

Death in the wrong place? Emotional geographies of the UK 2001 foot and mouth disease epidemic

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Abstract

In this paper, we draw on the concept of ‘lifescape’ (Somé and McSweeney, ILEIA Newsletter, ETC Leusden, The Netherlands, 1996; Howorth, *Rebuilding the Local Landscape*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999) to capture the spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock and farming community and to elucidate the heterogeneity of agricultural emotional landscapes. In so doing, we illustrate complex and contradictory spatial, emotional and ethical relations between humans and non-humans. Farm animals may exist simultaneously as ‘friends’ and sources of food, leading to a blurring of socially constructed categories such as ‘livestock’ and ‘pet’ (Holloway, *J. Rural Stud.* 17 (2001) 293). Livestock as ‘economic machines’ for converting roughage to meat, milk and by-products (Briggs and Briggs, *Modern Breeds of Livestock*, fourth ed., Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., New York, 1980) represents one strand of these relations; the sight of farmers crying and farm animals being blessed during the 2001 Cumbrian foot and mouth outbreak, yet another. As (Franklin, *Anthropology Today* 17 (3) (2001) 3) indicates, ‘the farmer weeping beside the blazing pyre of dead sheep is a complex portrait of a breach in the relationships between animals and humans’. By drawing on experiences of the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic, for farmers and the wider rural community in North Cumbria, we try to articulate the ambiguities of this breach.

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1. Introduction

Images of farmers weeping beside pyres of their culled livestock during the 2001 UK foot and mouth disease (FMD) epidemic raised a number of significant moral and ethical issues regarding the relationship between farmers and livestock (Franklin, 2001). Some writers go as far as to contest that farmers who wept at the slaughter of their stock were ‘simply hypocritical’ (Smith, 2002). We would argue, however, that the distress displayed reflects severe and often poorly understood disruption to a complex *lifescape*. Anderson (1997, p. 119) in her critique of animal domestication, alludes to this when she speaks of the complexity of relations of domestication where ‘animals can be beloved companions or eaten for a meal.’ This paper

draws on preliminary findings from an ongoing qualitative study of the health and social consequences of the FMD epidemic on farming and non-farming households in rural Cumbria,¹ to explore some of the emotional geographies that underpin livestock–farmer relations² and livestock–non-farmer relations. Our study is framed by ‘action research’, a broad approach that we detail below.

We begin by explaining what we mean by ‘lifescape’, (Somé and McSweeney, 1996; Howorth, 1999). This is a concept we use to articulate the complexity of the spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock, farming and

¹This work was undertaken by the Institute for Health Research, Lancaster University, who received funding from the Department of Health. The views expressed in the publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Health.

²We use this as a short-hand term to refer to the relationship between farm livestock and farmers.

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rural communities. Secondly, we discuss methodology and elaborate on our broad approach, ‘action research’. Thirdly, we draw on data from interview and diary material to consider how ‘taken-for-granted’ *lifescapes* of livestock farming became disrupted and displaced by the 2001 FMD epidemic. Our study participants speak about the unprecedented scale of livestock killing, including the loss of entire flocks and herds through culling; livestock culling on farms (as opposed to the slaughter of livestock in abattoirs) signifying ‘death in the wrong place and at the wrong time’; loss of livestock bloodlines and the difficulties associated with restocking entire flocks in the absence of elder flock members who can pass on *knowledge* of the *heft*³ and routines of the farm. A concluding discussion suggests that whilst livestock–farming relations may be socially constructed and dynamic, thus engendering particular sets of farming practices at particular times and places, they nevertheless form *lifescapes* of ‘taken for granted’ social, cultural and economic interactions between humans, livestock and landscapes (what Gray (1998, p. 345) refers to as ‘consubstantiality’). Such *lifescapes* are thus shaped by livestock–farmer practices, which in turn shape ways of being in the world. In this context, it becomes clear that a farmer weeping near a burning pyre of livestock during the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic, represents the deep distress caused by a *lifescape* fissured in multiple ways, a *breach in the relationship between animals and humans* (Franklin, 2001, p. 5).

2. Emotional geographies of human–animal relations

Geographers have long been interested in human–animal relations. For many early agricultural geographers, animals were mainly present as economic units or indicators of human ‘development’ (Yarwood and Evans, 2000). Since the mid-1990s, human geography has been concerned with spatial variations in human–animal relations (Holloway, 2001; Philo and Wolch, 1998); with exploring the ways particular categories like ‘livestock’, ‘domestic’, ‘nature’ and indeed ‘human’ and ‘animal’ are socially constructed (Harrison and Burgess, 1994; Whatmore, 1999; see also Quinn, 1993; Shepard, 1996) and thus with relationships between human agency, animal agency and landscape. Philo and Wolch (1998) go so far as to suggest that this emphasis on the socio-spatial place of animals and the coexistence of and social interaction between, humans and animals, reflects

a new cultural, ‘animal geography’ (see also Philo and Wilbert, 2000; Elder et al., 1998; Mullin, 1999).

Wolch and Emel (1998) contend that culturally orientated studies of animal–human relationships highlight complex and contradictory processes of, on the one hand, consumers distancing themselves from animals as food—people eat ‘meat’ not ‘animals’—hence an artificial split between the conceptual and the material—and the central role of animals in the structuring of society and hence to formations of human identities. The ambivalent position of the domesticated farm animal is further emphasised by Philo (1992) and Yarwood and Evans (1998). Yarwood and Evans argue that for some, farm animals are anthropomorphic creatures constructed by the rural heritage industry. To others, they represent an important aspect of local and rural identity, occupying a key position within the geographical imagining of the countryside (see for example, Halfacree, 1995). The sanitisation of livestock animals highlighted by Yarwood and Evans, where animals are clean, healthy and docile and even have pet names, may be contrasted with the violent, industrialised and anonymous death many farm animals encounter in the abattoir (Smith, 2002; Midgley, 1983).

Holloway (2001, p. 294) quoting Wolch and Emel (1998) asserts that whilst animals are traditionally viewed as part of ‘nature’, ‘the frontier between... culture and nature increasingly drifts, animal bodies flank the moving line. It is upon animal bodies that the struggle for naming what is human (is) taking place’.

Holloway offers a culturally informed examination of ‘hobby-farming’ (small-scale, part-time, food production) wherein there are emotional and ethical entanglements of human–animal relations. Animals may be viewed as friends, pets and as sources of food and as central to forming farming identities through such social practices as attending auction marts. Moreover,

... the animals were engaged in an ethical relation which involved regarding them as individuals while focusing on, from a human perspective, their well-being, happiness and ‘freedom’ to express ‘natural’ behaviour. At the same time, this relation allowed the animals to be used at the convenience of humans for food, and to be subjected to many aspects of conventional agricultural management (Holloway (2001, p. 304))

From within geography, there has then been a focus on the social construction of human–animal relations that is dependent on the ‘setting’. However, we would argue that in order to foster a culturally sensitive rural geography, we need to move beyond human–animal dualism to consider locally specific interdependent, fluid and shifting relations that signify *how* and *why* everything within the ‘rural’ is socially constructed (Murdoch and Pratt, 1993). As we illustrate below, this study made

³Hefting is a system where succeeding generations of sheep live on open commons, keeping to their ‘own’ area or heft. This is achieved partly by winter feeding but also by pressure of flocks on neighbouring hefts. Sheep are brought down to better pasture for lambing and then returned to the fell.

us aware of how the emotional geographies of livestock farming are entangled within human constructions of nature, with human and non-human identities constructed through ideas and practices played out in different contexts at different times and places. Emotional geographies of livestock–farming relations illustrate the complex socio-spatial dynamics of being someone (human) in this world. We were also made aware of how difficult it is to articulate these relations. We draw on the concept of *lifescapes* in an attempt to do this.

2.1. Lifescapes

It is believed that the concept of *lifescapes* was introduced by Nazarea (1995, 1999), an anthropologist working in the Philippines, and later developed by Somé and McSweeney (1996) as a way of framing the social, cultural and economic interactions that occur for people across the landscape. Subsequent work by Howorth (1999); Howorth and O’Keefe (1999) and Convery (2004) has highlighted the dynamic nature of *lifescapes* in creating *places* that offer livelihoods for the community.⁴ Likewise Ingold (1992, p. 49) argues that in the process of production people create their environments; in the sense that the environment is the embodiment of past activity and it is continually evolving, it is a ‘work in progress’. The environment enters actively into the constitution of persons; there is a mutually constitutive interrelationship between persons and environment, production is a becoming of the environment. The relationship between people, place and production system is thus complex and multiscalar. As Bender (2001) indicates, boundaries between persons and things are osmotic and creative of one another, people, places and spaces are intimately linked.

Wilson (2003) has also examined the importance of exploring non-physical dimensions of *place*, in particular those that do not exist solely on the ground, but are embedded within the belief and value systems of different cultural groups, placing emphasis on the social and spiritual aspects of place. From within our study, *lifescapes* articulates the spatial, emotional and ethical dimensions of the relationship between landscape, livestock and farming community and elucidates the heterogeneity of agricultural emotional landscapes. We draw on data from interview and diary material to illustrate how ‘taken-for-granted’ *lifescapes* of livestock farming and more generally, livestock–non-farming,

were hugely disrupted and displaced by the 2001 foot and mouth crisis. Before doing this, however, we first discuss the background to the study and the study methodology.

3. Background to the study: an ‘action research approach’

Our 2-year study was designed to capture the experiences of rural communities of the 2001 FMD epidemic and also to trace the process of recovery during 2002. Underpinning the 2001 FMD crisis and during the last decade, the UK agricultural sector suffered significant problems (Franks, 2002; Lowe et al., 2001; Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002; The Royal Society, 2002; MAFF, 1999). As the Royal Society Inquiry into infectious diseases in livestock states (2002, p. 9), from the mid-1990s, ‘much of the profitability has drained from the industry’. Contributory factors have been the strong pound, an excessive supply of sheep and the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) beef market crisis. Further public health scares such as *E. coli* 0157 have undermined public confidence in large-scale food production. Rural economies were thus under pressure before the onset of FMD so that by the time of the epidemic, farm incomes were ‘on the floor’ (Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, 2002, p. 13).

Within Cumbria, the FMD 2001 outbreak has damaged livestock farming as well as other (non-farming) rural businesses (Franks et al., 2003; CRE, 2001). This was particularly so in the more remote, upland parts of the county characterised by the lower income, small hill farming sector, strongly linked with tourism in areas of outstanding beauty (Bennett et al., 2002). Indeed the synergy between farming and tourism, for example farm accommodation and catering, compounded the problem. The virtual closure of the countryside for almost a year meant anxiety and hardship for those involved in tourism (including farms offering accommodation) whilst village shops and pubs upon which rural communities rely all year round and which are themselves reliant on seasonal trade for their survival, also suffered (Cumbria Foot and Mouth Disease Inquiry, 2002). This had in part led to a loss of self-esteem, an increasing sense of isolation among livestock farmers and called into question ‘a whole way of life’ and social identity.

Against this background we designed an action research (AR) project, a framework from within which a range of methodologies were used (we have written in detail of this study’s methodology elsewhere, see Mort et al., 2004). In AR, research is carried out with ‘participants’, research *with* people and communities, rather than on them. Collaboration between researchers

⁴Theoretically, *lifescapes* has resonance in the lifeworld phenomenology of Schütz (1940) and in the *phenomenology of perception* discussed by Merleau-Ponty (1960). In geography, the *lifeworld* (Buttimer, 1976 and later Seamon, 1979) has been used as means of drawing together the phenomenological with the existential to bring new meaning to emerging concepts of humanistic geography (Daniels, 1994).

and practitioners is central to action research. Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 1) in their 'Handbook of Action Research' define it thus:

... a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes.... It seeks to bring together action, and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people.

AR thus emphasises '*practical knowing*' and '*practical solutions*' to issues, often raised by participants (see Winter, 2001; Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001; Melrose, 2001). Broadly, our research sought out the '*practical knowing*' of the human health and social consequences of the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic, for a group of people living and working in rural Cumbria. A standing panel of 54 citizens, who were affected in different ways by the epidemic, were selected by an independent, professional recruiter. Selection criteria were framed by a demographic profile that was agreed by the project steering group.⁵ As a participatory method, the use of standing panels and citizens juries, are well-known in health and multi-agency groups (see for example, Coote and Lenaghan, 1997; Kashefi and Mort, 2000; Wortley, 1996). The panel includes farmers and their families, workers in related agricultural occupations, those in small businesses including tourism, rural accommodation and rural business, health professionals, veterinary practitioners, voluntary organisations and residents living near disposal sites. Intricate webs of social and economic relations mean that most members have familial, friendship and/or community ties to livestock farming.

Initially, individual, in-depth interviews were carried out and panel members participated in group discussions. Participants were asked to write weekly diaries for a period of 18 months and regular contact has been maintained through monthly visits by the research team to collect diaries. The ongoing diaries highlight the continued resonance and effects of the crisis.⁶

Seeking and implementing '*practical solutions*' to issues identified through the research process is very much part of AR. For example, despite the extraordinary stress that people living in rural communities had to endure during the epidemic (as our findings illustrate below), there was not an increased demand for formal health care services. However, participants told both of

seeking informal support (through contacting telephone 'stress help' lines and telephoning friends) and of '*covertly*' raising issues to do with stress during unrelated GP or health care practitioner consultations. There were expressions of reluctance to seek help directly through GP services. Working closely with local mental health services and ensuring strict confidentiality, we thus set up direct access to counselling services for participants.

More generally and through a multi-agency steering group, we are able to provide regular feedback to policy makers and service providers about problems, needs and the recovery process. The research team and participants have also held an interim findings conference to feedback our '*practical knowing*' of the epidemic so that '*practical solutions*' to issues raised can be found. We do not have scope here to think through the policy implications of AR, but it is worth noting the recent debates from within geography about the lack of policy relevance of much geographical research (see for example Martin, 2001; Dorling and Shaw, 2002). AR may provide a methodological approach to geographical research that could help make the discipline more policy relevant.

Our next section draws on our use of *lifescapes* to unpack some of the impacts that the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic has had on *livestock-farming* and *livestock-non-farming* relations in Cumbria.

3.1. Changing lifescapes

Whilst it would be disingenuous to argue that 'everything in the garden was rosy before FMD' (the pre-FMD *lifescape* undoubtedly contained elements of hardship vis-à-vis the problems of agricultural decline mentioned earlier), it does seem that many study respondents drew identity, self-esteem and well-being from their 'day-to-day' environment. For many study respondents, however, such everyday places changed dramatically during FMD.

(After FMD) I feel like a second-class citizen. I don't want to get big-headed or owt, but I used to feel that we were on a different planet to everyone else.
(Farmer)

Fig. 1 provides a more detailed exploration of the multiscale impacts of FMD on Carole's *lifescape*. It demonstrates how the immediate effects and residual 'fallout' from FMD impacted on her life, from her relationships with immediate and extended family (her children experienced disturbed sleep and nightmares and her own health deteriorated) through to issues of trust in governance and community identity. Significantly, the everyday place of the farm, a central component of her *lifescape*, became associated with death. The families stock were culled within farm buildings and the 'family

⁵Once agreed, the group profiles were sent to a professional recruiter whose task was to identify individuals to 'fit' the profiles.

⁶All the anonymised diary and interview material has been carefully shifted, compared and discussed in regular 'data clinics', using the constant comparative method (Strauss, 1987). Emerging themes were discussed with respondents during consultative 'feedback' sessions and revised accordingly (feedback sessions were held during June and July 2003).

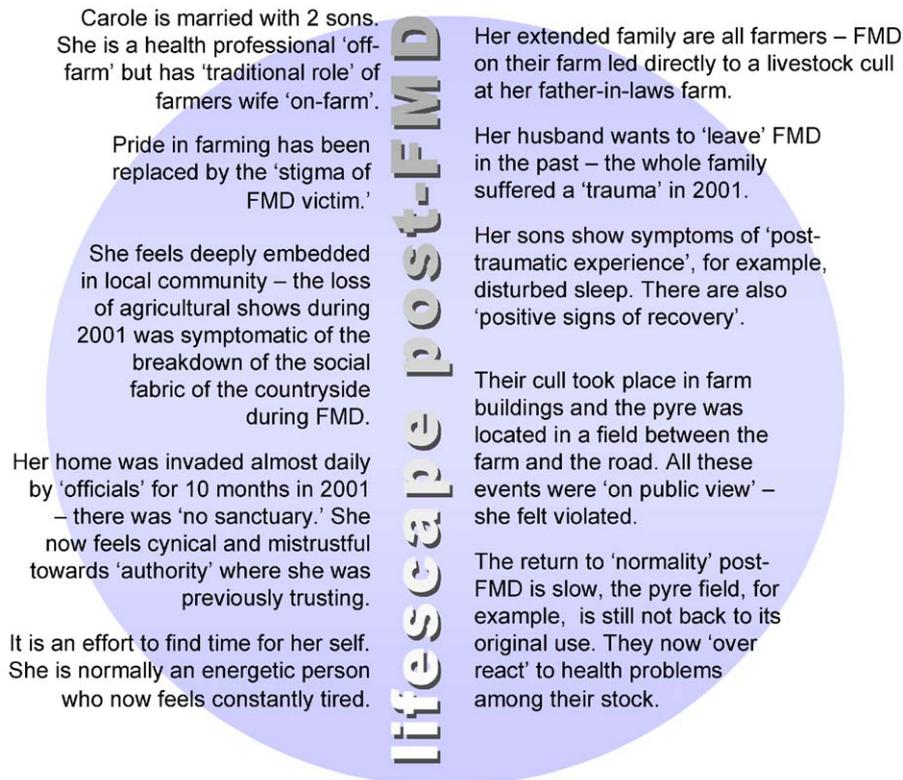


Fig. 1. Carole's *lifescape* post-FMD.

trauma' was on 'public view', as the pyre was situated close to a main road. Carole's post-FMD *lifescape* illustrates fractures across what Ingold (1992) refers to as mutually constitutive interrelationship between people and place. It also demonstrates links between place and well-being (see Gesler, 1993; Williams, 1999). Recent work by Wilson (2003, p. 84) has highlighted the culturally specific interactions between place, identity and health, emphasising the significance of everyday place in people's lives. For Carole, everyday places took on new, threatening meanings. The following quotes (from a teacher and a DEFRA worker) further illustrate how familiar places changed and took on new meaning during FMD:

On my way to school early in the morning you see a lot of people in tractors and you get to the point where you recognise people, I've been doing it 5 years so I recognise everything, and I was going past places and there'd be wagons there and men in the white suits... I've seen more farmers in tears than children that last year. The worst thing was later when they had killed them all and then had to pick them up... the stench, 'cos when they killed them, then they just left and some of those animals were left ten days before they were picked up. Ten days just to sit and rot. (Teacher)

I can remember standing at night looking down the valley and it looked like a scene I had seen from Kuwait during the Gulf War with all the pyres burning... it was really surreal. I used to drive back home through smoke... you couldn't see on the road you had to have the lights on—day turned to night, I couldn't believe it. (DEFRA worker)

As we elaborate below: particular aspects of these changing landscapes were to do with 'scale', and with 'death being in the wrong place'.

3.2. Scale

It is at times difficult to comprehend the sheer scale of the 2001 FMD epidemic. As Bennett et al. (2002) indicates, this was the world's worst recorded epidemic of the disease and the most serious animal epidemic in the UK in modern times. Cumbria was hardest hit, suffering almost 44% of the UK total number of cases. Approximately 45% of Cumbria's farm holdings were subject to animal culls (this rose to 70% in the north of the country) with the rest under the most severe restrictions. Farming networks, which depend to a large extent on reciprocity and cooperation, were unable to function normally, there were multiply fissures across the *lifescape*. The scale of animal slaughter in Cumbria was unprecedented—approximately 1,087,000 sheep,

215,000 cattles, 39,000 pigs and over 1000 deers, goats and other animals (Cumbria Foot and Mouth Disease Inquiry, 2002). Nearly half a million of these slaughtered animals were buried in a mass grave on a disused airfield in the village of Great Orton near Carlisle, the UK's largest disposal site. On this one site and at the peak of the crisis, some 18,000 animals were slaughtered daily. Some were infected; others were healthy animals 'taken out' in the cull of contiguous premises, or as dangerous contacts.

Death became industrialised with animals moving on from slaughter to containment trenches. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the government agency responsible for dealing with the disaster (later realigned as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), had to recruit or second large numbers of local people to cope with the workload of culling, disposal and record keeping. The magnitude of animal death is reflected in the narratives of respondents

Just the sheer waste, all the dead animals really there were 2000 sheeps on one of the places we were and a lot of the ewes were pregnant and as they were being slaughtered they were having premature births and I wasn't physically sick or anything but you felt you were going to be but you knew you had to get the job done and get on with it... it just seemed such a waste. I know stock gets slaughtered, we eat it, a lot of farm animals get slaughtered every year normally anyway—but not on that scale. (DEFRA field officer)

3.3. *Death in the wrong place*

For some, this scale of killing also impacted on their sense of identity and on their everyday living and working relations with the landscape, with livestock and with others in their community. As Franklin (2001, p. 3) notes, 'the outbreak of FMD in the midst of lambing season has meant that for many farmers the anticipated period of seeing their flocks spring to life instead has seen them put to death'. There was a clear breach of normal relations—whilst lambs are normally slaughtered, this is not when they are newborns, and so the rhythm and cycle of livestock–farming relations was out of synchronization. The epidemic created fissures in taken-for-granted *lifescapes* which transcended the loss of the *material* (i.e. livestock) to become also the loss of the *self* (respondents perceptions of identity and meaning associated with this *lifescape* were called into question). Death was in the wrong place (the farm rather than the abattoir), but it was also at the wrong time (in relation to the farm calendar) and on the wrong scale (such large scale slaughter seldom occurs at the same time). The following sequence of quotes illustrate this theme:

The worst thing was when they started bringing trailer loads of newborn lambs in. That was terrible,

we had to go in and unload them but it had to be done. We unloaded the trailer and drove them into a pen and got out of there as quick as possible because you can hear them, the animals bleating as they were being herded up to be put down. Absolutely innocent young lives. (Agricultural worker seconded to DEFRA)

We are outsiders to Cumbria. If anybody had told me I could feel this way about such a thing, I would have found it hard to comprehend. The emotions generated were so strong even amongst those of us who were not farmers. I could not tell of the images in my mind of the dead cows immediately over my garden wall. The sight of them lying there, the smell, the vision of them being lifted up by tractors and piled into lorries. I remember thinking 'how many more lorries? How much more cleaning? How can these poor people cope with this?' We are all going through bereavement and shared the feelings of grief. (Health visitor)

Like you go to a slaughterhouse everything's set up... You can't make it on a farm eh, not when you're expected to go two minutes, set up, ready, you just can't do it eh... I dunno. It just sort of got to me like. You used to go to farms and grown men used to come and cry like. (Slaughterman)

The culls brought for some a sense of failure, a loss of professionalism and a sense of not having 'done the job right'. Holloway's (2001) emphasis on good 'stockmanship' is borne out by many amongst the study farming community. Stockmen speak of pride and satisfaction in relation to the process of rearing healthy stock. There are clearly economic benefits associated with this, stock that are *kenned*⁷ are more likely to thrive and thus command a higher price at market. This pride can continue once the animal has changed from being *on the hoof* to being a *carcass*, from being an individual animal to a commodity. For example, some farmers might telephone an abattoir to find out 'how a beast has killed',⁸ at a small abattoir they might even go to view the carcass. Again, Holloway (2001) notes the ethical ambiguity of this relationship, and quotes one of his study respondents, who when taking an animal to the abattoir asked the slaughterman to 'look after her babies'.

Drawing on the work of Wolch and Emel (1998), whose review of culturally orientated studies of animal–human relationships highlights complex and contradictory processes of animals simultaneously being viewed as friends and as sources of food, and Anderson (1997), whose critique of domestication suggests that taming and regulation of animals may help humans to

⁷Known/well looked after.

⁸The quality of meat produced from the carcass, ease of butchering, etc.

construct a sense of superiority, we suggest that there is a much more pragmatic *working* relationship between livestock and their handlers. This relationship stems from the *lifescape*, the mutually constitutive interrelationship between people, place and production system (Ingold, 1992; Howorth, 1999; Convery, 2004).

Much of this paper has highlighted how lifescapes changed dramatically for study respondents during FMD. Underpinning the *lifescape* are behaviours and actions at play that correlate to ways of knowing. Cultural anthropologists Quinn and Holland (1987) write about the ‘*presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared... by the members of a society and play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behaviour in it*’. Such a view, according to Reybold (2002, p. 539), supports both a *way of knowing* and a *way of being*. Reybold refers to this as an individual’s pragmatic epistemology, the experience of epistemology in everyday life. ‘*These ways of being shape both mundane daily routines as well as profound life experiences*’. This *pragmatic epistemology* situates knowing about and *kenning* stock in the *lifescape* experience of everyday reasoning. Schutz (1940, cited in Luckman, 1978) writes that everyday practical knowledge is not homogenous, and may be only partially clear and *not at all free from contradictions... men’s (sic.) thought is spread over subject matters locate within different and differently relevant levels*. We have described how a group of study participants take pride in ‘healthy’, ‘well-bred’ stock that are ‘kenned’ on the hoof but that will nevertheless bring economic profit as a carcass. At the same time and as we illustrate below, whilst the slaughtering of livestock is part of livestock–farming *lifescapes*, few farmers and livestock handlers would volunteer to be at the interface between live animal and food. The abattoir would normally provide spatial distancing and some emotional detachment. The scale of killing during the 2001 crisis transgressed this emotional geography of farm as the appropriate place of livestock management and the abattoir as the appropriate place of livestock death. The culling regimes covered key spaces on the farm and parts of the farming landscape with death and dying:

And he’d had them [sheep] out on his fields and he’d gone with tarpaulins and bales of straw and making them little places to shelter so if the weather was cold or wet they could take their lambs inside, because I mean the sheep do have a bit of sense and they’ll get inside and get them, the lambs, keep the lambs dry and warm. And he’d done all this and he’d really worked and worked and worked and I went past one day at the weekend I was on my way down to my daughter’s and there was two heaps and they were just lying by the side of the road waiting to be

collected one day, and I cried then (upset here)... and I see the farmer’s wife sitting crying and the farmer sitting crying and we were just wondering what on earth’s going to go on? (Teacher, describing local landscape)

Like I said for most farmers it was a traumatic experience seeing their stock slaughtered. A lot of them couldn’t face seeing it I know some camped out for the night but most farmers on the farms I was on were actually involved in helping to slaughter the stock, They wanted the team to work with them. They felt the need to be there they wanted to make sure things were done correctly. (Farmer)

4. Emotional geographies of changed *lifescapes*

According to Humphrey (1995, p. 478), humans ‘can hold multiple, seemingly contradictory attitudes to the same animal: enslave, worship, consume, abuse, befriend, hunt, play games with, grieve for’. Fig. 2 presents respondents diary and interview material relating to Holstein–Friesian⁹ dairy cattle, together with other documentary sources, to demonstrate how perspective and discourse portray the same animal as a ‘machine’, a ‘friend’, a ‘representation of a life’s work’, an ephemeral presence, or a ‘bovine replicant’ with limited lifespan (after Dick, 1968). As we have already indicated in previous section of the paper, the emotional geographies of livestock—farming relations are embedded in the production of particular places where such relations are played out. The intricacy of this relationship meant that for some, the cull of dairy cattle signified the total severing of a whole array of networks of meaning, practice and identity.

They all had names here, they weren’t just numbers, they all had names and known individually. They are all characters and individuals in a way when you farm the way we do. (Farmer)

They walked them through the milking parlour and out, through the milking parlours like, as if they were going to get milked... after they come out of the parlour we’d get about ten through, close the door off and they would just stand there and be shot. They weren’t a bit bothered. Dragged out and put on the silage pit and another twelve through, and that was just like a conveyor belt really. It was just like milking them or something that they weren’t going shot, and dragged out. ... there was about 30 cows due to calve in the next month, and they were all in two calving sheds, calving bays, and they were just done where

⁹Holstein–Friesian cattle were selected due to their position as the most ‘popular’ breed of dairy cattle in the UK and USA, as Klinkenborg (1993) notes, they occupy a ubiquitous position in the rural landscape.

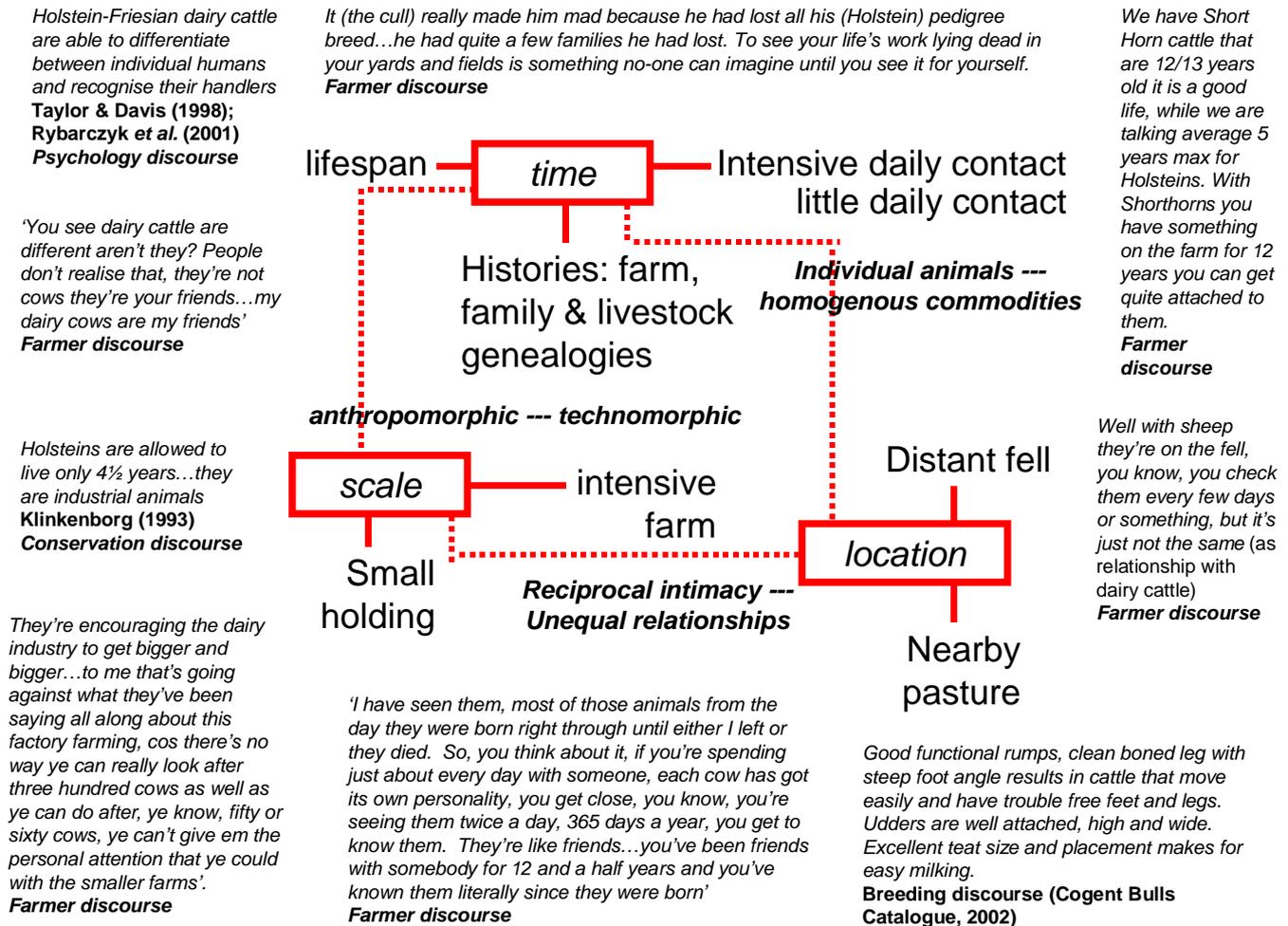


Fig. 2. Complexities of livestock–farmer relationships: the case of Holstein–Friesian dairy cattle (Cogent Bulls Catalogue, 2002; Taylor and Davis, 1998; Rybarczyk et al., 2001; Klinkenborg, 1993).

they stood, and dragged out. And there was a calf, and the slaughtermen had had to draw straws on who shot the calf and they were absolutely devastated. (Farmer)

A further level of meaning and identify can be linked to the cull process itself. The culling regime imposed by DEFRA during the crisis undoubtedly meant that a significant number of healthy animals were killed. As the National Trust (2002) indicate, animals of particular significance, including pedigree bloodlines, sheep managed by hefting and livestock associated with distinct localities were lost at this time. In diaries and interviews, respondents have reflected on the loss of bloodlines and pedigree stock build up over generations:

But I mean I just keep thinking of the farmers round the corner that had a pedigree dairy... which were distinctive even to me, they were brown and white cattle, very beautiful cattle. And they, I think they went back 160 years the pedigree. But they were all gone. (Small business owner)

We were lucky that we had 40 cattles up at another farm, they still had the bloodlines of course... when they came back, they were very poor and lean but we still have the bloodline. (Farm worker)

For those who lost stock, the process of restocking has been a contradictory experience, bringing both renewal and sadness at the loss of often irreplaceable bloodlines. Respondents have spoken of a 'loss of confidence' in handling the new cattle, as they're just 'not my stock'; an increase in calving difficulties because the 'wrong bull' had been used and vets commenting on an increase in caesarean deliveries and other calving difficulties. The following diary entry and field notes from visiting a respondent illustrate these points:

Saw a patient who was injured by a cow calving. It was new stock, having lost everything to FMD. It changed her. After 2 weeks in hospital with surgery, it will take 6 months for her to physically fully recover. I don't think she'll ever have the same confidence—at present she doesn't want to calf again. (Community nurse)

Vera was talking about this on Wednesday, saying how, one morning she was trying to bring in her new cows for milking. They went to the corner opposite the gate. It was sheeting with rain and as she struggled she looked across the valley at her neighbours getting their (un-culled) herd in. She says she thought ‘You thought we were the lucky ones because we got paid out—you should try this.’ This was all related with her usual good humour, but it’s unusual for her to be anything other than completely stoical and accepting of circumstances. (Field notes from visit to farming respondent)

Much has been written about the traditions of *hefting* during the FMD epidemic (e.g., *Cumbria Foot and Mouth Disease Inquiry*, 2002). Whilst hefting is an important facet of the Cumbrian agricultural landscape,¹⁰ permanent herds and flocks are in effect *hefted* within the farm itself, i.e. they possess unique *knowledge* about the geography and routines of the farm (Briggs and Briggs, 1980). It is rare for a farm to replace all its livestock at once, thus the mass culls of 2001 signified also a loss of *knowledge* of complete herds and flocks of livestock. It is customary for livestock to be replaced on a rolling programme, thus the older members of the flock/herd know the geography of the farm (fields and buildings) and will know where to drink, where to eat, where the shelters are and which gate a dog wants them to go to when it sets off round the field. Respondents speak of flocks meandering about when they do not know the ground and sheep dogs and humans having to work much harder to control their movements (reinforcing work by Gray, 1998).

It (lambing) could be a harder time this year as none of the sheep have lambed before. It is easier when there are older ones for the first-timers to follow their example (...) Even feeding them at a trough takes time because they haven’t done it before and there is no older ones to teach them. (Farm worker)

5. Conclusions

The 2001 FMD crisis severely disrupted the tangible, material and tactile relationship with *known* livestock. As Humphrey (1995, p. 478) puts it, ‘*we can hold multiple, even seemingly contradictory attitudes to the very same animal*’. We argue, however, that the complexities of this relationship have not been reflected in either the public or academic debates about livestock–farmer relationships during the FMD crisis. The phenomenological approach of *lifescapes* allows for an

understanding of the heterogeneous complexity of the rural landscape. It articulates what Ingold (1992, 2000) refers to as the being-in-the-world attachment to place and landscape, highlighting that through familiar fields and woodlands, roads and paths, people create a sense of self and belonging.

This complexity is not easy to articulate, it is at once ubiquitous and specific, open and hidden, and deeply embedded in the nexus of landscape, livestock and farm. In this paper we have used the concept of *lifescapes* to try to articulate that which is the sum of a ‘whole way of life’. We argue that communities in Cumbria are at once defined by their *lifescapes* and define their *lifescapes*, which in turn were changed because of a catastrophic event.

There’s not a day goes by as I don’t think of it ... Big thing like that I suppose it don’t just stop, does it?” (Slaughter team worker)

The 2001 FMD epidemic created deep fissures in the *lifescapes* of Cumbria, so that much of the *taken-for-granted world*, identity and sense of meaning changed. There can be no going back to the previous *lifescape*. As Minh-ha (1994, p. 15) indicates ‘every movement between here and there bears with it a movement within here and within there.’ The scars left from this process are likely to be long lasting.

We argue that the events of 2001 transcended the loss of the material (traumatic though this undoubtedly was) and became also the loss of the conceptual (the loss of the meanings associated with this *lifescape*). The scale of killing during the 2001 FMD epidemic did transgress the emotional geographies of the farm as the place of livestock management and the abattoir as the place of livestock death, because death was in the wrong place, at the wrong time and on the wrong scale.

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¹⁰Brown (2002) argues that hefted sheep (of which the two most important breeds in Cumbria are Herdwicks and Rough Fell) are a Cumbrian icon and make a key contribution to its cultural landscape.

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