The Study of Policy Change: Constructing an Analytical Strategy

Abstract:
This paper aims to construct an analytical strategy for the study of policy change. It starts out arguing the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the European Union (EU) and the appearance of organic farming policy within the CAP is both a critical and deviant case of policy change making it a particularly suitable field for the study of such change. The paper goes on to discuss the contributions and shortcomings of previous studies of changes in the CAP and ends up by suggesting an analytical strategy to the study of policy change drawing on additional theoretical work and empirical illustrations of the usefulness of this work in the case addressed here.

The Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union is often considered the most institutionalised policy of the Union. This is the point made whether the CAP has been described as ‘extremely path dependent’ and governed by a ‘club-like’ Agriculture Council (Peterson & Bomberg 1999, Swinbank 1989) or governed by an ‘iron triangle’ of farmers’ organisations, Commission officials and agriculture ministers (Hix 1999) or as having found its ‘policy equilibrium’ (Peters 1996). The gist of the matter is that there exist particular severe admission requirements for actors who wish to participate in the formulation of the policy, the policy process

1 I am particularly grateful for the comment of and discussions with Wyn Grant (University of Warwick) and Johannes Michelsen (University of Southern Denmark) on earlier drafts of this paper.

2 See also e.g. Grant 1997 and Nugent 1999.
is very much set, there are clear boundaries for which issues are included and excluded and the extent to which the policy is subject to change, this is only expected to happen reluctantly and never to be radical.

Still, five major attempts to reform the CAP have been made since it was first launched in 1958. The ‘Mansholt Plan’ in 1968 was the first attempt to reform. In the 1980s reforms appeared in 1984 and 1988 and in the 1990s another two attempts were made in 1992 and 1999 respectively. The Mansholt Plan was initiated by the Commission on the background that production surpluses was rising as were the pressure on the EC budget. The initial idea was to reduce the number of farms and employees in agriculture, increase farm size and to keep agriculture prices from rising. In general, the intentions were to modernise the agricultural sector and improve its competitiveness. Although prices were stabilised for a period and three ‘socio-structural directives’ were eventually adopted in 1972, the grand structural adjustment envisaged failed to appear. What makes the Mansholt Plan stand out is not that is was basically a failure (compared to its intentions), but instead that the reform was in fact meant to improve the structure of the agriculture sector and not merely a reaction to the effects of the CAP itself as latter reforms (Moyer & Josling 1990, pp. 59, Grant 1997, pp. 70).

The reforms in 1984 and 1988 also came about on the background of increasing production surpluses and immense pressure of agriculture expenditures on the EC budget – indicating the lack of success of the preceding Mansholt plan. The 1984 reform in part managed to address the increasing productions surplus by introducing quotas in the dairy sector whereas budget stabilisers were agreed upon in 1988. The stabilising of agriculture expenditures consisted of the introduction of a threshold for which – when production exceeds – the otherwise guaranteed prices would fall. In other words, it was an attempt to introduce an element of producer co-responsibility on a market, which the CAP itself seemed to have invalidated. In addition, a ceiling was put on the growth in agriculture expenditures, which were not to take up more than 2/3 of the growth in the total Community GDP (Grant 1997, pp. 74, Moyer & Josling 1990, pp. 61, chapter 4). The 1992 reform or the MacSharry reform is broadly agreed to constitute the greatest departure from status quo. Most important, it meant that price support to farmers in part (the reform was mainly directed towards the arable sector) was decoupled from yields and, hence, the incentive to produce without consideration of the existence of demand was reduced. Moreover, a scheme to support farmers to set-aside arable land was set up and an agri-environmental programme was introduced (Grant 1997, pp. 77, Swinbank 1997, chapter 5). The agri-environmental programme
included support for organic farming, which was seen as useful policy instruments to improve the environmental effect of agriculture. The most recent Agenda 2000 reform came about on the background of the approaching enlargement of the EU and the new WTO negotiations commencing in 2000. The Commission proposal was to eliminate price support and export subsidies to farmers, to give greater scope for Member States to support particular needs of national agriculture and to improve the legitimacy of the CAP vis-à-vis EU citizens by targeting support to the ‘most needy producers and regions’ and extensive production (Ackrill 2000, pp. 116). After considerable ‘arm-wrestling’ the Agenda 2000 was finally agreed upon at the Berlin Summit in 1999. Although price support was not eliminated, the agreement included a continuation of the lowering of this form of support in favour of direct payments to farmer as started by the 1992 reform. Further it was agreed that the total CAP expenditures were not to increase above the expected inflation and a series of existing measures were put together and reintroduced as a rural development policy (Ackrill 2000, chapter 6).

Apart from these five reforms a long and steady stream of reports, evaluations etc. have called for a reformed CAP throughout its existence. There have, hence, been pressure to generate changes in the CAP and attempts have also been made to bring about such. That is, although calls for a reformed CAP is by no means a new nor an unusual phenomenon only very few of these requests have materialised in actual reform attempts, even less have lead to actual policy change and none seem to justify for the label ‘radical’ change. In recent years, however, the CAP has been challenged by values, objectives and strategies known from environmental policies that, to a considerable extent, are defined in opposition to those of the traditional agriculture policy. The surprising thing, in relation to the prevailing perception of agriculture policymaking, is that this challenge on principle has not been abortive. In contrast it has caused themes and problems to enter the CAP agenda, which already has had and, in time, may have further and radical impacts on the development of the CAP (Grant 1997, Gardner 1996, Hix 1999, Lowe & Whitby 1997, Nugent 1995). The challenge meeting the traditional agriculture policy is particularly exposed in relation to the policy that has developed about organic farming. Organic farming is often presented as making up a coherent environmentally oriented concept and having the characteristics of a social movement (Michelsen 2001, Campbell & Liepins 2001, Kaltoft 2001), which ideologically is a showdown with traditional agriculture. In spite hereof legislation concerned with organic farming has been adopted, committees have been set up and policies have been implemented within the auspices of the CAP.
Thus, the CAP is an example of a policy field ‘least likely to’ show changes. Still organic farming, which is defined in opposition to traditional agriculture, has become part of the CAP and constitute an actual change. This may then be seen as a critical as well as a deviant case (Flyvbjerg 2001, Peters 1998) of a limited, yet a somewhat successful process of political change. The case is critical for the study of policy changes as it is a change occurring in a field which is considered to be the least likely to show such and it is deviant as the actual change – constituted by organic farming – is an example of how a ‘dissident’ issue has entered a territory which is usually considered to be exclusively occupied by the politics of its adversary. This paper aims to construct an analytical strategy, which may start to grasp the question; how has changes towards the development of an organic farming policy been possible at all within a highly institutionalised field like the CAP? In order to get an idea of what sort of themes may be worth pursuing in an analysis of policy change as well as to point to some of the shortcomings of previous studies, in the following I shall have a look at how these have conceptualised policy change and continuity respectively.

**Continuity, Change and the Common Agriculture Policy**

Daugbjerg (1999, 1998) approach the CAP through a descriptive network analysis. The main characteristics of a cohesive policy network like that existing within the CAP is the existence of consensus among network members about a basic policy paradigm. Within such a network it is very unlikely that advocates of fundamental changes will be successful and there exists a general reluctance to setting the policy in motion and running the risk of changes that may have unforeseen consequences. In addition to policy preserving networks, the institutional structures on a macro level is also disfavouring changes. The fragmented nature of the political system and the absence of one centre of authority place restrictions on the practicability of generating the power necessary to carry through reforms and increase the number of potential power centres which may oppose reform (Daugbjerg 1999). In order to measure the scope of policy change, Daugbjerg distinguishes between three orders of change (drawing on Hall 1993). First order change will involve changes in instrument settings such as adjustments of a particular policy instrument. Second order change involves changes in objectives and the policy instruments used whereas alterations in the over-all policy paradigm is characterised as a third order change. That is first and second order changes are seen as moderate whereas changes of third order are fundamental (Daugbjerg 1999). Daugbjerg describes the 1992 reform as the most far-reaching yet the changes cannot, according to Daugbjerg,
be labelled radically or fundamentally since it did not contest the extensive use of subsidies. The main point made by Daugbjerg (1999) is that attempts to reform the CAP have only had limited success as the policy is very persistent and the extent to which changes take place they will be incremental. The reason for this path of development is the nature of the meso-level policy networks surrounding the CAP as well as the macro institutional framework within which CAP develops.

The subject matter for Daugbjerg is to capture changes in the CAP, which – however minor they may be - is in fact agreed to have taken place. On the other hand policy networks as pointed out by Daugbjerg - as well as March and Rhodes (1992) - are expected to stand surety that policy changes are avoided. In other words - perhaps more or less intuitively, perhaps since it seems to be the self-knowledge of the actors involved in the CAP - it is claimed that the CAP has been subject to changes. On the other hand the conclusions made is that these changes are not radical but instead minor or even insignificant. Acknowledging this, opposed to ‘examining the reasons why there have been no fundamental changes in the CAP (Daugbjerg 1999, p.410)’, which inevitably will lead to conclusions along the above mentioned lines, the more intriguing question seems to be why changes have in fact taken place in spite of the existence of cohesive networks and the fragmented nature of the EU polity.

In a comparison between attempts to reform EU and US agriculture policy Skogstad (1998) points to the importance of ideas in shaping policy outcomes. The likeliness of policy changes will increase when existing ideas have a low degree of institutionalisation, if they are in opposition to wider societal rationalities and when policies and policy instruments put into force with reference to these underling ideas have a disintegrating effect on the regulated sector (Skogstad 1998, p. 465, Coleman et al. 1997). The CAP is, however, characterised by the opposite. The idea that agriculture is an area, which – for various reasons – should be supported by the EU, is constitutionally imbedded in the Treaty of Rome. This idea is supported by strong and highly institutionalised relations among farmers’ organisations, agriculture officials and politicians on both the national and supranational levels (Skogstad 1998, p. 479). Furthermore, the basic aim of supporting a common market for agriculture products in the EU, the inclusion of most agriculture product in the CAP and the high level of organisation among farmers’ in Member States have a unifying effect on the agriculture sector (Skogstad 1998, p. 480). Finally, it is claimed that the continuity of the CAP is enhanced by a broad societal acceptance – particularly in France and Germany – of the idea that agriculture is a matter of state interest and ought to be supported as such
(Skogstad 1998, p.481). In all, Skogstad claim that whereas successful and fundamental reforms of market liberalisation have been carried through in the US, the CAP has not experienced equivalent changes during the 1990s and, although the MacSharry reform ‘introduced new, market-liberalising policy instruments, the underlying goals of the CAP remained intact (Skogstad 1998, p. 463)’.

Although the concept of ideas and their role in processes of policy change is highly relevant, Skogstad – like Daugbjerg - operates with a notion of policy change that is detached of the context within it appears. It is plausible the CAP has not undergone changes in the over-all policy paradigm to the same extent as have agriculture policy in the US and, similarly, whereas the US agriculture policy have changed towards favouring market liberalisation this have not happened to the same extent in the EU. This does not, however, exclude nor expose other possibly types of policy changes that may have taken place – neither in the EU nor the US agriculture policy. In addition, although both Daugbjerg and Skogstad consider three orders of policy change (cf Hall 1993), these are rather rigid. The understanding seems to be that first order changes are necessary for changes of second order which, in turn, is requisite for third order changes and, still, there is no suggestions as to how these three orders of changes are otherwise related. Such concept of change fails to recognise policy changes as relative to the context in which they appear and to capture the particularities of the context.

According to Coleman and Tangermann (1999) the 1992 CAP reform was a product of autonomous but linked negotiations as they took place in the context of the CAP and the GATT respectively. On one hand the games or negotiations in each forum are autonomous as they are imbedded in a particular set of institutional rules and involve different sets of actors, which are concerned with specific policy problems. On the other hand the negotiations are linked since some actors are involved in both games and the outcome of each game will depend on that of the other (Coleman and Tangermann, 1999, p.388). Through an analysis of the negotiations leading to the CAP reform in 1992 and those leading to the finalisation of the Uruguay Round in 1994, Coleman and Tangermann find had the CAP not been influenced by the GATT negotiations, it is unlikely agreements would have been made to move from price support towards greater emphasis on direct farmer income support and an introduction of a compulsory set-aside scheme. In spite of an institutionally path dependent CAP and forceful agricultural policy networks acted against radical changes, the CAP was reformed due to the entrepreneurial role played by the Commission and, essentially, ‘shaped by the interpretations of what policies might be successfully enshrined in a GATT agreement (Coleman and Tangermann 1999, p.401)’.
outcome of the CAP reform, the claim is, would have been different, had it not been for the involvement of the European Commission and the parallel struggle between the US and the EU partners in the forum of GATT.

Like Coleman and Tangermann, Lenschow and Zito (1998) ascribe the 1992 MacSharry reform to events external to the CAP. The theoretical framework applied emphasise a typology of environmental policy frames which seek to capture unlike ways for involved actors to ‘make sense’ of a very complex policy context and, hence, enable political action. These policy frames are embedded in certain institutional structures which intermediate and shape policy outcome. The institutional structures are seen as having an organisational, procedural and normative dimension. In addition to pressure of the GATT negotiations on the Macsharry reform, the changes are seen as a consequence of the establishment of the Single European Market (SEA) and the enlargement of the union. The SEA project and the cohesion policy that followed paved the way for criticism of the financial burden of the CAP, the distortion in favour efficient northern farmers and the adverse environmental effects of the CAP. Enlargement to the south and potentially to the east have also highlighted the economic expenditure as well as had a fragmenting effect on the farm lobby, which is increasingly pursuing unlike interests. Finally, it is claimed that support to environmentally friendly farming is a way to legitimise continuing support for agriculture in the context of the GATT as well as in the broader public. Lenschow and Zito find, however, that due to the ‘thick institutional structure’ of the CAP institutional changes in favour of a development towards a policy more informed by environmental concerns has only been very limited (Lenschow and Zito 1998). Organisationally, links have been established with the Director General (DG) for the Environment adding to the complexity of the CAP but still leaving the policy highly sectorial. New procedural structures introduced by the SEA and the TEU lacked, according to Lenschow and Zito, clear definitions which disfavour their usage and, hence, policy change. Along the normative dimension the ‘politically influential farming sector is still some distance away from accepting its responsibility for environmental degradation and the need to integrate environmental considerations into production processes (Lenschow and Zito 1998, p. 438)’.

Lenschow and Zito as well as Coleman and Tangerman conceptualise continuity and changes along the lines of historical institutionalism. The CAP is seen as path dependent that is the course of the policy follows decisions made during its establishment and departure from this path is rare (Pierson 1998). When changes like those of the 1992 CAP reform do takes place these are often the product of exogenous factors (Thelen and Steinmo 1992).
Ascribing changes to external events are, however, problematic. The externalisation of sources of change is based on a predetermined assumption of what is inside and outside to the policy field studied which seems to lead to the negligence of important interrelations among actors and institutions in bringing about change. Is it not most sensible to include what is identified as an important source of change as being endogenous to the case studied? – I shall return to this question in the second part of this paper.

Sheingate (2000) makes a break away from addressing the question of why CAP has shown to be highly persistence to reform attempts. This is significant as it probes a pronounced focus on the concept of political change or, basically, continuity is replaced by policy change as the dependent variable. Sheingate proposes that the concepts of issue definition and venue change may improve the understanding of policy change. When an issue is redefined, new aspects of the issue will surface which may destabilise the existing majority and, essentially, bring about changes in policy. The redefinition of an issue may also pave the way for change in venue. Where the jurisdiction over a particular policy is not clear cut, the venue, which eventually becomes the forum where the policy is dealt with, may very well be significant as to whether changes in policy may take place. Skilful policy entrepreneurs seeking policy changes play an important part. They will act strategically and seek to redefine the issue at hand in order to destabilise the majority-preferring status quo and/or direct the policy towards a venue, which is considered to make changes more likely. Applying these concepts Sheingate finds the CAP – compared to US agriculture policy – is more reluctant to changes since there exist clear jurisdictional lines on the area, which hinder venue change. It is uncontested that agriculture related issues are dealt with by the DG for Agriculture, the Special Committee for Agriculture (SCA) and the Council of Agriculture Ministers. On a national level - particularly in France and Germany - agriculture policy takes place in a neo-corporatist environment made up by farmers’ interest organisations and agriculture ministry bureaucracies.

These are general considerations of the continuity of the CAP, however, the 1992 reform is the exception from the rule and exemplifies how venue change by the involvement of the GATT forum made a difference. This, Sheingate argues, was amplified by the mere threat of additional venue change from ‘finance, industry and foreign ministers, plus ultimately heads of government (Sheingate 2000, p. 355)’ who would take over control of the negotiations if the traditional actors in charge did not find a solution. Finally, the reason why venue change and threats of such was a real concern can be found in the successful issue redefinition which occurred in the
time up to the 1992 CAP reform. It had become an increasingly widespread perception that the central problems or ‘negative externalities’ of the existing CAP were the ever-increasing expenditures as well as surplus production.

A common feature of studies concerned with continuity and change in the CAP is that to a large extent the policy is characterised by the former one. It is also agreed that the reasons for this is to be found in the institutional characteristics of the CAP. Firstly, on a macro level the fragmented nature of the EU polity means no single actor holds the political power to carry through reforms and, at the same time, there exist a wide range a veto players each of which may hinder the success of reform attempts (Daugbjerg 1999, Lenschow and Zito 1998, Fennel 1985, 1987). Secondly and related, the CAP is a highly sectorised policy. The policy field is inhabited and governed by a ‘club-like’ Agriculture Council, the Director General (DG) for Agriculture, the Special Committee for Agriculture (SCA) and farmers’ organisations. The latter either pursuing their interests via EU peak organisations or within neo-corporatist networks at the national level (Skogstad 1998, Daugbjerg 1999, Sheingate 2000, Pappi and Henning 1999, Grant 1997, Swinbank 1989). Thirdly, the CAP has exhibited a highly path dependent development. Since its establishment the CAP has been the central policy in the EU and the objectives of the policy were even written into the constitution, that is into the Treaty of Rome making changes very difficult (Skogstad 1998, Coleman and Tangerman 1999). Fourthly, it is a widespread idea that agriculture is a matter of public policy and there are legitimate reasons for supporting the sector. Not only is this the general belief within the agriculture sector itself it is also claimed to hold up in the broader mass public (Skogstad 1998). In addition, it is claimed that although environmental concerns have been used to legitimate continuing support to agriculture production vis-à-vis the mass public, it is argued that the actual adoption of such beliefs are still not common within the agriculture sector (Lenschow and Zito 1998).

The above point to a series of features which highly favours policy continuity and makes changes very difficult, however, it is also widely accepted that the CAP has in fact been subject to changes, however minor these may be. Moreover, it is agreed that the 1992 CAP or Macsharry reform marked the greatest departure from status quo. The studies emphasise various causes for this. Firstly, the GATT negotiations are seen as being critical for the 1992 reform and in this context the role of the Commission as a policy entrepreneur was particular important (Lenschow and Zito 1998, Coleman and Tangermann 1999, Daugbjerg 1999, Sheingate 2000). In relation to the GATT the mere threat of ‘outsiders’ to take over the control of the negotiations is
claimed to have probed the agriculture network to strive for a solution (Sheingate 2000). Further, it is argued the Macsharry reform should be seen in the context of the pressure generated by the financial burden imposed by the implementation of the Single European Act (SEA) in general and the Cohesion Policy in particular as well as the planned enlargement of the EU. The growing concern with the adverse effect of the CAP on the environment has also made its impact - at least in the way how support for agriculture is legitimatised (Lenschow and Zito 1998, Daugbjerg 1999).

**Closing in on Policy Changes and Moving Towards an Analytical Strategy**

Although the studies considered supply great insight on why the CAP has been very persistent to pressures, they also point to a series of shortcomings as to understand the processes that have led to policy changes. Firstly, the object of the majority of the political studies of the CAP has been focusing on attempts to reform, yet these studies have applied theoretical frameworks and concepts addressing political continuity. This manifest itself in partly the questions asked by these approaches and partly in the conclusions made. When the aim is to study policy changes it is, however, requisite to apply a theoretical framework which has a pronounced preoccupation with the concept of political change opposed to network analysis (Daubjerg 1998, 1999) or historical institutionalist approaches (Lenschow and Zito 1998, Coleman and Tangermann 1999) which – as far I can see – is basically developed to study political continuity. That is these approaches can be said to be preoccupied with ‘business as usual’ and it ought not to surprise the understanding of change remain limited when employing such theoretical frameworks. In fact, as far as the bulk of the literature has been focussing on explaining why the CAP has shown a very high degree of continuity (apart from Sheingate 2000 and to a some extent Skogstad 1998) over time it can be argued the most startling common feature appearing is the general acknowledgement that changes have in fact taken place.

Hence, in order to improve the understanding of policy change I wish – as does Sheingate (2000) - to deal with such as the dependent variable. In fairness, this focus owes lots to the studies that have shown the persistence of the CAP. On one hand the CAP is characterised by continuity (as shown by the above mentioned studies), one the other hand, however minor these may be changes have taken place (again as shown by the above mentioned studies). Thus, given the CAP is considered to be highly institutionalised in – it seems – every sense of the term, the most intriguing questions to ask must be; *how have changes in the CAP been possible at all?* The intention here is to develop an analytical strategy, which addresses the question of how changes in a
highly institutionalised policy field like the CAP, has been possibly. A process of change will be illustrated by the development of organic farming policy, which, it is argued, constitutes a limited yet successful example of policy change. I do not necessarily expect the changes that have taken place to be anymore radical or greater in scope than indicated by previous studies. What I claim is that our understanding of these changes is limited and I wish to develop an analytical strategy, which may start to grasp such policy changes. As indicated above the analytical strategy should consider: 1) policy changes vis-à-vis the context in which they appear 2) sources of policy change as endogenous to the policy field and 3) the properties of policy entrepreneurship. In addition, I shall suggest an analytical strategy aiming to grasp the changes organic farming policy constitute within the CAP should pursue the themes of: i) how institutions may contribute to policy change ii) the role of ideas in the policy process as well as iii) how the definition of issues or problems may contribute to policy change. The following will address these three considerations and three themes in turn.

First consideration: Policy changes in context

The methodological approach adopted is neither deductive nor inductive, but may instead be described as analytical inductive (Laegreid & Pedersen 1999). The aim is, through an ongoing re-evaluation of the analytical strategy, to establish an open but stringent analytical frame for the study of how policy changes within the CAP have come about illustrated by the policy concerned with organic farming. Inspired by Andersen and Kjær (1996) I wish to construct the analysis of policy change in two parts. The first part will be a diachronic analysis, which will be an analysis of the development in the institutional environment, ideational changes and changes in problem perception in the organic farming policy as expressed by the involved actors. This first part of the study will focus on changes within a series of themes, the relevance of which will be accounted for theoretically but, as regards content, will be clarified by central actors. The second part will be a synchronic analysis in which a series of analytical couplings³ are introduced. In the synchronic analysis time is frozen and focus is on points in time characterised by changes. Hence, whereas the diachronic analysis will be a chronological event analysis as expressed by the involved actors, the synchronic analysis will zoom-in on points in time characterised by changes and seek to establish analytical couplings between the themes pursued in diachronic analysis. A second step in the synchronic analysis will be to focus on changes in the analytical couplings, that is, to compare
analytical couplings, as they are constituted at different points in time. The latter analysis of ‘coupling changes’ may also be seen as operation where the policy field is ‘compared with itself’.

Second consideration: Exogenous vs. endogenous changes

The studies dealt with above all consider policy changes as generated by factors exogenous to the CAP. But what makes a factor exogenous to the policy field studied? The understanding that sources of policy changes are either in full or partly external drawn on pre-established notions of what is inside and outside the policy field. In the case of the CAP that means these explanations assume a priori that the field making up the CAP is already known as to which issues are included/excluded, which actors are involved/which are not, and which political processes guide the field. Even though the CAP is thought to be characterised by a high degree of institutionalisation on all of these areas, the concern of the cost of the internal market and the enlargement of the EU, the latent menace of other Commissioners than the Commissioner for Agriculture and the significance of international negotiation illustrates very well the limits for which policy issues are present in the CAP, who are involved in the policy field and which political processes are important for its development is not given and unchangeable. An analytical strategy aimed at improving of our understanding of policy change should, thus, not take the boundaries of the policy field as given and permanent, but instead it should operate with an endogenous notion of sources of change.

Obviously there are e.g. socio-economic conditions of relevance for the development in a wide range of policies at any given time, but they are likely to have different impact on different policies. Even when broader socio-economic conditions are relevant for policy change, it is the expression of these broader socio-economic condition within a particular policy that most be considered when we operate on a meso-level of analysis. The problem of attributing policy change to exogenous factors is it easily led to explanations which are not studied in sufficient details and we do not get a proper understanding of how these so-called external factors works and why they are important for the particular policy at hand. That is, explaining policy change as a consequence of external factors contain the risk of becoming explanations retreated to when we can not come up with anything better and they are left out, if not needed to explain change – although this is often the case. Hence this study will not operate with a predetermined noting of the boarders of the policy field and broader socio-economic conditions will be considered another layer of the policy and its particular relevance will be central to the study.

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1 The notion of analytical couplings is inspired by Jessop (1990) and Pedersen (1997). Analytical couplings are, as
Third consideration: From policy entrepreneurs to policy entrepreneurship

Policy entrepreneurs are claimed to be essential in bringing about policy changes (Lenschow and Zito 1998, Coleman and Tangermann 1999, Daugbjerg 1999, Sheingate 2000) and are supplied with special resources, which they willingly invest in the policy process. The characteristics of these resources remain, however, unclear as do the motivation for investing those resources in generating policy change. As pointed out by Legro (2000), the power of policy entrepreneurs in generating policy change is often attributed to their ability to ‘persuade’, but there is a lack of understanding of this particular quality. In rational choice institutionalism – like e.g. Pollack (1999) - the concept of policy entrepreneurs is often used as a way to contain system imperfection or irrational individual behaviour (see Peters 1999), but it seems to be a more general feature in studies addressing policy change. In their study of changes in British roads policy Dudley & Richardson (1998) attach great importance to a policy entrepreneur which is described as a ‘zealous individual’ with an ‘apparently eccentric stance’ who ‘understood instinctively the correct arena for his activity (Dudley & Richardson, 1998, p.735, p. 743)’. But that is as close as we get.

Addressing the working of bureaucracies and the people within them Downs (1967) pointed to particular types of individuals as significant for the development policies. Downs identified three types of officials; namely zealots, statesmen and advocates all of whom stands out as driven by ‘mixed motives’. In addition to the maximisation of particular self-interests bureaucrats will also have a certain concern for either specific policy goals (zealots), very broad policy goals (statesmen) or the goals of the organisation or unit they inhabit (advocates). The behaviour of individuals is explained partly by psychological predispositions (optimism, energetic, aggression) and partly by the behavioural requirements inherent in the position held by these individuals. Downs main contribution is the realisation that individuals have mixed motivations and advocacy or entrepreneurship is related to the position taken up by the individual. It seems to me, however, motivations are often very mixed and complex and should – if nothing else is known – be subject to an empirical investigation. Furthermore, entrepreneurship is related only to the position or role and explanations of entrepreneurs guided by ‘inner directions’ are not very helpful in political science.

Kingdon (1995 – first edition was out in 1984) describes policy entrepreneurs as possessing a ‘willingness to invest...resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return (Kingdon 1995, p.122)’ and they may be found anywhere among the opposed to a positivist understanding of causalities, local and historical contingent relations.
people involved in policy-making. That is policy entrepreneurs are supplied with a certain ‘willingness’ to engage in generating policy changes and this willingness rises out of an expectation that such change will bring about ‘future returns’. A wide range of actors can, however, be imagined to benefit from certain policy changes but not all of them take up the part of a policy entrepreneur. In addition, although policy entrepreneurs come across as particular resourceful actors, their apparent motive is that they are operating within a policy field that produces sub-optimal outputs vis-à-vis their perceived goals. Thus, the existing policy field may very well be producing outputs which leave other involved actors better off, that is, advocates of status quo must be expected also to possess a non-trivial degree of resources or/and the structural environment favours a status quo position. In all there must to be additional characteristics to what makes a policy entrepreneur particular resourceful leaving the question open; what is it that makes policy entrepreneurs so special?

The conservative former UK Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1989-93) and Environment Secretary (1993-97) John Gummer has been pointed to as a particular important advocate in favour of the development of organic farming both in the UK and in the EU. The organic sector in the UK has described Gummer as the ‘organic minister’ and as ‘a friend in Whitehall’ (Living Earth April-June 1990). Just around the time legislation on organic farming was adopted in the EU Gummer was chairing the Council of Agriculture Ministers and negotiating on behalf of the European Community during the GATT round. Also in the early 1990’s Macsharry and his reform team was in the process of drawing up an agri-environmental scheme, which was adopted as part of the 1992 CAP reform. The initial preparation of the Macsharry reform was deliberately being done by ‘small ad hoc groups meeting informally’ in order to isolate this phase from forces obstructing the attempt to draw up a reform proposal (Ackrill 2000, p. 179). It can be argued Macsharry had a reform agenda that needed to be specified and Gummer may also have had the ‘willingness’ to promote organic farming to become part hereof. But since the initial phase of Macsharry reform apparently was surrounded by some secretiveness and there were strong forces such as the French government opposing reform did Gummer also have the opportunity to act as a policy entrepreneur? It appears as if the environment a possible policy entrepreneur has been operating within have at least contained some strong hurdles but, on the other hand, Gummer has also been pointed to as having taken up the part of a policy entrepreneur. This is a specific example of how the policy field studied here may be seen as a critical and deviant case also for the study of policy entrepreneurship.
In the second half of the 1990s Ritt Bjerregaard seems to have exercised entrepreneurship. Between 1995-99 Ritt Bjerregaard was the possibly not so popular Commissioner for the Environment and has subsequently become Minister for Food in Denmark. As Commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard and the Director General for the Environment were involved in the planning of a major conference ‘Organic Farming in the European Union – Perspective for the 21st Century together with the Director General for Agriculture in May 1999. Although the context in which this conference was brought about is different from the context within Gummer operated, not least due to legislation on organic farming had in fact been adopted at this point in time, it was still the first time the two DG’s had co-operated about a major conference addressing issues of European agriculture. The initiative of Ritt Bjerregaard – herself a organic fruit producer - has been pointed to as important in bringing on the cooperation between the DG for the Environment and the DG for Agriculture on organic farming issues and she is currently pursuing the organisation of a second conference on organic farming. But like Gummer the policy entrepreneurship exercised by Ritt Bjerregaard seems to be in spite of the current understanding of the agricultural/environmental policy field. On one hand the DG for the Environment has often been considered a relatively weak DG making the pursuit of the treaty objective of considering the environmental aspects of other Community policies difficult; on the other hand the DG for Agriculture is particularly influential (Grant et. al. 2000, Grant 1997). This is no doubt the case in general terms but the case of organic farming policy seems again to constitute a deviant and critical example making it worth pursuing along the lines of policy entrepreneurship.

Most recently Sverrisson (2000) has emphasised that policy entrepreneurship or brokerage should be seen as a socially produced role and suggest this position may be offering the holder the opportunity of ‘networking’ (bringing people together), the opportunity of producing ‘knowledge’ and interpretations and/or opportunity of introducing ‘innovations’. That is over time expectations and opportunities develop around certain positions such as academics, Commissioners etc. that may enable entrepreneurship. This understanding avoids to ascribe individuals with certain and otherwise unexplained abilities and instead the subject for further empirical investigation is the particular properties of the position of entrepreneurship. In all, the case of policy change within the

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4 When Ritt Bjerregaard took up office she declared the EP was not a proper parliament, which may not have been so sensible as, the EP were to approve the new Commission. Later Bjerregaard - under pressure from Commission President Santer - withdraw the publication of her ‘Dairy of a Commissioner’, which was believed to contain politically intimate material. At this point, however, extracts had already been published in the media and, naturally, the dairy is now available on the internet.

5 The conference included about 180 participants from a wide range of public and private organisations in the EU as well as some from Eastern Europe.
CAP constituted by the organic farming policy supply a basis for an empirical study of the role of policy entrepreneurship and there also seems to be a need to improve the theoretical reflection of such and move beyond explanations of ‘ability to persuade’. For a start I will study policy entrepreneurship as a socially constructed role with certain characteristics which individuals or collective actors may take up for shorter or longer periods of time.

First theme: Institutional history and change

The literatures on CAP reforms all ascribe continuity to structural aspects whereas, when changes occur, they are claimed to be brought about by agents. Although, Lenschow and Zito identify some yet limited changes they attribute to the organisational and normative dimensions of their concept of institutions, these are counteracted by other and stronger structural forces. That is networks are seen as promoting continuity (Daugbjerg 1998, 1999) as is institutions (Lenschow and Zito 1998, Coleman and Tangermann 1999, Daubjerg 1999, Sheingate 2000, Skogstad 1998). On the other hand all of the studies considered ascribe the limited changes identified to policy entrepreneurs – most notably the Commission. It is not surprising that institutions are seen as accounting for continuity as it is a defining characteristic of the concept of institutions across the ‘new institutional approaches’ (see Peters 1999), but (which is also a point made by Legro 2000) there is a tendency to one-sidedly ascribe continuity to institutions and change to agents. In other words, institutions also change and I intend to adopt an institutionalist approach, which has a pronounced preoccupation with institutional change.

The institutional perspective or analytic adopted here is the one termed institutional history (Åkerstrøm & Kjær 1996). The ambition of institutional histories is to study the construction of institutions and institutional fields and how changes take place over time. Institutions are seen as institutionalised discourses or more likely the institutionalisation of certain aspects of discourses. That is institutions are bits and pieces of discourse, which have taken a firmer and more structural form. They are, however, far from fixed and in fact institutions are on-going processes of renewal and possible change and institutions as institutionalised discourse is only upheld as long as someone actually refers to the principles of the institutions (Hajer 1995, Berger & Luckmann 1966). The study of institutional change is carried out as described under the first consideration: Policy changes in context. That is through a diachronic analysis, which unfold the construction of the institutional environment as expressed by the involved actors, and a synchronic,
which compares the constitution of the policy field as different point in time in order to illuminate changes.

In the case of the CAP institutions would be adopted legislation referred to by involved actors. It may very well be disagreed whether such legislation includes desirable objectives and means but actors will refer to these and different positions are likely to be formed. The objectives of the EU agriculture policy as they were drawn up and constitutionalised in the Treaty of Rome is an illustration of an institution, as they are understood here. The original article 39 of the Treaty of Rome is still in place (although after the Treaty of Amsterdam it was renamed article 33) and states the objective of a common agriculture policy should be:

a) to increase agriculture productivity by development of technical progress and by ensuring the rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilisation of the factor of production, particular labour;
b) to ensure thereby a fair standard of living for agricultural population by the increasing of the individual earnings of persons engaged in agriculture;
c) to stabilise markets;
d) to guarantee regular supplies; and
e) to ensure reasonable prices in supplies to consumers (Minet 1962)

For a start I shall see institutionalised discourses as institutions that are generally accepted by all (or nearly all) involved in the field. Not necessarily that all involved actors ascribe to certain institutions but they relate, refer and position themselves in relation to these.

Second theme: Ideas and ideational interaction
A second theme, which seems to be important when studying policy change, is that of the role of ideas. This is a theme pointed to by Skogstad and although she does not find any change in the CAP the changes in US agriculture policy are explained by changes in ideas. The reason why ideational changes are not fond in the CAP by Skogstad may be due to the macro-level of analysis. On a meso-level of analysis ideas have been considered important features in generating policy change (see Kingdon 1995, Dudley & Richardson 1996, 1998, Richardson 2000, John 1999, Legro 2000) and it seems particularly relevant in the case of organic farming policy. Some of the more coherent conceptualisations of ideas with a specific interest in change are Sabatiers’ (1993) ‘belief systems’
and Hajers’ (1995) ‘discourse coalitions’. Both of these approaches operate with meso-level studies of political processes but whereas Sabatier (1998) relies on external perturbation of non-cognitive factors to generate changes exceeding instrumental decisions (‘secondary aspects’), Hajer is concerned with cognitive changes, which come about through discursive interaction, and is more open to internally generated changes. Studying EU tax policy Radaelli (1999) finds that endogenous learning processes have been more important for changes in the field than have exogenous events. The changes, which the policy concerned with organic farming makes up within the CAP, seem to be a case of the latter.

Organic farming has been defined as: ‘an approach to agriculture where the aim is to create integrated, humane, environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural production (Lampkin 1996, p. 2).’ There are other and much more specific definitions of what organic farming is about. This is the case both as a particular farming practise but also as a farming practise derived from a broader set of ideas which is not just about the role and impact of farming but also concerning the governing of society at large (see e.g. Sociologia Ruralis 2001). The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), for instance, state that organic farming should: ‘consider the wider social and ecological impact of the organic production and processing system…use, as far as possible, renewable resources in locally organised production systems…minimise all forms of pollution…[and]… progress toward an entire production, processing and distribution chain which is both socially just and ecologically responsible (IFOAM 2000)’.

What is very much implied by these definitions and principles is that traditional agriculture is not ‘environmentally sustainable’, not ‘considering the wider social and ecological impact’ of food production and has failed to develop ‘socially just and ecological responsible’ farming etc. Organic farming may, hence, be seen as based on a set of ideas, ideas which to some extend is defined in opposition to what organic farming seem to successfully have termed ‘conventional agriculture’. On the other hand organic farming and organic farmers also have a lot in common with traditional farming and farmers. Traditional farmers and organic farmers alike operate on a market for food products within a farming community and within an agricultural/environmental policy field (Lynggaard 2001, Michelsen 2001 et al.). Although, the ideational basis for organic and traditional farming may be seen to be each others adversary, together they are part of the same meaning systems (Scott 1994) or, in the words of DiMaggio and Powell, make up a ‘recognized area of institutional life (DiMaggio and Powell 1991)’. On this background it seems the
suggestion that ideas play a role in policy making is very relevant in the case of organic farming policy and this case may throw light on how changes come about within a policy field.

Third theme: Problem definition and redefinition

The third theme is that of issue or problem definition. In the context of the CAP this is a theme pointed to by both Lenschow and Zito (1998) and Sheingate (2000), but Rochefort & Cobb (1994) have also studied how definition and redefinition of problems can cause these to be perceived in new ways and affect the course of policies. Additionally, Kingdon (1995) has pointed to how policy change is as much about ready-made solutions searching for a problem to get attached to as it is a rational problem-solving activity.

The reason given for adopting EU standards for organic farming in June 1991 was that ‘in the context of the orientation of the common agriculture policy, this type of production may contribute towards attainment of a better balance between supply of and demand for agriculture products, the protection of the environment and the conservation of the countryside (Council 1991, preamble)’. That is the regulations are put forward as a respond to increasing consumer demand for organic products, a demand the policy aims to encourage further through common production standards and labelling and hence to develop a distinctive profile for organic products. The development of a consumer driven market (a driving force the policy is meant to encourage further) for organic products and the expansion of organic productions methods may contribute to a more environmentally-friendly agriculture and that is a development wished for. A further precondition for the working of the policy is that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for organic products. Council Reg. 2078/92, which contains financial support for organic farming, was adopted at the 30th June 1992. This regulation makes a similar reasoning and organic production should be supported due to consumer demand for such products, the beneficial impact of organic farming on the environment and since environmental protection should be an integral part of the common agriculture policy (Council 1992, preamble). However, these links are now more clear and explicit than in the 1991 regulation. This finds its expression in a longer list of possible environmental benefits of organic farming, the questioning of this link is no longer so pronounced and consumer demand is now explained by their preference for protection of the environment and natural resources. Emphasised is ‘good farming practise’ which is seen as production methods compatible with the environment and organic farming is mentioned on par with such practises.
Recently organic farming has been seen as a solution to the ‘BSE scare’. On the background of the outbreak of BSE and the problems that follow in the second half of the 1990s in particular in Britain, the German Minister for Agriculture Funke renounced the possibility of a similar situation appearing in Germany, which was declared BSE-free area. After the first cases of BSE in Germany in late 2000 (the first BSE infection was discovered on the 24th November) and massive critic of Minister Funke as well as the Minister for Health, Andrea Fischer both stepped back on the 9th January 2001. The Ministry for Agriculture was changed to a Ministry for Consumer Protection and Agriculture and the Green Party’s Renate Künast took up office. It has also been announced the policy of what has been called a new ‘super-ministry’ would change (Frankfurter Allgemeine 27.02.01). Backed by Bundeskanzler Schröder, Künast declared a wish to support the production of high quality food products, which is also believed to be in accordance with consumer interests and demand. The promotion of organic farming is central to this intended turn in policy. A target of 10% organic farming of the total agricultural sector in 2005 has been put forward and the vision of Künast is organic farming should eventually reach 20% of total German agriculture. It has already been claimed that this policy change will be carried to the EU and the CAP. The EU Commissioner for Agriculture Franz Fischler has responded positively and promptly by stating that the BSE scandal ‘has taught me that we have to encourage and promote environmentally-friendly production methods which respect animal welfare’ and Künast would ‘not have to try and break down doors in Brussels – they are already wide open (Financial Times 01.19.01)’. On the 13th February 2001 the Commission launched a ‘7-point plan’ as a reaction to the BSE-crisis and its impact on the market for veal and beef. The first point bore the heading: ‘Boosting organic farming’ and stated that: ‘the BSE crisis demonstrates the need for a return to farming methods that are more in tune with the environment (Commission 13.02.2001)’.

As illustrated, organic farming has been linked to problems of an unmet consumer demand, adverse environmental effects of traditional agriculture, ‘good farming practice’ and recently to the BSE-crisis. Organic farming has also been linked to the debate of Genetically Modified Organisms in food products and most recently to the foot-and-mouth outbreak in Britain. On one hand organic farming is defining new problems and, at the same time, appears as a solution to these problems. It seems an analytical strategy addressing policy change should enable the study of issue or problem definition as a source of policy change.

6 Compared to the CAP objectives as they appear in art. 39 it is not necessarily a departure from the notion of the CAP
Concluding

In this paper I have pointed to how most studies of the CAP have emphasised the continuity of the policy, which makes our knowledge of how changes come about, limited. I have also argued the study of the changes the policy concerned with organic farming constitutes within the CAP may contribute to the understanding of processes of policy change. Finally I have made some very humble suggestions on how such a study may be approached. These suggestions include firstly; changes should be considered vis-à-vis the context in which they appear and this may be done through the conduct of a diachronic and synchronic analysis that enable a comparison of the how the policy field is constituted at different point in time. Secondly, the study of policy change should not operate with a predetermined notion of the limits of the policy field and sources of policy change should be studied as endogenous to the field. Thirdly, policy entrepreneurship should be studied as a socially constructed role individual or collective actors may take up for period of time. Moreover, it is suggested that the case of the changes organic farming policy constitutes within the CAP may be captured through the pursuit of the themes of firstly, institutional change as conceptualised by institutional history. Secondly, ideas and their interaction are particularly relevant in the meeting between traditional agriculture and organic farming policy. Finally, organic farming has been politicised by being linked to various political problems at different points in time and, hence, the study of the theme of issue definition and redefinition should be enabled by the analytical strategy.

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as supporting the supply of agriculture products to ‘reasonably prices’ but at least it shows the flexibility of such notion.


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