisure patterns).

One way to get round the problem of labour shortage after succession is to continue the parental holding among two or more successors. (The reader may remember that this was the suggestion of Iñigo of the Iriondo farm, put into practice by the two brothers, Iñaki and Antxon, of the farm Garibai; see Section 7.4.) The alternative would be to join two or more holdings and run them as one. There were some experiences of joint farming enterprises,

among relatives or close friends, or small-scale cooperative undertakings, which were quite successful. Yet, the general opinion in the field was that mutual distrust among farmers made this scenerio extremely difficult to realize. (Remember, for example, what Pilar of the Beko-etxe farm said about this; see Section 6.1.) This distrust was not totally unfounded: there were perhaps not many, but some very notorious examples of joint enterprises that had failed as a result of misbehaviour of one of the partners. I was repeatedly told the story of four farmers (who had no kin relationship) who for some time had privately pasteurized their aggregate milk production; the milk was hawked on the streets. A successful enterprise until it was discovered that one of them, before distributing the milk, and without the others knowing about it, used to water the milk down. The group fell apart and the three aggrieved farmers, having lost the confidence of their clients, began to deliver their milk to the factory. Stories like this one tended to get a life of their own: their symbolic meaning (of warning, of reaffirmation of values like individualism and relying only on oneself) thus exceeded their mere discursive content.

Hence, the general pattern was for successors to continue their parents' farm on an individual basis. In former chapters I have hinted at the tendency of farming households to substitute money for labour as a way to get round the problem of mobilizing the necessary labour power at the right time. It became more and more common for farmers to contract someone with heavy machines, like hay or silage balers, for a few hours instead of doing the more strenuous tasks themselves. This even held good for the older farmers who had done the most tiresome work by hand all their lives. On the other hand, farmers in possession of extensive machinery adequately responded to this growing demand; they would prefer the money they could earn with this, even if it meant that work to be done on their own land had to wait. The preference for money of these, predominantly young, farmers could bring them into conflict with their fathers, who would stick to the cultural value that 'farm work should be done at the right time' and who might fear being criticized by people from their own group of reference: the other old farmers in the village.

A farmer who fell ill or wanted to go on holiday for a week or two could contract a specialized farm-worker from Lurgintza or EHNE (see Chapter 4) to look after his holding. Although this service was not yet extensively used, it was gradually becoming more popular.

Contracting a farmer with his machines for a few days or a specialized worker for two weeks would solve the problem of labour shortage during incidental labour peaks or allow a farm family to go on holiday, but the general problem of being able to do the usual tasks from day to day, including most weekends, remained. In Chapter 5 (see Section 5.8), it was argued that the phenomenon of late marriage among Basque farmers in combination with the increase of the size of viable farm units tended to aggravate this problem for many farmers, and perhaps especially for those running the biggest and most modernized farm enterprises. That was the reason why members of farming households used to emphasize how important it was that parents and other siblings living on the farmstead continued to assist the successors for as long as possible, and that brothers and sisters who lived elsewhere regularly

came round to lend a hand.

But having a farm with enough land, cows, machinery and labour power did not suffice. The successor himself also needed the required qualities, such as knowledge and physical and social capabilities, to run the holding successfully. And even if these conditions were met and the perspectives for a successful economic undertaking were good (as in the case of the Eguzkitza farm, for instance; see Section 6.2), the successor might nonetheless prefer to continue the holding as a spare-time activity. It was in this context that I spoke of the crucial importance of the successor's motivation (which in agriculture is normally understood in terms of 'vocation for farming').

A successor's motivation is partly based on his assessment of the probability of economic success (in the light of the production factors present, his personal qualities and the market possibilities), but should above all be traced back to his job preference - i.e. does he expect farming to contribute to his 'self-realization'? Besides, it should not be forgotten that someone's motivation is often ideologically or organizationally boosted - a potential successor may, for example, draw on the farmer ideology of one of the farmers' unions (their views on farming as a 'useful' activity for society) or feel supported by a professional association like Baserriko Esnea. Motivation, however, should not be taken as a residual *explanans*, which would happen if we simply followed the reasoning that if the holding is not continued as a full-time enterprise in spite of its good perspectives, it must be because of lack of motivation of the successor. The reverse is equally valid: if a successor is highly motivated to continue his parents' farm business, he will do anything to mobilize enough resources to make his enterprise a success. And, of course, a successor may fail despite his motivation or, conversely, be rather successful (through favourable circumstances, help of others or simply luck) without being excessively motivated. As I pointed out before (cf. Section 6.5), a person's motivation to continue a holding as a productive unit may often be deduced from the privations he had put up with in order to reach this goal.

A crucial factor in relation to the successor's decision as to the terms on which the farm will be taken over is the quality of the relationship with his father. This relationship is usually characterized by the authority of the senior farmer over his son, which not only affected the latter's conduct of business but sometimes also his personal way of life. As Gasson observes: "The spectacle of elderly farmers holding firmly to the reins and refusing to retire in favour of their sons is a familiar one to agricultural economists and rural sociologists" (Gasson, 1980: 176), and the situation in the Basque Country can hardly be called an exception. Even though management control over the farm was normally tranferred to the successor upon the retirement of the senior couple, this seldom refrained the parents from interfering with how the farm was run. Thus, the hierarchical relationship between the parents and their succeeding son was a potential source of friction, and even more so if the son was married. The son himself would perhaps not be unwilling to overlook this, but for his wife it might be more difficult to accept. A successor with the intention to continue the holding on a full-time basis might reconsider his decision if this reduced his chances of finding a spouse willing to move into the farm.

9.2 "A yeoman must wive..."[43]

Having a successor is not enough to safeguard the transgenerational continuity of the farm, he should also marry and eventually have a successor himself. This had been the bottleneck in the past, and that was the reason why so many farms that had been taken over by bachelors were abandoned in the end.

Successors knew all too well how difficult it still was to find a suitable wife. In former years, migration of women from the rural villages to the urban sector had been even greater than the male exodus. These women knew the situation in agriculture from experience and did not want to become like their mothers: that is subject to their husbands in the field of production, and in the domestic sphere to their mothers-in-law (cf. Mendras, 1987:329; also Etxezarreta, 1977: 168, 169). Strangely enough, several of the farm heirs I interviewed had married a woman with an urban background. The explanation may be that such a woman, who often had her own job, was in a better position *vis-à-vis* her husband and parents-in-law to negotiate the conditions under which she would be prepared to live on the farm. Having a job and thus an income, and being deprived of any agricultural experience, it was probably more easily accepted that she neither could nor wanted to help on the land or in the cowshed. Conversely, a woman who had grown up in the countryside and married a farmer's son might find it much more difficult to get out of doing any farm-work. At the most, she might be able to wrest some minor concessions, like not having to do any milking (see Section 8.4; also Bennett, 1982, and Mak, 1996).

Gasson suggests several reasons why farmers' spouses or daughters might prefer to do off-farm work rather than to help on the holding (Gasson, 1984: 217-220); these reasons may be of financial, social or personal origin. Some women feel that their need for a certain degree of financial independence cannot be fulfilled through working on the farm. Others prefer the social contacts that work off the holding will provide them. Or they hope that a paid job will give them the status and recognition they miss as workers on a farming enterprise. Finally, such employment may mean personal fulfilment for these women.

Now, if this is true for farm women, the same motives are likely to function even more so as impediments for an urban-employed woman, about to marry a farmer's son, to give up her job in order to take up farm-work. The successor on a family farm has to take into account both his parents' wishes with respect to the future of the holding and his spouse's preferences as to her own position on the farm enterprise and in the farm-house. It demands a great deal of his creativity to do as much justice as possible to the objectives of the different participants in this drama - and he will not always succeed.

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[43] In Gasson et al., 1988, citing "Tusser's axiom that 'To thrive a yeoman must wive'"(ibid.: 25).

Iturmendi revisited

We saw in Section 6.4 that next to his parents' farmstead Aitor had had a new house built where he lived with his wife. She had an urban background and worked as a nurse in an old people's home in town. Aitor confessed that he would never have been able to conduct his farm business without this extra income.

He had never considered living with his parents after marriage: first, because he thought that children once they reached a certain age should start living on their own, since the age difference might give rise to problems between the generations, and second, because "in my case, these problems would have been even greater, as my wife is from urban origin," he said. "My parents live nextdoor, which is an advantage for me, but we live here and they live over there."

Aitor had switched from dairy hawking to selling his milk to the factory, and he would now have to build a big, new cowshed and expand his livestock. But he feared the financial consequences and claimed that he might have made a mistake when he had built their house: "You can't build a house before you set up a business." At the same time he recognized that he had had no choice. His wife would not have accepted to live in the same house as her parents-in-law. "If I had decided to build the cowshed first instead of the house, we would now be living in town and I would have to come to the farm every day to look after the cows."

The original idea had been to split the farmstead in two: his parents would live downstairs, and he and his wife upstairs. It had been his mother who suggested to build a separate dwelling. A building contractor told them that for 25% more they could build a new house next to the farm. They were convinced. (In the end, the price turned out to be considerably higher than had been estimated.)

The present situation had many advantages. Aitor and his wife had two children, 6 and 2 years old in 1996, and although most of the day they were at school and at the day nursery, "for them it is much healthier to grow up on the farm than in town," Aitor stated. "Besides, if we lived in town, I would be at home less often."

Antonio's farm

A similar story can be told about Antonio. His father had died in 1974, when Antonio was 26 years old. Antonio, being the oldest son, gave up his job in the factory and began to work on the farm. He did this for five years; for the following eight years he had another off-farm job, while he ran his farm on a part-time basis. Since 1986, he had been a full-time farmer again. When I interviewed him three years later, he had 12 beef cows, a bull and 7 calves, of which he would keep a few in order to expand his livestock. The animals used to graze on the pastures and mountain fields around the farm.

All his five brothers and sisters had long married and left the village, and for several years Antonio and his mother lived alone on the farm. In 1987, he married a woman who owned a chemist's shop in town. He then bought part

of a big, renovated farmstead in the village nucleus, where the three of them went to live. During the day, Antonio's wife had to work in town, and Antonio himself and his mother worked on the farm.

However, the two women did not get along with each other. After a few years and a lot of quarrels, Antonio and his wife decided to go and live in town, while his mother stayed behind alone. Later she fell ill and since then she lived alternately with each of her children.

Antonio only came back to his farm in the evenings, to have a look at his cows and give them something to eat. He and his wife had two small children by then; they could have returned to their house in the village, but this may not have fitted in with their plans for the future. People in the village rumoured that Antonio and his wife were trying to buy a new chemist's shop in another town, where they would work together...

9.3 Succession and subjective evaluations

At the moment that the son who will in due course inherit the farming enterprise decides to get married, the personal projects of all parties involved (the successor himself, the future spouse, and his parents) are being articulated to each other. If succession is to be effectuated in a way that is acceptable for all participants, these different projects should be brought into line with one another as much as possible - which means that the realizability of these projects should be negotiated.

The prospective successor hopes to realize the take-over of the holding as smoothly as possible, so that he will still be able to count on his parents' and siblings' labour power in the future; and he naturally wants his fiancée to come and live on the farmstead with him after marriage. If his future wife has her own paid job, she probably will not be inclined to give this up and start doing farm-work. She may also demand a certain independence in the domenstic sphere in relation to her parents-in-law. In more and more cases, the eventual outcome of these negotiations between the senior farming couple and their successors seems to be a certain separation of domestic and/or labour domains along generational lines (see de Haan, 1994: 251, for a description of a similar development in a region in the Netherlands).

An example of a separation of labour domains we saw on the Antolar farm (see Section 8.4), where Maria worked in the kitchen garden and the forage fields while her daughter-in-law Edurne did most of the household tasks; they did not normally interfere with each other's work. But the aged farmers and their children, including the succeeding couple, always ate together at the same kitchen table and lived in the same house. Such a situation is only viable if all people get on reasonably well with each other. This turned out to be the bottleneck on Antonio's farm. Antonio, his wife and his mother had moved into a house in the village nucleus so as to meet with the wish of Antonio's wife not to live on the farmstead. There was a physical separation of more than a kilometre between the labour domain on the one hand and the domestic domain on the other. Besides, Antonio's wife had her own job, so she and her mother-in-law did not see each other all day. But they still lived in the same house: in the evenings and at weekends they could not

avoid one another - and that is where it went wrong.

On Iturmendi, the domestic domains of the senior farmers and the succeeding couple were spatially separated. (Aitor had a very explicit opinion about this.) Whereas the senior couple lived in the old farmstead, the succeeding couple had their own house next to the farm; the two households were run independently from each other. Moreover, as Aitor's wife had her own job, no-one would demand from her that she entered the farm labour domain of her husband and parents-in-law. All parties seemed to realize that this was the most attainable solution. Aitor could at all times count on his parents, but they lived next-door and did not interfere with his personal life. His wife was happy with their beautiful house. And both of them thought it was better that their children grew up in a rural environment. The parents knew that if Aitor had not built this new house, he and his wife would probably have lived in town by now.

The importance of this problem had also been understood by the women's association EBEL, a semi-independent department of the farmers' union EHNE. The association's spokeswoman told me that they had recently begun to discuss themes related to succession and the multi-generation household with farm women in different regions of Gipuzkoa:

> "Society should become aware of the problems of inheritance on the farms. We have to create the conditions under which women are prepared to live on the holding; that is something the union wholeheartedly supports. (..) One of the main problems is that of two families living together, especially for the women. A certain physical separation is desirable so that a woman has her own space."
> [M. Agirrezabala, EBEL; VI/96]

The way in which the family farm is passed on from one generation to the next (as a full-time or a part-time holding, with dairy cows or beef cattle, with what type of domestic separation and organization of labour, etc.) is based on the confrontation of subjective evaluations of the potential successor and all relevant others: his wife and parents, but also his siblings on and even off the farm.

The successor's decision not to continue the holding as a full-time, productive business depends on what he considers to be the most limiting resource, whereby the term 'resource' should be understood in the widest possible sense here; that is, comprising not only the production factors land, labour and capital, but also one's knowledge, capabilities and motivation. Production factors can to some extent be substituted for each other. The problem of shortage of land, for example, may be met by making a more intensive use of it, applying fertilizers and better varieties of grass, by working the land more intensively, or by feeding the cows high quantities of concentrates. Lack of family labour power can sometimes be overcome through the mechanization of the most labour demanding tasks or by contracting outside labour.[44] Substitution may be a solution especially if

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[44] That is, in peak periods or for special reasons (such as holidays or illness). Family farms seldom hire outside labour on a more permanent basis.

shortage is temporary - only noticeable at definite times.

But the problem of lack of personal qualities or motivation cannot be overcome that easily. Someone's refusal to take over the parents' farm business on a productive basis may also be motivated by his difficulty to find a suitable wife; a fiancée's 'unwillingness' to live on the farm may thwart plans for succession that are based on years of preparation, as we saw in the case of Julen's brother on the Eguzkitza farm (Section 6.2).

Positive or negative decisions as to continuing the parental holding as a profitable, full-time enterprise are always subject to conditions and can therefore at any time be reconsidered. We saw this on the Eguzkitza farm (see above), but we may also recall what had happened on Iriondo (see Section 7.3): Iñigo took over his parents' dairy farm and invested in a more modern way of selling his fresh milk, but for reasons that remained rather obscure (lack of vocation for farming, the perspective of decreasing family labour power?) he gave up after a few years and began to work in a factory. Another example is Antonio's farm: the owner had bought a house in the village nucleus, so that his wife would not have to live on the farm, but due to the bad relationship between her and her mother-in-law, the couple left the village and the future of the farm became uncertain.

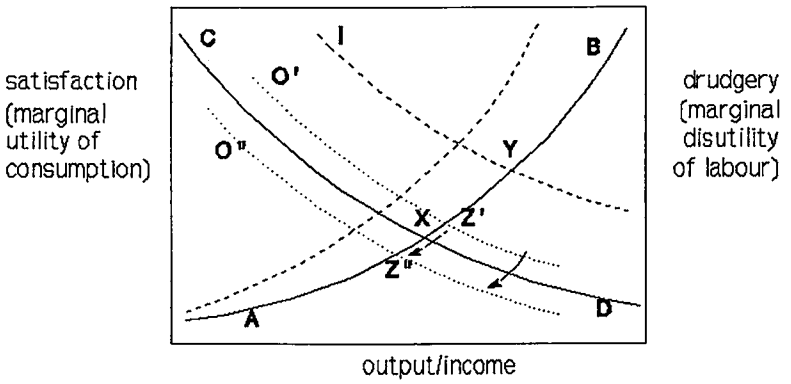


Figure 16. The effect of off-farm female labour on the successor's labour drudgery.

Such a reconsideration of the future of the farm is not entirely impossible either in the case of farming enterprises like Aitor's, where the successor's wife has her own full-time, off-farm employment and does not assist on the holding. Once the senior couple is not able to work anymore and their successor only has his own labour power to count on, his room for manoeuvre may become severely restricted. In all probability, he will be forced to resort to further labour saving innovations.

The situation in the latter case is illustrated by means of Figure 16. When the labour input of the senior couple becomes insignificant, the labour drudgery of the successor increases notably (and the corresponding curve moves up). The purchase of technology in order to reduce his labour input demands capital, so while the labour drudgery curve falls again, the demand satisfaction curve shifts upward (curve T): all in all, the resulting equilibrium Y is less favourable than in the starting position. Only if the successor's wife has an off-farm job and her income contributes to the household economy, the eventual demand satisfaction curve lies lower (in the area from O' to O"). The new equilibrium point lies somewhere between Z' and Z" - that is, it approaches X again or may even become more favourable.

9.4 The common project jeopardized

In the years of massive industrialization of the Basque coastal provinces, the bertsolari 'Lazkao Txiki' expressed in his improvised verses the sorrow of many people over the threatening depopulation of the countryside (see the paragraph with which Part III starts). In Chapter 3, however, we saw that there are indications that in Gipuzkoa the exodus from the rural villages to the urban centres has come to an end. Mendras describes a similar development for many villages in France: since 1975 a repopulation of rural areas seems to have taken place; at the same time, however, the number of farmers continues to decline. Consequently, "the farmers are no longer the majority in the countryside" (Mendras, 1987: 321; my translation).

In the Basque Country, the result of the revaluation of village life has been that relatively few farmsteads have been abandoned in recent times. Conversely, there are many holdings where farmers had invested in the renovation of the buildings. If the senior farmers have children, their holding is normally taken over by one of them, sometimes in order to continue the farm business, but in most of the cases as a spare-time or hobby farm annex rural dwelling. In some villages houses had been built, and in others plans existed to do so, so that farmers' children who had to leave the parental holding could still continue to live in the countryside.

But there is another side to the picture. There is a real danger that the development towards greater social viability of the rural villages has unintended, and undesirable, consequences. Also farms that are likely to be continued as part-time or full-time productive enterprises by one of the children are becoming more interesting for non-succeeding brothers and sisters, who either want to live there permanently or convert it into their second house. There have been cases of siblings instituting legal proceedings against the successor so as to obtain an equal right to the parental holding.

The underlying problem seems to be that many senior farmers tend to postpone the formalization of the succession too long.

> "Parents often do not want to transfer the holding into the hands of their successor as long as they are still able to look after themselves. But as it has become popular to have a second house and so... when the moment comes to speak about the inheritance, brothers and sisters who had gone to live elsewhere ask also for their part of the farm and the land. Several farm enterprises have been ruined that way."
> [M. Agirrezabala, EBEL; VI/96]

Paradoxically, the increasing popularity of countrylife might thus result in an accelerated reduction of the number of productive holdings - a tendency which would go against the expectation that a healthier social environment in the rural areas would keep the viable farmers on the land.

So far, it had been common practice for non-succeeding siblings on most farms to accept that their parents' holding would be taken over by a single heir, who subsequently paid them their share (but hardly ever an equivalent part) of the farm's value. But what about those who wish to have a weekend house in the countryside or who want to live in the village permanently: if they have the choice between buying a house in the village nucleus or obtaining part of the parental farmstead, will they still agree with this single heir arrangement?

Decisive is here the attitude of the parents. Are they able and willing to defend that the farm be taken over by a sole successor with the objective to be continued as an agricultural enterprise? The situation outlined above could be avoided if the terms of succession were formally laid down (preferably in a notarial act) at an early stage, for instance as soon as one of the children proves to be seriously interested in continuing the holding either on a full-time, productive basis or as a part-time enterprise. In the Netherlands the gradual transfer of the farm from one generation to the next is often established through a partnership (*maatschap*) between the senior farmer and his successor.

> "A partnership is an important shield against the risk of a successor losing his place. As a partner, he is assured of access to the whole farm, which protects him from the legal claims of siblings to appropriate land as part of an inheritance" (de Haan, 1994: 256).

At present, such a construction anticipating the eventual transfer of property rights is hardly conceivable on most farm enterprises in Gipuzkoa, as Basque farmers are seldom willing to yield authority before retiring and handing over the 'reins' of the holding to one of their children.

9.5 Conclusions

So far, we have differentiated three levels within the (extended) farm family: the senior-successor axis, the siblings residing on the farm, and the siblings living outside. And we have seen how the senior farmers and their successors

not only mobilize resources through external social networks, but also attempt to enrol their own family members into what is understood to be the common family project of maintaining and continuing the farm enterprise.

In this chapter I have dissected the relationship between the senior and successor couples. The successor finds himself in an intermediate position and subject to conflicting loyalties towards a) his parents, who try to ensure the continuity of the farm, and b) his spouse, who may refuse to work or even to live on the farm. In order to resolve this situation, a great deal of creativity and flexibility is demanded of all the parties involved. In a number of cases, a separation of the domestic domains of the senior farmers and the younger couple is believed to be the best solution. This implies first and foremost that a working consensus has to be reached about the position of the succeeding farmer's wife on the holding; it will eventually affect such things as the authority relationships between the older and the younger couple, the age and gender division of labour, and the incorporation of changing (urban) norms on labour and leisure into the existing farm management pattern.

The successor intends to safeguard his parents' assistance for the years to come, while at the same time trying to create the conditions under which his wife is willing to live on (or close to) the farm. In the past, it was not uncommon for successors to put the continuity of the parental holding before marriage - hence, the many *mutizarrak*, or bachelor farmers, in Euskadi. The logical result was that upon the death of the successor the farm was often abandoned after all. At present, few successors would make the same decision. Those who try to overcome the dilemma in the way described above, however, need considerable ability in the management of family networks.

The same ability is also needed in case the enrolment of other family members into the common project turns out to be problematic. In earlier chapters, I have gone to some length to explain that for the successor the labour input of his siblings, both living on and off the farm, is crucial in the years which follow taking over the enterprise. Their help could normally be taken for granted. Yet, there are indications that solidarity with the successor is no longer a fundamental sentiment among siblings: in a few cases, siblings not only dissociated themselves from the common family project but even actively undermined it.

The economic and social changes in rural areas in the recent past, which manifested themselves in better infrastructure, decrease of the rural exodus, a rising living standard and the revival of social life in the villages, have at the same time led to a cultural break which might be characterized as countryside romanticism. It has caused a growing demand for rural housing, either for permanent residence or as weekend cottages, among urban and rural people alike. It is probably too early to speak of a marked tendency, but the indications are reason for concern for those who claim to defend the interests of the farming population.

Chapter 10

CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have explored how different types of farm households in the Basque province of Gipuzkoa, occupied in dairy farming, mobilize their family labour and external social networks so as to guarantee the realization of their main objectives: the satisfaction of consumption needs of the household members and the passing on of the family farm to the following generation.

An important part of my ethnographic material was presented in the context of four chapters which followed in broad outline the categorization of the Basque rural sector that at the time I carried out my field research was still very much en vogue. However, I have argued that this apparent 'folk' typology - of modern, traditional and part-time farmers - had strong normative and ideological overtones. For most regional policy makers and agrarian economists, 'modern' farm enterprises represented the only valid model for agricultural development. As the combination of modernizing, expanding dairy farms and a strong dairy factory was seen as the best guarantee that, upon the incorporation of the region into the European Common Market, competition from outside could be resisted, agricultural policy throughout the 1980s was aimed at the accelerated modernization of the dairy sector. Farmers who belonged to the other categories were believed to be hindering modernization. The farmers' union EHNE claimed to defend the small, marginalizing producers, but their policy was biased in favour of full-time farmers. Part-time farmers, by no means a small category in the Basque countryside, felt that their interests were ignored by virtually all institutions. By the end of the 1980s, however, the awareness had grown among regional policy makers that there might be good reasons (mainly of an ecological or social nature) to support not only the large-scale, modernizing enterprises, but to defend the maintenance of other types of holdings, as well.

In line with the styles of farming approach, I then suggested that these three aforementioned categories (and a fourth: the small group of quality producers) can be understood as different farm practices, each having its own, particular logic, which offer varying but, in principle, equally valid responses to outside intervention. This is not to say, of course, that all farm enterprises are therefore equally successful. If some are more successful than others, this is due to differences in land and capital assets, in family composition (and thus in the possibility to mobilize labour), in knowledge and management qualities, etc. But success also depends in no small measure on the degree of support (or obstruction) that the agricultural policy mapped out for the region has to offer to different holdings - which is closely related to the typology on which this policy is based. In other words, if the so-called vanguard type of farming, the modern enterprise comprising both scale-enlargement and intensification, has thus far proved to be successful, this has among other things to do with how 'success' has long been defined (i.e. as the creation of bigger and more intensive enterprises, increasingly incorporated into the food production chain) and with the institutional policy

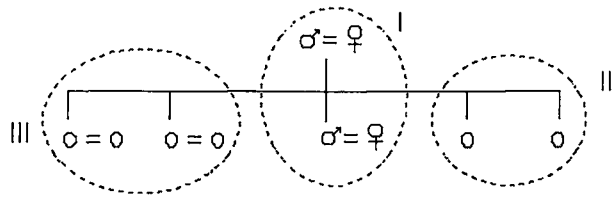
which supported this definition.

For the explanation of the economic actions of farm households, I have referred to Chayanov (1966), who argues that the farm family's decisions regarding the labour expended on farming or the technology to be adopted can be traced back to subjective evaluations as to the expected demand satisfaction versus the corresponding labour drudgery. I have suggested that the same may be said about the household's rationale for creating and mobilizing social networks. That is, external relationships - such as interlocking projects of the farm enterprise with other holdings, with particular categories of clients, or with relevant institutions - are established if the household esteems the resulting (subjective) equilibrium to be more favourable than before.

However, while the Chayanovian subjective equilibrium figures in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this study illustrate the motives at the level of the farm household for establishing and mobilizing interpersonal networks, they obscure the personal motives of the individual household members for letting themselves be enrolled or not into the common family project. This is why I have claimed that the analysis should zoom in on the individual family members: after all, they are not only involved in the common household project, but also attempt to realize their own, personal projects as much as possible. Siblings who have left the farm and founded a family of their own may still feel committed to the parental holding's survival strategy. Conversely, children living on the farm who find that there is too little room for their own projects may decide to dissociate themselves from the common project. Now, the rationale behind the household members' personal projects may also be described in terms of subjective evaluations of remuneration and drudgery. Yet, I have tried to make clear that at the level of individual family members these concepts should be understood as rather diffuse aggregates of other, constituent elements. Remuneration may comprise income, recognition, status, or personal realization, whereas labour drudgery may refer to physical exertion, type of work, authority relations as well as working conditions. By weighing all these elements against each other, household members eventually decide to what extent their personal projects are compatible with the common family project.

In the course of this study, it has become clear that not all the members of the farm household have equal decision power, nor is an equivalent amount of labour or capital input into the farm enterprise expected from each member. There is a certain hierarchization, whereby the fundamental decisions with respect to farm management are taken by the senior couple and the successor (or the succeeding couple, in case he is married); they also provide most of the labour power and capital needed to run the holding. (Although it should be noted that the senior farmer normally still has the final say, as long as he has not retired and transferred the farm into the hands of his successor.) The other farm residents (brothers and sisters of the successor or an unmarried uncle or aunt) may have their own occupations, but they often help with the daily tasks that have to be done; their opinions are taken into account when decisions have to be made. Married and unmarried children living elsewhere generally help on the farm when extra labour power is needed (particularly in the haymaking season); they may occasionally be consulted, especially when

decisions are made that affect the inheritance or concern important investments. Schematically:



I	senior-successor axis	♂	man
II	on-farm residents	♀	woman
III	siblings living elsewhere	o	male or female

Figure 17. Hierarchy of decision power and mobilization of resources within the farm family.

The central locus of decisions concerning the household's strategies is the senior-successor axis. The senior farmers and their successor (or the succeeding couple) are the ones who mobilize family labour and social networks. Senior and successor also attempt to enrol each other into their respective projects, which do not always run parallel. This becomes particularly evident in decisions on how to manage and continue the parental holding.

The meanings the senior farmer and his successor attribute to remuneration and labour drudgery may diverge considerably, and so may their images of the future of Self (and the place of the farm therein). Both these meanings and the images of Self are to a large extent socially determined (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969). The interactions with relevant others, be it directly or mentally, are of influence on these meanings and images; these relevant others are seldom the same for the senior farmer and his successor. For the former, his reference group is normally made up of the other farmers in the village, especially those whose holdings are comparable to his own. For the succeeding son, they are usually the urban youth, whose lifestyle he is acquainted with through his evenings out, the mass media and maybe his off-farm work, or his rural peers, most of whom also have off-farm jobs, fixed wages, paid holidays, etc. The negotiations between senior and successor (and their respective spouses) over how the farm enterprise should be run in the years preceding the moment of succession, and how it should eventually be continued, are determined by these divergent perceptions of Self and the confrontation of remuneration/drudgery balances.

The usefulness of Chayanov's model for the present sociological analysis of farming practices in Euskadi lies, first, in its emphasis on the importance of

family composition and, second, in the insight that economic decisions made within the scope of the farm household are highly dependent on the subjective evaluations of the actors. It is understandable that mainstream economists have normally found this model difficult to accept, as subjective considerations are not easily expressed in quantifiable terms and do not fit in well with current theories that are based on notions of rational economic behaviour.[45] I hope to have demonstrated that by introducing a sociological reconstruction of the Chayanovian concepts of satisfaction and labour drudgery, relating them to the actors' reference groups, these concepts have become meaningful for explaining the motives behind the actors' strategic behaviour.

Let us now turn to the question of how the farm household's possibilities to mobilize internal and external relationships and its survival and succession strategies mutually determine and condition each other in practice.

Establishing linkages with external agents in order to overcome economic obstacles may confront the actor with new constraints as to his future strategic decisions. Farm households, whether oriented to scale-enlargement, intensification or both, often establish institutional relationships so that certain tasks for which they lack the knowledge or the labour power are taken over by these institutions. The more these enterprises become integrated into the food production chain, the more their farm management becomes subject to external prescriptions and the more difficult it becomes for these holdings to break away from the treadmill of investment and expansion (Pile, 1990). Nevertheless, farmers who operate within the boundaries imposed upon them by what Benvenuti (1975, 1991) calls the Technological and Administrative Task Environment often completely internalize its prescriptive character, so much so that they may still affirm that their strategy of growth and further investment is entirely and exclusively theirs.

Farmers who then meet with the limits of their possibilities for further development (through lack of land, overcapacity of expensive technology, etc.) may try to become involved in alternative networks so as to get round these constraints. They clean the fields of neighbouring farmers who use their land less intensively and can often keep the grass for free, as hay or silage fodder for their own cattle. Or they carry out contract-work with their machinery, enrolling other farmers in the area into their circle of regular clients.

However, not only institutional networks condition the actions of farm households. Farmers who sell their non-pasteurized milk directly to consumers keep external institutions as much as possible at a distance. Their success is based on personal ties with their clients, but this also makes them highly dependent on their clients' consumption habits. When these change, they find

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45) Indeed, at a congress on *Neurobehavioral Economics* in Pittsburgh, in the summer of 1997, economists were reproached for having too exclusively built their theories on rational behaviour of people, while ignoring the role that instincts and emotion play in the actors' economic decisions. It was argued that by incorporating psychological processes into their models these would gain in explanatory strength.

it more and more difficult to safeguard the reproduction of their way of producing and marketing. Over the last decade, most dairy hawkers have seen their market decrease rapidly. The older farmers normally try to hold out until the moment of their retirement. Younger farmers and the successors of retired hawkers may attempt to switch over to milk production for the dairy factory or to selling fresh milk under the banner of Baserriko Esnea. Yet, we have seen that for these farmers, too, new links often imply new constraints. This step (and the same holds good for the few cooperative members who switched to Baserriko Esnea) normally demands extra investment in technology and/or expansion of livestock. It generally implies that such farmers, so to speak, have to make up arrears on the treadmill. External prescription thus tends to become even more compelling for them (the example of the Iturmendi farm in Section 6.4 is illustrative).

Baserriko Esnea members are able to benefit from the best of both worlds as to marketing their product, shifting from direct sales to the dairy factory and back, according to their needs and possibilities; but at the level of production they are more subject to external control of the quality of their milk than any other category of dairy farmers. Moreover, they need great social and organizational skills and a high input of labour power to be successful. Attempts to reduce the amount of labour power needed (i.e. the search for a more favourable subjective equilibrium between remuneration and drudgery), through the routinization of production and marketing tasks, may be expected. I hypothesized that when this happens, competition from industrial enterprises becomes more likely.

Furthermore, in the chapters on dairy hawkers and Baserriko Esnea members, it became clear that actors may be involved in one network for the purpose of creating or securing another. Hawkers who sold their milk in the same town would sometimes come together to discuss the prices they had to charge their clients; that way, competition was avoided. It also happened that a hawker who unexpectedly had to deliver more milk to some clients than he had counted on, could buy from his colleagues at a low price. Mutual cooperation thus favoured the stability of client networks. Eventually, when a hawker retired, his clients were 'redistributed' among the other farmers who were part of this hawker network. The Baserriko Esnea association was another example of a higher-order network: it was created with the objective of extending the networks of individual consumers to shops, restaurants and residences.

I have further argued that, in discussing the decision of a successor on how to continue the parental holding, social and cultural factors should be an important focus of attention. First, there are the cultural patterns of marriage and inheritance which condition the successor's possibilities of enrolling the other household members in his project. This becomes especially relevant if he intends to continue the holding as a full-time enterprise. I have demonstrated that the tendency among people in the Basque countryside to marry relatively late in life has far-reaching consequences for the succeeding couple: the moment of succession, which normally does not take place until the senior farmer has fully retired, coincides with a decline of the labour power that can be mobilized within the family household (see Figure 9, Section 5.8).

Another feature is what I have termed the 'dual succession pattern'. On the one hand, there was the successor who, from the day he left school, had consciously prepared himself for his task to take over his parents' farm, and who could therefore be considered the most capable among his brothers and sisters to continue the holding. If he had a few younger siblings who still lived on the farm, the authority of the senior farmer and his successor normally guaranteed their regular collaboration in the tasks to be carried out. That way, the effect of the falling family labour curve at the moment of succession could be partially mitigated. On the other hand, it had become increasingly common that a holding was taken over by the son (or occasionally the daughter) who was the last one among the siblings to get married. As this successor was normally one of the youngest in the family, and thus the age gap between him and the senior farmer was greater, the decrease of the family labour curve upon succession was even more pronounced. Mitigation of its effect was in this case out of the question, since the other brothers and sisters had already left the farm. Moreover, it often happened that by the time the parents retired the successor had had an off-farm job for several years which he would be unwilling to give up. Such a farm was therefore seldom continued as a full-time enterprise.

The difficulty to mobilize enough family labour in the years which follow on succession is particularly felt on farms that are 'tied' to the treadmill of continuous investment, and especially if these holdings are in a disadvantaged position for which they have to make up. It also becomes more problematic for the successor to maintain the set of external relationships I referred to before. This social network may be instrumental in guaranteeing the household an acceptable income level, which in turn is necessary to continue to enrol family members in the common project.

The revival of social life in the villages has brought the rural exodus of former decades to a halt. More than in the past, women who marry farmers' sons are prepared to live in the countryside; this even (or especially?) holds good for those with an urban background. But in more and more cases, a farmer's wife has her own, urban job, which she generally prefers over working exclusively on the farm. A successor who intends to continue his parents' holding as a full-time enterprise but knows he is not able to count on the labour input of his wife will seriously reconsider his plans.

There are indications, however, that the revaluation of village life among the rural population may have consequences that are even more threatening for the future of the family holding than the lack of labour input of the farmer's wife. Thus far, the successor could normally count on the solidarity of his siblings who had left the farm. He had to pay each of them a part of the total value of the holding, but far less than an equal share; in turn, he and his wife would take care of his parents until their death. His brothers and sisters would help a little during the hay-making season or in case of illness, and at weekends they often came round for the sake of recreation. But now that living in the country or having a second, rural, dwelling are becoming ever more popular, some siblings seem to be inclined to demand an equal partition of the farm, thereby going against the regional norm of single inheritance.

For the successor, it is quite evident that thrift and hard work are not enough to make succession a success. He also needs some economic and

legal knowledge (or access to this knowledge) and the right combination of authority, a flexible attitude and social skills so as to involve as many family members as possible in his project and reduce opposition to a minimum. The conclusion, in the light of the foregoing discussion, is that for many successors continuity of the parental holding as a full-time, productive farm is out of the question - and this is equally true for successors of economically strong enterprises.

This is in line with my argument that successors who, over the last few decades, have opted for part-time farming have done so more and more because of social rather than of economic motives. For the good order, this is not to say that economic motives are no longer important for them, but it is rather to stress that considerations of lifestyle and social deprivation have become increasingly dominant. It is at this point that the sociological reconstruction of the Chayanovian concepts of labour drudgery and satisfaction (remuneration), which I referred to at the beginning of this chapter, is again highly relevant. Economic, technological and policy developments are reflected upon by the successor and weighed against the difficulties to mobilize enough family labour to maintain a sound, full-time farm enterprise. If he then compares his own situation with the lifestyle (consumption and leisure pattern) of the majority of his urban and rural contemporaries, the choice for combining an urban job with running a part-time farm is clearly self-evident.

Even if the starting position of a succeeding son is favourable (an economically viable farming business, sufficient labour power in the years to come), he will not always decide to continue his parents' holding on a full-time basis. Conversely, not all farms that are continued full-time would be considered economically sound, according to prevailing standards. It is my contention that one of the reasons - and an important one at that - for a farmer's son to continue his parents' holding as a full-time enterprise is that he finds part of his personal realization in farming. Hence, we should no longer ask ourselves: why is it that so few successors continue the parental holding as a full-time, productive enterprise and become part-time or hobby farmers instead? The questions should rather be: Why is it that still so many farmers' sons - in spite of all that has been said so far - take over their parents' holding to become full-time farmers themselves? What economic and social strategies do they develop to realize their objective? And what does this mean for agricultural policy?

The traditional mayorazgo principle has virtually disappeared. In the days when the oldest son automatically took over the farm from his parents, excluding the other siblings, his being the owner or tenant of a holding ensured a livelihood and status within the rural community. This might be reason enough for younger siblings as well to attempt to become farmers, for instance by marrying a farmer's daughter. But those days are gone, and being a *baserritarra* is no longer perceived as having status. In their discourse, farmers may still try to distinguish themselves from *kaletarrak* ('streetfolk') by depicting the latter in negative terms, but at the same time they attempt to emulate their lifestyle as much as possible. Nowadays, becoming a full-time farmer and accepting the sacrifices related to it has much more to do with

motivation, with a certain 'vocation' for farming.

I have argued that the motivation to continue a farm enterprise on a full-time, productive basis is not just dependent on the individual successor in question (and motivation or vocation should therefore not be treated as a residual explanatory factor), but may be organizationally, ideologically and also socially boosted. That is, the support of an organization like Baserriko Esnea or Iparlat may give a successor just the confidence he needs to 'give it a try'. The conviction that agriculture is not only about the creation of specialized, large-scale dairy farm enterprises may motivate another farmer to try something new, 'against all odds'. And a third one may decide to continue the parental holding because his wife will work with him on the farm or because the number of inhabitants of the village is no longer in decline and their children's school will not close down.[46]

Motivation may also be socially constrained. As a result of close rural-urban contacts and under the influence of the mass media, the urban frame of reference has become predominant in the countryside and determines in no small measure farm household members' subjective evaluations of their consumption satisfaction and the drudgery of agricultural labour. It is true that labour drudgery decreases as a result of technological innovation and that agricultural labour is generally less monotonous than industrial work, but the corresponding remuneration, especially the amount of leisure, which household members may enjoy (in comparison with their urban peers), frequently remains such an important bottleneck that it may easily influence the potential successor's motivation negatively.

And also the fact that young women today are more inclined to negotiate the conditions under which they would be willing to marry a farmers' son can be regarded as a social factor influencing the successor's motivation. At present, few succeeding sons would be willing to continue the holding as a bachelor; yet, marrying a woman with 'urban' wishes inevitably affects their farm management. This woman will probably make higher demands on the family's style of living than farmers' wives of former generations. But these demands may still run parallel to her husband's own preferences. It becomes more difficult if she does not want to do any farmwork, for instance, because she has a job of her own which she does not want to give up upon marriage. It forces the successor to rethink his strategy, in order to get round this loss of labour power on which he might implicitly have counted. If, on the other hand, her income contributes to the total family budget, as is normally the case, the farmer is probably able to invest more money in the purchase of labour-saving machinery than he had initially calculated, thus (partially) parrying the consequences of labour shortage. Nevertheless, many successors may take up an off-farm job themselves (if they did not already have one) and continue the parental enterprise as a part-time or hobby farm, considering this an easier way to reconcile preferences they find difficult to match otherwise.

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[46] But vocation may have negative overtones, as well; Mak (1996) describes how even suicide and maltreatment of wife and children may be the result when farmers try to hold out under adverse conditions.

Empirical indications as well as theoretical considerations point to an expansion of the category of part-time farmers in Euskadi, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total farming population. Since this type of farming is becoming more and more dominant in the Basque countryside, it can no longer be regarded as a residual category.

Marxist authors have normally regarded part-time farming as a further step towards proletarianization of farm households. This fits in with the general idea, based on Kautsky (1987) and Lenin (1956), that the evolution of the farming sector will not differ much from that of industry, in other words, that eventually a differentiation will take place between capitalist holdings on the one hand and a rural proletariat on the other. Conversely, Neo-Populists, who mainly follow Chayanov's work[47], have normally predicted the maintenance of family farm enterprises - arguing (one) that agriculture is too insecure a business for the large-scale penetration of capital and (two) that the farm household is functional within capitalist society, due to the self-exploitation of its members (cf. Shanin, 1988). The debate was at times more dominated by exegesis than by scientific arguments, though (Jorion, 1984: 71).

In both theoretical approaches, structural factors come to the fore as determining either the disappearance or the survival of family farming. Farm households do not appear as agents that are capable of shaping their own future. From my own analysis, in which strategic actions of farm households are central, a different picture emerges. The reducing category of full-time dairy farmers, the gradual disappearance of hawkers, the growing number of quality producers, the continuous increase of the part-time sector - they are all indications of a changing composition of the rural population. But these changes do not seem to attend the disappearance of certain categories of farmers from the peasantry. It would thus be incorrect to interpret part-time farming, for instance, as the prior stage to proletarianization. Part-time farming might also be regarded as the attempt of small farmers to counter their full proletarianization and stay at least partially in farming (cf. Greenwood, 1976).[48] If farmers who take an outside job do not give up their holding, this may be, of course, so as to have something to fall back on in case times get worse, but also because they owe part of their identity to being a farmer.

Zurek (1986) states that, in disadvantaged rural areas in developed societies, part-time agriculture may be the only long-term solution. This idea is endorsed through Mendras' analysis of rural development in France (Mendras, 1987). The situation in the Netherlands suggests that we might even put it in more general terms: in agriculturally developed countries, it seems that reproduction of the holding through economic diversification is becoming the

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47) For a discussion on the qualification of Chayanov as a (Neo-)Populist, see Shanin (1988: 159 ff.).

48) The importance of the existence of labour alternatives outside farming for the maintenance of a great number of family farms becomes evident if we compare Euskadi with, for example, the north of Portugal where industrial employment is much harder to find in the rural areas, and where consequently many small-scale holdings are being abandoned (Brouwer, 1995).

dominant tendency; this diversification can take on various forms of which part-time farming is one (cf. de Vries, 1995).

However, the former conclusion does not appear to be applicable to the Basque Country. Diversification of activities within a farm household is unlikely if it is difficult to mobilize enough family labour (or if the main activity demands a high labour input, as we saw in Chapter 7). Lack of sufficient labour power on the farm is indeed one of the reasons why a full-time farmer may decide to reduce his farming activities to a minimum and take up an off-farm job. But diversification does exist at the level of the dairy sector as a whole. And from the changing composition of the farming population we may deduce that diversification itself is in a process of transformation. Again, this would make further research in the tradition of the styles of farming approach highly relevant.

I have already hinted that the four categories mentioned in Part II should not be regarded as the most adequately defined nor the only existing farming styles in the Basque countryside. Research would be able to bring out those styles of farming which are specific for Euskadi, to be differentiated according to criteria of regional relevance. Such research should ideally have a longitudinal character so that possible evolutions among and within farming styles can be discerned. Furthermore, this research should not only focus on farm households, but should also highlight the relationships among individual household members, especially the interface between senior farmers and their successors, for it is at this level that decisions are made about the projects to be developed.

This way, we may avoid developing agricultural policies which, on the basis of taken-for-granted criteria such as 'modernization' and 'competitiveness', not only distinguish between, but also actively create, first-rate and second-rate farmers. The latter group would comprise most part-time farmers and those who operate outside the relevant food producing industries and administrative institutions. It would mean that many farmers who have managed to hold out for years without any appreciable support or even faced with important constraints (those who in general may be assumed to have the necessary vocation for farming) are then disqualified as technologically and economically inefficient - and only allowed to stay in farming because of the social and ecological functions they are believed to fulfil for the sector as a whole.

The so-called Strategic Plan for the rural sector, which the Basque Department of Agriculture and Fisheries brought out in the beginning of the 1990s, still stipulated that priority had to be given to supporting "potentially competitive family farming" and fostering "greater specialization for the sake of (achieving) major technico-economic efficiency". But at the same time it was recognized that agricultural policy should support - instead of simply tolerate - part-time farming ("insofar as it helps keeping rural areas alive") and holdings that complement agriculture with other economic activities (such as rural tourism). In the context of the European programmes 5b and Leader on behalf of the socio-economic revival of rural areas, it would be extremely interesting to investigate the matrix of interferences of this new, two-edged, regional policy with the divergent farm household strategies which emerge from the styles of farming analysis advocated above.

After all, as long as there are farm households designing strategies for survival and succession and institutional policies that interfere with them, there will be agricultural development requiring sociological research. In line with the present study, we may conclude that this research will only be carried out if researchers are able to ask the relevant questions and through their academic (and other) networks manage to mobilize the resources which allow them to search for answers.

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SAMENVATTING

Arbeid, Netwerken en Levensstijlen - overlevings- en overnamestrategieën van boerenhuishoudens in Baskenland.

Op 1 januari 1986 werd Spanje lid van de Europese Gemeenschap. De verwachting was dat de toetreding vooral negatieve gevolgen zou hebben voor de melkveehouderij in de noordelijke regio's (stagnerende melkprijzen, toenemende concurrentie vanuit Noord-Europa). In Baskenland was het beleid van het ministerie van landbouw en visserij van de autonome deelregering gedurende de jaren tachtig gericht op een versnelde modernisering van de melkveebedrijven, opdat deze in de concurrentiestrijd met de Noord-Europese zuivelsector niet ten onder zouden gaan. Baskische melkveehouders volgden uiteenlopende strategieën teneinde de reproductie van hun gezinsbedrijven te verzekeren: een kleine meerderheid leverde de produktie uitsluitend aan een zuivelcoöperatie, daarnaast ventte een aanzienlijk percentage boeren dagelijks persoonlijk hun (rauwe) melk uit aan urbane cliënten, enkelen legden zich toe op het verkrijgen van een officieel kwaliteitskeurmerk voor hun ongepasteuriseerde melk, en velen hadden naast hun boerenbedrijf een baan buiten de sector. Het regionale landbouwbeleid was ontegenzeglijk 'biased' ten gunste van de zuivelindustrie en de grotere, moderniserende boerenbedrijven.

In deze studie worden de genoemde strategieën beschouwd als in principe even valide stelsels van boerenpraktijken. Er wordt onderzocht op welke wijzen de verschillende boerenbedrijven hun gezinsarbeid en externe netwerken mobiliseren teneinde vorm te geven aan deze strategieën, in het bijzonder voor zover deze gericht zijn op de overname van het bedrijf. Voor een verklaring van het economische handelen van het boerenhuishouden wordt teruggegrepen op Chayanov's model van de gezinslandbouw. Dit model stelt ondermeer de gezinssamenstelling en de binnen het gezin gemaakte subjectieve afweging van (het marginaal nut van) inkomen en de geleverde arbeid centraal. Individuele gezinsleden zijn niet alleen betrokken bij de gemeenschappelijke bedrijfsstrategie, maar zullen ook hun persoonlijke projecten trachten te verwezenlijken. Ik heb betoogd dat de rationale achter hun persoonlijke projecten evenzeer begrepen kan worden in termen van subjectieve afwegingen van beloning en arbeidsinzet (of moeite; datgene wat bij Chayanov 'labour drudgery' heet). In het onderzoek is er met name aandacht voor de relatie tussen het oudere boerenechtpaar en hun opvolger (eventueel met partner). Binnen deze relatie worden de belangrijkste beslissingen genomen en worden gezinsarbeid, kapitaal en externe netwerken gemobiliseerd. In dit verband heb ik een sociologische reconstructie van de begrippen beloning en moeite geïntroduceerd door deze te relateren aan de voor de actoren relevante referentiegroepen.

Het voornaamste referentiekader voor de oudere boeren wordt gevormd door de betekenis van het boerenbedrijf en de agrarische arbeid binnen de rurale samenleving. Hun potentiële opvolgers, daarentegen, spiegelen zich veel meer aan de levensstijl van de meesten van hun urbane leeftijdsgenoten: jonge mannen en vrouwen met een (redelijk) vaste baan, een zeker (en jaarlijks stijgend) inkomen, een zeer acceptabel consumptieniveau en betaalde vakan-

ties. Deze geheel andere perceptie van de eigen situatie onder jonge boeren, van de eigen plaats in de samenleving en daaraan gerelateerd de toekomst van de boerderij, heeft enerzijds gevolgen voor hun opvattingen over hoe een agrarische bedrijf gerund moet worden (welke soms conflicteren met die van hun ouders), maar vooral ook voor de wijze waarop zij tegen de bedrijfsovername aankijken. Deze studie toont aan dat opvolgers, in het spanningsveld tussen de eigen gezinssamenstelling, het persoonlijke referentiekader, netwerken en sociaal-culturele factoren, de te mobiliseren gezinsarbeid op het moment van bedrijfsovername veelal als een sterk beperkende factor zullen ervaren.

Hoe meer een boerenbedrijf geïntegreerd is in een institutioneel netwerk (van vermarktingscoöperaties, banken, landbouwvoorlichting, etc.), des te sterker wordt de bedrijfsvoering doorgaans voorgeschreven, genormeerd, vanuit die instituties. De consequentie is dat het gezinsbedrijf wordt opgenomen in wat wel aangeduid wordt als de tredmolen van voortgaande investering en uitbreiding. In de Baskische berglandbouw stuiten moderniserende boeren al snel op de grenzen aan de schaalvergroting en mechanisering; door andere agrariërs in en rond het dorp in hun strategieën te betrekken weten sommigen evenwel grond- en machinegebruik te optimaliseren.

Venters van niet-gepasteuriseerde melk, die als gevolg van het ontmoedigingsbeleid van de regionale overheid en van veranderende consumentenvoorkeur hun klantennetwerken uiteen zien vallen, kunnen trachten economisch te overleven door hun melk voortaan aan de zuivelcoöperatie te leveren. Sommige venters en een enkel coöperatielid stappen over op de verkoop van als 'kwaliteitsprodukt' geafficheerde, want door erkende instanties gecontroleerde, rauwe melk. Door deze overstap krijgen zij te maken met alternatieve tredmolens waarbij zij bovendien veelal een achterstand hebben in te lopen op degenen die hier al langer in meedraaien.

Een aantal sociale en culturele factoren zijn van invloed op hoe potentiële opvolgers, in het licht van het voorgaande, tegen de overname van het ouderlijke bedrijf aankijken. Van oudsher gaat de boerderij ongedeeld over in handen van de oudste zoon. In recentere jaren heeft dit *mayorazgo*-principe plaatsgemaakt voor een tweevoudig vererving spatroon: sommige bedrijven worden voortgezet door de meest geschikte en gemotiveerde zoon of dochter, in andere gevallen is het degene die het laatst trouwt, die op de boerderij blijft wonen. Belangrijk is bovenal dat huwelijken op het Baskische platteland gewoonlijk op vrij late leeftijd plaatsvinden: de consequentie is dat de door de opvolger te mobiliseren gezinsarbeid daalt rond het moment van overname en de eerstvolgende twee decennia laag blijft (doordat de arbeidscapaciteit van de ouders van de opvolger terugloopt, terwijl die van zijn kinderen nog verwaarloosbaar is). Indien een der oudere kinderen het bedrijf voortzet en er derhalve vaak nog jongere broers en zusters inwonend zijn, kan het dreigende tekort aan arbeid wellicht een aantal jaren worden uitgesteld. Wordt de boerderij overgenomen door het laatste kind dat trouwt, dan is de leeftijdskloof tussen ouders en opvolgers vaak alleen maar groter en is voorts de overbrugging van het arbeidstekort niet aan de orde. Mijn veronderstelling is dat het effect van de neergaande arbeidscurve in het bijzonder voelbaar zal zijn op de bedrijven die in de genoemde tredmolen van voortgaande moderniseringen zitten en dan vooral wanneer zij bovendien een achterstand hebben

in te lopen. Enerzijds is in de bergachtige gebieden van Gipuzkoa het werk op het land slechts tot op zekere hoogte te mechaniseren; anderzijds is het door de afname van arbeidskrachten binnen het gezin problematisch de institutionele en sociale netwerken in stand te houden die de uitbreiding mogelijk hebben gemaakt.

In tegenstelling tot wat vroeger zeer gebruikelijk was, stellen de huidige opvolgers van landbouwbedrijven het vinden van een geschikte partner doorgaans boven de overname en voortzetting van de boerderij. Door de wederopleving van het dorpsleven in streken die tot voor kort nog bedreigd werden door een massale uittocht van inwoners is het voor hen bovendien minder problematisch een partner te vinden dan in het verleden. De rol van de vrouw als echtgenote van een boer is tezelfdertijd echter danig veranderd. Het komt steeds vaker voor dat partners van bedrijfsopvolgers een eigen baan hebben die zij niet zomaar opgeven om op de boerderij mee te werken. Menigeen heeft zelfs geen rurale achtergrond. De autoriteit van de schoonouders in de huiselijke en de bedrijfssfeer wordt ook minder vanzelfsprekend door hen geaccepteerd. Een opvolger zal voor deze problemen oplossingen moeten vinden die door alle partijen geaccepteerd worden. Het ontbreken van de arbeid van zijn partner versterkt het effect van de neergaande curve van te mobiliseren gezinsarbeid nog eens. Anderzijds kan haar inkomen ook een niet te verwaarlozen financiële ondersteuning betekenen voor de reproductie van het bedrijf.

Het grootste gevaar voor de voortzetting van het gezinsbedrijf ligt evenwel in het doorbreken van het patroon van ongedeelde vererving. Nu het hebben van een (tweede) woning op het platteland populairder wordt, eisen broers en zusters van de beoogde bedrijfsopvolger soms ook een evenredig deel van de bij de boerderij behorende grond op om er een eigen huis op te bouwen.

Deze tendensen, bezien tegen de achtergrond van de aspiratie van veel opvolgers naar een meer urbane levensstijl (qua consumptieniveau en vrije tijd), maken de groeiende voorkeur voor part-time farming begrijpelijk; deze voorkeur is in de loop der tijd meer ingegeven door sociale dan door economische motieven. Ik heb gesteld dat de vraag waarom zo weinig opvolgers het ouderlijk bedrijf full-time voortzetten nauwelijk relevant meer is. We zouden ons veeleer moeten afvragen waarom - ondanks alles wat hiervoor gezegd is - nog zovelen bereid zijn full-time melkveehouder te worden, welke economische en sociale strategieën zij daartoe ontwikkelen en hoe het landbouwbeleid hierop kan inspringen. Ik heb gesuggereerd dat de motivatie van de opvolgers, welke ideologisch, organisationeel of sociaal bepaald kan zijn, een voorname factor is bij de keuze voor full-time voortzetting van het bedrijf.

De laatste jaren voert het regionale ministerie van landbouw een gedifferentieerd beleid, mede onder invloed van Europese richtlijnen: enerzijds is dat gericht op actieve steun aan moderniserende, 'concurrerende', boerenbedrijven, anderzijds is er, om sociale en ecologische redenen, ook meer aandacht voor part-time en 'marginalere' bedrijven. Nog immer wordt er echter, zij het op minder expliciete wijze dan voorheen, een tweedeling aangebracht tussen 'economisch rationele' versus 'minder levensvatbare' bedrijven - waardoor er voorbij gegaan wordt aan de mogelijkheid dat jonge, gemotiveerde boeren ook levensvatbare strategieën kunnen ontwikkelen op als part-time of marginaal

gedefinieerde bedrijven. Ik pleit voor een categorisering (in de lijn van de Wageningse bedrijfsstijlenstudies) welke deze tweedeling overstijgt. Onderzoek zou vervolgens licht kunnen werpen op de interferentie van het regionale landbouwbeleid met de binnen de Baskische melkveehouderij werkelijk relevante bedrijfsstijlen.

* * *

RESUMEN

Trabajo, Redes Sociales y Estilos de Vida - estrategias de supervivencia y sucesión de familias agrarias en el País Vasco.

El 1 de enero de 1986, España se incorporó a la Comunidad Europea. Se preveía que la adhesión tuviera consecuencias sobre todo negativas para las ganaderías de leche en las regiones del norte de la península. Durante los años 80, el Departamento de Agricultura y Pesca del Gobierno Autónomo del País Vasco llevó a cabo una política de modernización acelerada de las explotaciones agrarias (denominadas 'caseríos' o 'baserriak' en la región misma), con el fin de que éstas no se hundieran frente a la competencia de otras partes de Europa. Los ganaderos vascos seguían estrategias diferentes para garantizar la reproducción de sus explotaciones familiares: una pequeña mayoría comercializaba la producción entera a través de una cooperativa lechera, un porcentaje considerable vendía la leche cruda personalmente a una clientela urbana, un grupo reducido se dedicaba a obtener un label de calidad, reconocido oficialmente, para su leche no pasterizada, y muchos caseros combinaban su explotación con un empleo fuera del sector. La política regional agraria favoreció principalmente la industria lechera y las explotaciones agrarias modernas.

En este estudio, consideramos las estrategias mencionadas como sistemas de prácticas ganaderas que en principio son igualmente válidos. Se investiga la manera en que las distintas explotaciones de leche en la provincia de Gipuzkoa mobilizan la mano de obra familiar y las redes sociales para dar forma a estas estrategias, y en especial a aquellas dirigidas a la sucesión de las granjas en cuestión. Para comprender las actuaciones económicas de la familia granjera nos referimos al modelo de agricultura familiar de Chayanov. Este modelo resalta la importancia de la composición familiar y la evaluación subjetiva que la familia hace de (la utilidad marginal de) los ingresos y el trabajo correspondiente. Los miembros individuales de la familia no sólo están comprometidos con la estrategia empresarial común, sino que intentarán también realizar sus proyectos personales. Hemos argumentado que la racionalidad que hay detrás de sus proyectos personales se puede comprender igualmente en término de evaluaciones subjetivas de remuneración y esfuerzo (es decir, lo que Chayanov denomina 'labour drudgery'). La atención en este estudio se centra en la relación entre la pareja mayor y su sucesor (con su cónyuge). En esta relación se toman las decisiones más importantes y se mobilizan la mano de obra familiar, el capital y las redes externas. Es en este contexto que hemos introducido una reconstrucción sociológica de los conceptos remuneración y esfuerzo, relacionándolos con los grupos de referencia más relevantes para los actores.

El marco de referencia más significativo para los caseros mayores está formado por el significado de la explotación ganadera y el trabajo agrícola dentro de la comunidad rural. Para los sucesores, en cambio, es mucho más el estilo de vida de la mayoría de sus contemporáneos urbanos: hombres y mujeres jóvenes con un puesto de trabajo (más o menos) fijo, unos ingresos seguros (y crecientes anualmente), un nivel de consumo muy aceptable y unas vacaciones pagadas. Esta percepción totalmente diferente por parte de los

ganaderos jóvenes de su propia situación, de su lugar en la sociedad y del futuro de su caserío, tiene consecuencias, por un lado, en sus opiniones sobre el modo en que se debe llevar una explotación agraria (opiniones que pueden chocar con las de sus padres), y por otro, en la manera en que consideran la sucesión de la explotación. Este estudio demuestra que, en el entramado de la composición familiar, el marco de referencia personal, las redes sociales y los factores socio-culturales, la evaluación de los sucesores será en muchas ocasiones que la mano de obra mobilizable en el momento de la sucesión, y en los años siguientes, es un factor restrictivo.

Cuanto más integrada esté una explotación agraria en una red institucional (de cooperativas de comercialización, bancos, extensión agraria, etc.), tanto más estas instituciones suelen prescribir la gestión de la explotación. El resultado es que la explotación familiar entra en un círculo vicioso de inversiones y expansión. En la zonas de montaña del País Vasco, los ganaderos en vías de modernización se encuentran pronto con los límites a sus posibilidades de ampliar y mecanizar; algunos, sin embargo, consiguen rendir óptimo el uso de la maquinaria y de las tierras disponibles al implicar en sus propias estrategias a otros agricultores del pueblo y los alrededores.

Hay vendedores ambulantes de leche cruda, cuyas redes de clientes se desintegran a consecuencia de los cambios en las preferencias de los consumidores así como de una política restrictiva de la administración regional, que tratan de sobrevivir económicamente entregando el producto a la cooperativa lechera. Otros vendedores y algunos miembros de la cooperativa empiezan a dedicarse a la producción y venta de leche no pasterizada con registro de sanidad, leche controlada por instituciones reconocidas. A raíz de estos cambios, los ganaderos suelen entrar en unos círculos viciosos de inversión alternativos, donde además deben compensar el retraso que tienen con respecto a los que ya llevan más tiempo.

Como factores sociales y culturales que influyen sobre las decisiones de los sucesores a la hora de continuar la explotación de los padres (es decir, factores relevantes en el contexto de lo anteriormente expuesto) podemos mencionar los siguientes. Tradicionalmente el hijo mayor era el heredero exclusivo del caserío, pero en años más recientes el *mayorazgo* ha cedido ante un sistema de herencia doble: en algunos casos es el hijo (o la hija) más capaz y motivado el que continúa la explotación, en otros es el último de los hijos en casarse el que se queda a vivir en el caserío. Lo más importante es que los matrimonios en las zonas rurales del País Vasco suelen establecerse a una edad tardía. Como consecuencia, la mano de obra familiar que el sucesor puede mobilizar disminuye alrededor del momento de la sucesión y se mantiene a un nivel bajo durante los veinte años siguientes (puesto que la capacidad de trabajo de los padres del sucesor disminuye, en tanto que aún no puede contar con la de sus hijos). En el caso de que uno de los hijos mayores continúe la explotación y sus hermanos menores sigan viviendo en el caserío, la falta de mano de obra puede verse atenuada o aplazada por unos años. Pero si el último hijo en casarse hereda el caserío, la diferencia de edad entre los padres y el sucesor es a menudo aún mayor, mientras que la posibilidad de compensar la falta de mano de obra no existe (puesto que los hermanos mayores ya han salido de casa para fundar sus propias familias). Según mi hipótesis, la disminución de la mano de obra se notará

especialmente en las explotaciones atrapadas en el círculo vicioso de modernizaciones progresivas, y en particular si éstas llevan un retraso que deben recuperar, con respecto a los demás. Hay que tener en cuenta que la mecanización de los trabajos del campo tiene un límite en las zonas montañosas de Gipuzkoa. Además, la reducción del número de miembros familiares dificulta el mantenimiento de las redes institucionales y sociales que habían facilitado la expansión.

Contrariamente a lo que solía pasar en tiempos anteriores, actualmente la mayoría de los sucesores de explotaciones agrarias valoran más el encontrar una pareja adecuada, por encima de la herencia y continuación del caserío. Además, a raíz de la revitalización de los pueblos rurales, que hace poco todavía eran amenazados por el éxodo de sus habitantes, les resulta menos difícil que antes encontrar una cónyuge. Al mismo tiempo, sin embargo, el papel de la mujer como esposa del ganadero ha cambiado considerablemente. Es cada vez más frecuente que la mujer de un ganadero joven tenga su propio trabajo, trabajo al que no está dispuesta a renunciar para ayudar a su marido en el caserío. Y tampoco acepta con la misma facilidad que las generaciones anteriores la autoridad de los suegros en las esferas doméstica y laboral. Para hacer frente a estos problemas, el sucesor tendrá que encontrar soluciones aceptables para todos los implicados. La carencia de la ayuda de su esposa refuerza una vez más el efecto de la disminución de la mano de obra familiar que el sucesor es capaz de mobilizar. Por otro lado, los ingresos de la esposa también pueden significar apoyo financiero para la reproducción de la explotación.

El mayor peligro para la continuación de la explotación familiar proviene del derrumbamiento del principio de herencia única e indivisible. Ahora que se está haciendo popular el tener una (segunda) vivienda en el campo, hay casos en que los hermanos del supuesto sucesor exigen su parte proporcional de las tierras para poder construir su propia casa.

Considerando estas tendencias, y teniendo en cuenta que los sucesores en su mayoría aspiran a emular un estilo de vida más 'urbano' (en cuanto al nivel de consumo y tiempo libre), es comprensible que aumente la preferencia por la agricultura a tiempo parcial. En las últimas décadas los motivos ocultos detrás de esta preferencia se han ido desplazando cada vez más de lo económico hacia lo social. El por qué hay tan pocos sucesores dispuestos a continuar con dedicación exclusiva la explotación de los padres es una pregunta ya apenas relevante. Tendremos que preguntarnos más bien por qué todavía quedan tantos sucesores - a pesar de todo lo dicho anteriormente - dispuestos a seguir como ganaderos de leche a tiempo total, así como qué estrategias económicas y sociales desarrollan para realizar su objetivo, y qué significa todo esto para la política agraria. Hemos sugerido que la motivación del sucesor, incentivada desde lo ideológico, lo organizativo o lo social, constituye un factor de importancia para elegir el trabajo a tiempo total.

En los últimos años, el Departamento de Agricultura del Gobierno Vasco sigue una política diferenciada, influída también por los reglamentos europeos: por un lado, se apoyan de forma activa las explotaciones agrarias modernas y 'competitivas', por otro lado, y principalmente por razones ecológicas y sociales, se presta más atención a los caseríos 'marginales' y a tiempo parcial. Sin embargo, de esta forma, aunque menos explícitamente que antes, se

siguen dicriminando las explotaciones económicamente racionales de las supuestamente no viables. Pero este enfoque ignora la posibilidad de que jóvenes ganaderos motivados pueden desarrollar estrategias viables aun en el seno de explotaciones definidas como marginales o a tiempo parcial. Defendemos una categorización que va más allá de esta dicotomía (de acuerdo con los estudios sociológicos llevados a cabo en Wageningen acerca de los 'styles of farming'). Otras investigaciones podrían dilucidar a continuación la interferencia de la política agraria regional con las distintas categorías de explotaciones relevantes dentro de la ganadería vasca.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Hans-Peter van den Broek was born in Baarn, the Netherlands, in 1958. After his secondary school, he studied rural development sociology at the Wageningen Agricultural University, where he obtained his MSc. degree in 1985. He acquired extensive research experience in Spain (1980, 1983, 1984), Hong Kong (1985) and the Netherlands (1981, 1986).

Since 1987, he has lived mostly in the Basque Country, where he has worked as a translator and organizer of language courses (in English, German, Dutch and Chinese), combining this with doing fieldwork for and writing his Ph.D. thesis.