**Making a market for male dairy calves: Alternative and mainstream relationality.**

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**Abstract**

The paper uses Actor Network Theory and the field of market studies to take a processual and relational approach to the alternative/mainstream food duality. Questions about how food systems or products make claim to be of the alternative or mainstream, and to what consequence, underpin the study. Analysis traces the making and shaping of two market versions for male dairy calves, a by-product of the dairy industry, often treated as ‘waste’ in the UK. Analysis focuses on the assemblage of actors, the breaking of matters of fact and shaping and communication of concerns, and at actions. Contra many approaches to the alternative, focus is paid to overlap between systems, knowledge and actors and simultaneous development of two products. From this, the ethicality of the mainstream, the continued duality and its consequences are discussed. Beyond seeing mainstream/alternative as co-constituted constructs, the two are symbiotic, mutually supportive and implicated in the circuit of culinary capital.

Keywords: Agencing, concerned markets, alternative food, retailers, celebrity chefs, actor network theory

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**Introduction**

In 1995 500,000 very young male dairy calves were exported live from the UK to be raised for veal in mainland Europe. The trade occasioned widespread disquiet, primarily expressed through nightly protests at the relevant ferry ports and coordinated by the animal welfare pressure group Compassion in World Farming (CIWF – for a table of acronyms see appendix 1). Then, in March 1996 the trade stopped abruptly when the European Union (EU) banned all UK cattle and meat exports after a possible link was found between Bovine Spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or Mad Cow Disease) and the human illness, Creuzfeldt-Jacob Disease(CJD). This ban on exports persisted until 2006. Throughout that time many male dairy calves were slaughtered at birth and incinerated. The need for a market, of whatever character, for dairy-meat was widely clear but no market ‘existed’, it would have to be made.

This paper traces the consecutive development from 2006 of two versions (D’Antone & Spencer, 2014) of a market for male dairy calves – rose veal and dairy bred beef. Using Actor Network Theory (ANT) and more specifically the market studies area, my aim is to understand how these markets were made and shaped in order to critically explore the widely used notion of a food dichotomy comprising alternative and mainstream markets. From actor network theory objects are classified and qualified through ongoing efforts to associate and dissociate them from other objects (Callon, Méadel & Rabeharisoa, 2002) so that categories, including market categories, are made rather than being foundational (Lien & Law, 2011). The processes of qualification and re-qualification occur within continuously changing hybrid socio-technical networks of human and non-human actors so that markets are continuously emerging and reemerging in new forms (Callon, 1998) and the core aim of my analysis is to trace these networks and how they shaped two market versions. The rejection of pure or perfect, bounded categories, as denied by ANT, encourages us to look instead at how systems form each other and how, and to what consequences, alterity is claimed. Therefore, this brings the notion of alternative and mainstream under critical scrutiny.

Critical examination of the dichotomy between alternative and mainstream foods is important because if categories are constructed and acted upon, rather than being naturally occurring and given, then the construction of categories is a political act bringing its own consequences. The alternative is readily applied to the multiple and diverse approaches that resist an industrialised and globalised food system and offer alternative modes of production and distribution (Bryant & Goodman, 2004; Goodman, Dupuis, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012). Through the alternative the perceived problems existing within the mainstream, such as problems of animal welfare, climate and environmental degradation, distributive and social injustice, are addressed (Alkon & Norgaard, 2009) and the disconnection between consumption and production is redressed (Tregear, 2011). But use of the mainstream/alternative binary and the ‘perfect’ categories this implies has been criticised (Sonnino & Marsden, 2006; Holloway et al., 2007; Goodman, Dupuis & Goodman, 2012). The porosity of the separating boundary is evidenced through ‘mainstreaming’ (eg Guthman, 2004; Johnston, Biro & MacKendrick, 2009; Lockie, 2009). Claims to alterity often rest on privileged yet ambiguous terms, such as ‘local’ or ‘natural’ (Hinrichs, 2003; Pratt, 2007). That which is pitched as the alternative, consumed with conscious reflexivity, is prone to become a niched marker of distinction (Guthman, 2003) or a carrier of culinary capital valued *because* it is not accessed by all (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012) with limited possibility to effect change in the food system (Goodman, 2004). All of these critiques assert greater relationality and movement than allowed in the perfect categories of a dichotomy. Instead, they direct attention to how association and dissociation with the markers of the mainstream and alternative are used and to what consequences. As Goodman, Dupuis and Goodman (2012, p. 32) point out, ANT is a processual and relational approach that allows us to “muck ourselves up in the imperfection of political contestation over food”.

The paper is organised as follows. The next section expands on the theoretic framework that informs the study expanding on Actor Network Theory primarily through the market studies literature and relevant studies of food production. The second section provides the empirical work, explaining the methods before turning to the analytic narrative that follows the making of the two market versions. From the narrative I argue that there is considerable overlap of actors in the two market versions, that systems and practices flow between markets and that whilst ethical claims or their absence are important in shaping the markets the ethics of production do not necessarily differ between the two products. The discussion section reflects upon the implications that the study might have for a broader understanding of mainstream/alternative by questioning how market versions differ, what the effects of mainstreaming and ‘alternativisation’ are and whose interests the dichotomy serves? The conclusions summarise the contribution and areas of future research.

**Conceptual framing: Actor networks, concerned markets and the politics of concern.**

In recent years ANT has been widely used in the field of market studies in order to understand how markets are made and shaped (Araujo, 2007). ANT is relational and processual and rejects perfect categories and isolated phenomena to focus on the way in which categories are claimed and shaped through continuously changing and hybrid networks comprising human and non-human actors (Callon, 1998). ANT talks of the socio-technical arrangements (or ‘agencements’), or of hybrid networks, to denote the very broad ranging webs of connections through which action is achieved (Caliskan & Callon, 2009). This has important implications for how we understand food and it challenges the categories according to which foods might often be qualified and classified. For example, focusing on fisheries, Lien and Law (2011) show how categories including nature and culture, the domesticated and the wild are constituted through acts of differentiation. Johnsen et al (2009) elaborate on the interactions of the techno-scientific, policy, markets, human relations and marine life, also with respect to wild fish. ANT sees these phenomena as thoroughly interpenetrated, co-constituted and without any specific a priori claims to agency. What emerges is a network in which actors are so entangled as to render problematic the separate spheres by which they might be understood (Law, 1992).

ANT provides a fundamental critique of the classical view of markets and of the notion of agency in general and the consumer sovereign agent in particular. Markets are not natural or neutral phenomena, a meeting space of atomised and pre-existing demands, suppliers and goods (Callon, 2016; Geiger & Finch, 2016). Rather, markets are ‘broad, large and flexible coalitions of human actors and material entities’ (Cochoy et al, 2016). The removal of individual agency that is intrinsic to notions of agencement is very far from seeing actors as passive. Rather, the way groups form and are positioned relative to others, the way a technology meshes with culture or is deployed to act on nature, and so on, are not determined but are contingent and action emerges through the shifting complex of relationships. ‘Agencing’ is of particular importance since the use of the gerund places process at the centre, emphasises activity and diminishes notions of individual agency (Cochoy, Trompette & Araujo, 2016). Agencing directs attention to the processes through which market entities are arranged, how they acquire capacity to act (Hagberg, 2016) and are set in motion (Cochoy, Trompette & Araujo, 2016).

The lack of determinism allows us to see agencing as political since there may be, and often are, competing efforts to shape markets. Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) consider how ideas and market versions are related. They highlight the importance of defining the norms that are to underpin the market version, the work that is performed to gain wider support for the appropriateness of those norms and also the establishment of representations that will qualify objects in the market. This processual view that focuses on how certain market systems are established or unsettled has been further developed recently in a collection of papers edited by Geiger and colleagues (2014) that looks at ‘concerned markets’. Concerned markets are characterised by multiplicity of interests and values that orient around ‘concerns associated with the unfolding of economic transactions’ (Geiger et al, 2014, p. 2). ‘Concerning’, is a ‘collective process to shape resources to make exchange compatible with the concern’ (Mallard, 2016).

Geiger et al (2014) propose a model to disentangle the iterative movements involved in concerning. Firstly, that which has been consensually sustained as a ‘matter of fact’ (Chakarabarti & Mason, 2014) is problematized and its ‘taken-for-grantedness’ is questioned. This brings to the surface the ‘overflow’, an unattended to aspect of a market that has never been incorporated as relevant to the market (Onyas & Ryan, 2014). Callon (1998) associates the unsettling of matters of fact with the ‘heating up’ of the market whereby the contingency of routine performance is exposed making the market a site of potential change. In hot markets ‘everything becomes controversial’ (Callon, 1998b, p. 260) and facts and values become entangled. It is possible then to reimagine the market according to ‘matters of concern’ as actors assemble who relate themselves in some way to a concern. A matter of concern encompasses multiple interest, voices and values (Geiger et al, 2014) to which, from agro-food studies, we might add multiple knowledges (Goodman, DuPuis & Goodman, 2012). Therefore, it is germane to look at how particular concerns are made to count and particular knowledges encompassed to form a terrain that is sufficiently shared to enable action. Matters of concern then become the rallying point and actors can trouble the market space, making aspects of it visible and more broadly communicated. Unlikely coalitions might form to forward a sufficiently shared concern. The ‘macro actor’, is not a priori powerful but becomes contextually powerful, as they are produced in the way that multiple actors orient with respect to a concern.

The hot controversy might readily be seen in alternative food markets. In fact, Callon (1998b) illustrates the hot situation through BSE (mad cow disease) in the UK cattle herd which forms the backdrop to my study. Similarly, alternative markets more generally might be seen as collective attempts to reshape resources (Mallard, 2016) where concerns with extant exchange systems (Geiger et al, 2016) have crystallised from controversy. However, since concerned markets are characterised by a multiplicity of interests and values (Geiger et al 2014), the process whereby aspects of the situation become the focus of the concern and there is coalescence around what will redress those aspects illustrates the ‘powers of association’ (Latour 1984). Concerns are given energy, carried, translated, modified, and, crucially, acted on or performed by linked individuals seeking to achieve their own ends. In this process, and as certain values and interests are privileged over others, ‘politics plays out in markets and not outside them’ (Callon 2016, p.33) and the political is increasingly made explicit in market studies.

The ANT perspective turns from seeing power as a determined possession of any actor to look at how and to what consequences certain voices, interests and values shape a changing process (Latour, 1984). So the current study responds to calls for further work exploring the influence of multiple actors (inter alia politicians, regulators, the media) upon “what concerns are made explicit and how ... concerns are made to count” (Geiger et al, 2014, p.15) and notes that implicit to this is how concerns are made not to count or backgrounded against other issues that form the basis of action. In doing so it will be possible to unpick the politics of alterity in this case since, as will be shown, one of the market versions (rose veal) oriented around enrolling actors and consumer to an ethical concern in the way associated with explicitly alternative markets, whilst the dairy beef market acted to address the identical issue whilst backgrounding ethical concern.

**Data and methods**

News press and other publicly available data were selected as the primary data collection method. As Cochoy (2015) argues, any one media outlet provides a view from one observation point, but that observation point is then shared with its audiences. For researchers this is important because it allows us to appreciate the perspective offered to a set of actors as a basis for their action. For example, general media such as The Guardian tells us the story as told to (left leaning, in the Guardian’s case) consumers, whereas the Farmer’s Guardian speaks to another audience. Cochoy (2015) therefore adopts a ‘medially focused view’ wherein a core publication is juxtaposed with other media in order to identify and contrast different storylines and to observe their interaction. Crucially, by attending to what Cochoy (2015) terms the central and peripheral visions, the researcher can identify the restrictions that might be found in one set of media whereby parallel developments are neglected or some information is omitted. This approach to research is based on the recognition that public documents that are contemporary to the research case ‘do things’ in the wider world at the moment of their production (this is why I shall cite source rather than journalist) and are *part* *of*, rather than *comment about*, actor networks. More accurately, the media provides arenas where agencing and concerning take place. For these reasons, the use of public data as part or all of the primary data is common practice in market studies (eg Finch, Horan & Reid, 2015; Mallard, 2016) since it allows us to reveal the evolutions, communications and turning points of controversies across broad, multi-actor networks.

 Interviews were not used in this research on similar grounds. The perspective interviews provide is retrospective – the story told from the vision afforded by today rather than at the time of the events and told for the researcher rather than involved actors (Hopkinson, 2015a). Interviews also would be more limited in scope and prioritise some actors over others. Nevertheless, not all possible voices will be included and the task of the research is therefore to ‘follow the story’ treating the first tranche of data as ‘leads’ through to data from other organisations, people and events. The initial media search therefore leads through to multiple sources.

The research commenced with the NEXIS database, a comprehensive collection of international news sources. In this case relevant terms (initially ‘rose veal’, ‘veal’ and then ‘dairy + beef’) were applied to UK National Newspapers dataset and then the Industry Trade Press database. The research was then expanded through a ‘snowballing method’ to visit the webpages of organisations (eg. government departments, industry bodies etc.) mentioned in the first tranche of data. Of particular note, as the core arena in which dairy-bred beef was developed, was the calf forum website hosted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA). Relevant documents, such as reports documenting the work of the Calf Forum were collected.

The totality of data were then analysed to produce a chronology and locate ‘factual’ data (eg. sales figures, dates of legislation) and to develop themes. There were sharp differences evident in the development of the two market versions, demonstrating the importance of central and peripheral vision (Cochoy, 2015). The veal market was referenced predominantly in the general media, with some coverage in the grocery press and little coverage in the farming press. The inverse applied to dairy-bred beef which was widely featured in farming publications and almost absent from the general media. In practice this rendered two separate sets of data (veal and beef) hinged together by a few key events and led to me placing different sources at the centre and the periphery of my vision as I trace the two market versions.

The data was then distilled to two narrative accounts, of rose veal and of dairy-bred beef. This necessarily involved selection and exclusion but was guided by the wish to capture the most relevant events and emerging practices and understandings that shaped the market. Quotations were selected to provide effective and succinct illustration of key aspects of the narrative. Distillation proved difficult since the world of farming, in particular, is complex and continuously hit by intersecting and multiple influences. Market prices of grain, of milk, of meat fluctuate dramatically, European and UK regulations and farm payments change. In the period in question three cattle diseases had a massive impact on the industry – BSE, Foot and Mouth and Bovine Tuberculosis. All I can do is apologise to those deeply affected by some of these events for the omissions I have made. However, I hope to have rendered an account that includes the aspects most relevant to the two market versions with which I am concerned.

**Analysis – the narratives of two market versions.**

*Background*

Veal is the meat of young bovine animals – regardless of sex or breed. Veal had formed part of the traditional diet in the UK (see for example its inclusion by Mrs Beeton, 1861) but consumption declined rapidly from approximately 616,000 calves in the 1960s to 35,000 calves in the 1980s (Farmers First, 2013 p.15). The rapid decline is attributable to prominent activism, led by Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), which highlighted veal rearing practices and brought consumer anxiety. These practices limited the calves to a diet based only on milk products and restricted the calves’ movement and access to light through the use of small crates. The practices produced a pale, white coloured meat. The UK government banned these methods of rearing in 1990, ahead of less restrictive but European wide legislation in 2007. This created a live export trade of animals transported shortly after birth to continental Europe where the rearing methods that produced young white meat could still be practiced and where a market for that meat existed. However, the live export trade ceased abruptly in 1996 when a possible link between BSE and CJD was established and the EU imposed a ban on all bovine meat exports in “the week that shook the meat industry” (Palmer, 1996). The export ban meant that many dairy calves were then slaughtered at birth and incinerated. Incineration in large numbers continued until the EU export ban was lifted in 2006.

Figures I and II provide an overview of the key period on which I focus in this paper. Figure I shows the resumption of live export in 2006 when the ban was lifted, albeit of lower volume than had existed in the early 1990s. From 2006 greater numbers of calves were retained within UK farming and export declined. Slaughter at birth fluctuated through the period but was not eradicated. Figure II demonstrates an uplift in veal consumption from 2010 although veal sales remained ‘negligible’ (BCESF 2013, p. 11), indicating that much of the uplift in calf retention is attributed to beef rather than veal sales. The aim now is to understand how market versions were created and shaped to address the problems associated with male dairy calves.

The analysis is in three parts. Firstly, the rose veal market since early market making activity commenced in the mid-1990s, although my core focus is on the period 2006-2009. Then the dairy-beef market from 2006. I treat these as market versions (D’Antone & Spencer, 2014), to avoid duality and reification. As will be seen, the two actor-networks are overlapping and co-constitutive and, furthermore, porous to other networks. These themes are developed in the third tranche of analysis that addresses the mainstreaming of rose veal (from around 2009) and looks at how mainstreamed dairy-beef has led to the creation of new forms of alterity in the beef market.



Figure 1: Dairy calves retailed in the UK 2006-2012 (Source: AHDB/Defra 2013)



Figure 2: British production of veal 2006-2012 (Source: AHDB/Defra 2013)

*A market version for rose veal.*

The first attempts to create a veal product for the UK market coincided with the widespread criticism of production systems that featured regularly in news coverage of nightly ferry port blockades (Hopkinson, 2015b). The term ‘rose veal’ can be traced to the mid-1990s and several features in this period are noteworthy. Firstly, there was an evident need to clearly differentiate this from production methods that were considered distasteful and associated with white meat. Secondly, the naming of the product was called into question as was the consumer acceptance of the product, regardless of its name. Collectively these features demonstrate the attempt to differentiate a product defined by its alterity to traditional veal and associated with higher animal welfare.

In 1995, William Waldegrave the then Conservative Minister for Agriculture and himself a dairy farmer criticised for providing calves to the export trade, requested government support to promote ‘rose veal’[[1]](#footnote-1) (*Hansard*, 1995, January 26) and his colleagues asked the multiple retailers to stock the product (*Hansard*, 1995, February 23). Others in parliament, however, were sceptical of what they framed as a naming exercise. Paul Tyler, Liberal Democrat Agriculture spokesperson, doubted that branding as ‘welfare beef’, ‘rose veal’ or ‘happy meat’ (*The Guardian*, 1995, February 15, parentheses in original) could provide an effective make over for a meat that was, in effect, no longer eaten. The same doubts were held by the National Farmers’ Union (NFU), the main farming body, that ‘poured scorn’ on the possibility of a sizable UK veal market (*The Independent,* 1995, January 10). Nevertheless, it was around this time that the term ‘rose veal’ made its first appearance in the national press and indicated the difficulty that farmers had in disassociating themselves and their product from the public association between veal and cruelty. *The Times* (1995, February 8) reported security measures on farms, including that of David O’Connell where veal was raised in ‘a small family farm in Bedfordshire’, animals were in family groups, in lose pens, and fed a mixed diet including cereal and forage, giving a rose coloured meat. So from before the export ban and until 2006, the picture emerges of individuals, almost mavericks, lacking governmental and industrial support and therefore insufficiently connected to agence a market although sporadic media reports demonstrate the increased use of the term ‘rose veal’ to indicate an ethically reared meat.

Whilst there had been some scepticism about the power of differentiated branding, this was central for the network of actors involved in market agencing from 2006 and closer examination of this exposes the challenges of carving out an alternative position in food markets. Celebrity chef and food campaigner, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, along with farmers, chefs and Compassion in World Farming (CIWF – the focal animal welfare pressure group previously involved in port blockades) launched the Good Veal Campaign at the Organic Food Awards ceremony in 2006 (*The Independent*, 2006, September 2). The timing of this impetus to market creation, the coalition of actors and the by now naturalised use of the term rose veal as a referent to an ethics of production are important and interrelated. The campaign was launched concurrent with the reopening of the live export trade and the support of CIWF contributed to its ethical credentials. Specifically, CIWF inclusion crystallised the recognition that banning export in itself would not contribute to the ethical treatment of male dairy calves in the continued absence of a viable UK market. In this way the concern (animal welfare) became attached to a particular solution (the UK veal market). Although readily used in the campaign, the term rose veal was defined through usage rather than through law. It was only in 2008 that ‘veal’ became a legally defined product category and even then the prefix ‘rose’ remained undefined and flexibly used (See footnote 1). Additionally, whilst the campaign was launched at the Organic Food Awards, rose veal might or might not be raised through organic methods and it remained permitted to cull male dairy calves whilst retaining Organic Association membership until 2015. If ‘the alternative’ is understood to be based on a reflexive approach to consumption that is resistant to industrialised production (Guthman, 2003; Bryant & Goodman, 2004; Goodman, Dupuis, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012), then the Good Veal Campaign demonstrates the challenges in making an alternative claim stick given the possible multiplicity of specific and existing understandings (both amongst consumers and amongst other market actors) of quite what is problematic in the mainstream and is to be resisted. Rose veal overlapped with, but was not overlaid on, other ‘alternatives’ (such as organics) and market agencing was aided, perhaps, through the acceptance of a relatively ambiguous term applied to the market object.

The Good Veal Campaign highlighted the persistent superiority of UK rearing standards (no crates used and a mixed diet) that exceeded new European legislation that specified minimum dimensions of crates. The campaign presented rose veal consumption as the alternative to calf slaughter or live export (*The Independent*, 2006, September 2) although it was the former that was often graphically illustrated. Over the next six months further media coverage that built on the theme of this ethical alternative included Gordon Ramsey’s ‘The F Word’ and the Channel 4 documentary ‘The Lie of the Land’ (both including footage of calf shootings). The prominent journalist, Janet Street Porter, featured alongside Gordon Ramsey and declared herself ‘happy to chomp on veal’ (*The Independent*, 2006, August 27). Concern about calf slaughter was taken on by celebrity chefs who were ‘queuing up to join the campaign’ (*The Independent,* 2006, September 2) and sought to upturn the ‘fact’ (Chakarabarti & Mason, 2014) that UK consumers will not eat veal so that, from this point, ethical and culinary aspects were blended. Concern spread through extant networks in the ‘culinary media industry’ and appeared particularly in lifestyle sections through travel and restaurant reviews. For example, Matthew Fort praised the rose veal found in the Farm Shop at his weekend destination (*The Guardian*, 2007, April 28) and Jay Rayner extolled the rose veal dish of ‘youthful Michelin winner’ Nathan Outlaw (*The Observer*, 2007, July 15).

As endorsement gathered pace in the world of the culinary media, so too the associations with lifestyle were solidified and those with ethicality loosened. Earlier extensive explanation of welfare issues (eg. *The Independent*, 2006, September 2) was reduced as if the readership already knew and understood the issues and at the most needed prompting. For example in a cookery column (*The* *Times*, 2008, February 23), Gordon Ramsey placed this almost in parentheses: ‘British rose veal, by the way, is from humanely reared UK dairy cattle that would otherwise be exported to produce continental white veal’. Also, by 2008, numerous restaurant reviews reported on the culinary quality of ‘rose veal’ dishes with no reference to production. In this way, the presentation of the product shifted from one where alterity rested on animal welfare to one where alterity attached rather to culinary capital, whereby ‘certain foods and food-related practices connote, and by extension, confer status and power on those who know about and enjoy them’ (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012, p.3).

Coinciding with reduced ethical emphasis, the association of ‘the alternative’ with re-connected production and consumption loosened whilst rose veal availability in mass retail gradually increased. A vicarious sense of re-connection had been established through early pen portraits of the farmer and farm, such as we have seen in the case of farmer O’Connell (*The Times*, 1995, February 8; see also *The Guardian*, 1997, November 29; *The Telegraph,* 2000, November 18; *The Times*, 2001, January 13). Shopping advice emphasised connection and championed provenance. *The Times* (2001 January 13) headline urged readers to ‘make a meal of local veal’ advising that ‘(m)ost butchers will supply veal to order, but you may want to check its provenance. For supermarket availability, ring your local branch.’ Rather less locally, the same article provides mail order information for two farms, which also feature in *The Guardian’s* (2004, June 2) list of six suppliers. Whilst such advice emphasised alternative characteristics it was, however, almost inevitable given the very restricted distribution of rose veal which gradually increased from around 2007 and after the Good Veal Campaign.

Waitrose alone had, since before 1995, sold ‘British Veal’ or ‘English Farmhouse Veal’ (*The Times*, 1995, February 8) whilst some other multiple retailers catered to the remaining minority demand for white veal through (re)imports from Europe. The availability of UK veal increased alongside media coverage. For example UK veal was introduced to Marks and Spencer in 2003 and to Tesco in 2007 (*The Grocer*, 2003, July 5; 2007, November 26). Sainsbury’s had eschewed involvement in such a small market in 2008, then reversed this decision to introduce rose veal early in 2009 (*The Grocer*, 2008, April 19; 2008 December 6). The significant increase in veal production occurred only after these moves by multiple retailers (see Figure II). Also in 2008, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) extended their ‘Freedom Food’ accreditation, already widely applied to other products, to qualifying veal. This independent endorsement provided the first qualification for a product that we have seen was somewhat ambiguously defined. The Freedom Food marque guaranteed standards of welfare through RSPCA monitoring of both rearing and slaughter. However, this voluntary scheme involved additional costs and the absence of accreditation did not necessarily denote lower welfare standards. Neither would this scheme satisfy all alternative concerns (for example it does not specify organic production) and hence the Freedom Food marque does not fully clarify the ambiguity that I have already noted.

By 2009 key actors in the rose veal network included many that will also feature in the dairy-bred beef network. Notably these included pressure group organisations (CIWF and RSPCA) as well as some of the major retailers who might well be seen as central to the industrialised food system in general and antithetical, therefore, to notions of the alternative. So, limited movement towards the mainstream was set in place before a renewed spate of activity amongst the major retailers in 2012. I shall expand on this point after considering the dairy-bred beef market version since the renewed activity can only be explained through the overlap of the two market versions.

The emerging version of the market for rose veal can be analysed through the lens of the concerned market and the three movements proposed by Geiger et al (2014). The ‘overflow’ (Onyas & Ryan, 2015) from the dairy industry was neither new nor unremarked but was surfaced as a concern that could be acted on by the constellation of actors to which Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall was central. The concern gained a media presence that could not be matched by those previously concerned, notably by those farmers already engaged in rose veal production but portrayed as a fringe element of the farming world and somewhat maverick. Geiger et al (2014) argue that matters of concern become the rallying point and, as alliances form, concerns in effect build groups. In this version of the market, however, the profile of the concern was raised, as was a particular articulation of the action to be taken, through an extant network of culinary media, noted chefs and their following. The concern gained profile but was also reshaped. It is not true to say that animal welfare currently has no place amongst those rearing, processing or consuming rose veal, but there is an operative assumption that those who are concerned already know or that being concerned is not strictly necessary to consumption. Agencing set in motion through food celebrity has, in this case, shaped alterity towards culinary capital (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012) inevitably bringing a niche status to the product that is retained to this day.

Before moving to the dairy-bred beef market, it is worth expanding upon the interests and voices represented in the development of the rose veal market. Without questioning participants’ concern with animal welfare, their interests were also served. In 2004 Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s ‘The River Cottage Meat Book’ included a chapter on beef and veal and a ‘meat manifesto’ (p.9) emphasising thrift, nose to tail eating, provenance and ‘moral dimension’ of consumption. These aspects are fitted to our understanding of the alternative market and of its consumers as active, reflexive choosers. Rose veal provided a topic for paid food writers, and proved the contemporaneity of restaurants, Michelin starred or otherwise, to then be reported further by others paid to eat and write. Coincidence of interests produced, in effect, a unidimensional voice that used their media access to speak *for* their chosen farmers whose access to voice was predominantly then located with culinary commentators. I stress that one need not eliminate any ethical motivation, neither is the product intrinsically less ethical, to see that market development was in large part propelled by a network with vested interests that ultimately gravitated around limiting the size of the market. This was achieved through concerted suggestion that distinction was demonstrated by knowing which restaurants to aspire to, by buying the right recipe books and by having value, in culinary capital terms (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012), placed on one’s knowledge of provenance and husbandry.

*The making of a dairy-beef market version*

An obvious response to consumer antipathy to veal might be to raise dairy calves for beef – but whether this could be done is obscured by a central vision (Cochoy, 2015) on the general media. Indeed, the poor eating quality of dairy beef is presented as fact alongside the Good Veal Campaign (*The Independent*, 2006, September 2). Activity to build (or re-build, as it turns out) a dairy-beef market version intensified through the formation of Calf Exports Stakeholders Forum in 2006 (CESF or ‘the forum’ forthwith) which provided a more formalised network than that discussed with reference to rose veal. Dairy-bred beef gets little coverage in the national press although the forum was mentioned in 2008 in association with the extended availability of rose veal through the multiple retailers and endorsement of the product offered by the RSPCA (bakced by accreditation in some cases) and CIWF (*The Guardian*, 2008 Jan 21). So, there is an overlap of network membership and of issues along with the systems for handling them that seep across the two market versions – hence many players already mentioned will recurring in my account.

The CIWF and RSPCA, vociferous opponents of live export, convened the forum which spanned multiple ‘stakeholders’ in the cattle industry, broadly conceived. Dairy, beef, meat processing, genetics, veterinary and livestock auction sectors were represented by national bodies (eg the NFU) and by corporations significant within the sector (eg Arla foods, Anglo Beef Processors). Universities, accreditation schemes (Red Tractor, Freedom Foods and the Soil Association) and two government departments (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs/DEFRA and Trading Standards) participated. Later additions provided a particularly strong retailer presence: Asda, Marks & Spencer, McDonald’s, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Waitrose (CESF, 2013 p.3).

As Geiger et al (2014) note, concerns are agential, they form groups and unlikely alliances. Here the supply chain from pre-conception (genetics) to retail was represented including competitors at several levels. Players readily associated with ‘the alternative’ (.eg. the Soil Association) worked alongside ‘the mainstream’ (e.g. McDonald’s). Former adversaries came together – Phil Lymbery, CEO of CIWF later cited this as the lobbying organisation’s *most* positive engagement with industry (*The Grocer*, 2014, April 25). The forum also included actors already engaged with veal (eg Brookfield Farm, Waitrose) and those sceptical about the possible size of a veal market (eg the NFU and Sainsbury’s).

But, noting that all participants might well have had a generalised concern about animal welfare (and there is nothing to suggest that they did not), what factors were at play and what concerns motivated participation in 2006 in particular? Firstly, renewed live exports were troubling to the values of the convenors, CIWF and RSPCA, and to others, although the now well illustrated reliance on exports to avoid slaughter at birth gave an imperative to the need to find some other, domestic solution. Secondly, the economic interests of the dairy and beef industries that had been opposed since 1996 now occupied more common ground. That is, sales of beef in the UK plummeted in 1996 and export markets were lost – for the beef industry, the slack could be in part taken up by the exclusion of dairy meat sources. The first reported attempt to build collaboration between dairy and beef came in 1999 with the Best Beef Consortium and in the face of predicted beef shortages. This was blocked by many in the beef sector who feared this would suppress prices in the still fragile recovery from BSE (*Farmers Guardian*, 1999, December 3). Then, an outbreak of foot and mouth in 2001 reduced the beef herd by 20%. The National Beef Association saw dairy-beef as ‘critical to the stability of the beef industry’ but recognised that dairy farmers had reduced staffing because supermarkets had inflicted such ‘wickedly low milk prices, (that they) have little time to do anything else but manage their cows’ (*Farmers Guardian*, 2002, May 31). The government also had several motivations to engage in the project – from a wish to avoid the public disorder that previously coalesced around live exports, to address the trade deficit in the product area ( with 76% national beef self-sufficiency) and to add some stability to the nationally important dairy and beef industries. For dairy farmers, whose farm gate milk prices were depressed and roughly static from 1999-2008 (DEFRA cited in Bate, 2016 p.9), the possibility now existed to monetise male calves through the export market, with the public backlash that might provoke. The multiparty forum offered a different means to monetise the calves in UK meat markets, provided that costs and income could be reconciled.

The forum set its core focus early on and effectively associated this market version with a ’mainstream’ in so far as they deliberately sought to avoid differentiation and thereby alterity. An early decision saw the forum target the largest part of the problem by concentrating specifically on the Holstein breed (‘black and whites’) that represented 90% of the dairy herd, and realising also that the key to success was to breed these for beef rather than veal (CESF, 2013 p.10). However, they recognised ‘a traditional view ... that carcasses from dairy breeds such as the Holstein are inferior to those from beef breeds such as Aberdeen Angus or Hereford’ (BCESF, 2008, p. 5). Differences in carcase shape created the perception of diary-beef as less saleable, of lower visual appeal and quality and this blocked the development of an economically viable market system (BCESF, 2008). Two solutions were considered and rejected. The first was an appeal to consumers with a differentiated product, ‘rose beef’ or ‘dairy beef’, to be marketed for health benefits being leaner and higher in polyunsaturates than other beef (BCESF, 2013 p. 14). The second solution proposed adjustment of extant beef industry standards through the introduction of revised carcase grading systems specific to dairy-beef (BCESF, 2012, p. 10). Instead, the forum coalesced around a challenge to the ‘matter of fact’ (Chakarabarti & Mason, 2014) that saw dairy-beef as necessarily inferior, turning this instead into matter on which they could act. Rather than focus consumer attention on issues of concern, the network sought to identify and address the barriers to quality beef from the dairy herd and produce an undifferentiated product that was therefore deliberately ‘mainstreamed’. From this, the forum sought to redesign or re-engineer either the market systems or the market object to enable dairy beef to sit alongside beef from other herds on supermarket shelves.

As the dairy-bred beef market version is traced through documents, more information about cattle industries is introduced than is available in the more public presentation of rose veal. Dairy-bred beef is not new, although specialised dairy animals and beef animals (and the specialisation of farms along with them) are relatively recent and are the product of successive breeding. The Holstein was introduced to the UK only in the latter part of the twentieth century (The Holstein Society [www.holstein-uk.org/the-holstein-breed](http://www.holstein-uk.org/the-holstein-breed)) and before the appearance of BSE had accounted for approximately 2/3rds of the beef in the UK market (*Farmers Guardian*, 2002, May 31). Amidst generalised oversupply with the overnight collapse of the beef market due to BSE, and consumer rejection of cheaper cuts and mince, dairy beef suffered disproportionately (Palmer, 1996; BCESF, 2013) and dairy farmers, also suffering low farm gate milk prices, had to focus single-mindedly on their one remaining market, dairy (Foster in BCESF, 2013, p. 13). Over the next ten years, breeding emphasised dairy conformity, Holstein animals became less ‘beefy’ and handling and rearing structures for dairy-bred beef deteriorated (BCESF 2013). Dairy yields increased (from 5,398 litres per cow in 1995 to 6,986 litres in 2005, DEFRA 2014 cited in Bate, 2016 p.6), but the facticity of the poor quality of contemporary dairy-bred beef gained ground. What emerges is an understanding of cattle as thoroughly ‘engineered’ by breeding for a specific purpose, a storyline that finds no place in the presentation of rose veal.

Attempts by the initial forum members to build designated Assembly Markets for dairy-beef supply were unsuccessful and it was only then that detailed cost and profit indicators were taken to the retailers in an attempt to secure their participation (BCESF, 2013, p.13). From the retailers’ perspective, this could allow them to secure beef supply from domestic sources and the possible role of smaller dairy-beef cuts on their shelves would only become all the more critical over the next few years due to world food price escalation (*The Telegraph*, 2008, April 22) and consumer responses to the credit crunch. Subsequently, the forum reports show that retailers took a prominent role in agencing through extant relationships that located them centrally for both problem shaping and solution development.

Forum publications document and disseminate the research undertaken by different members (often collaboratively) to establish how dairy-beef quality (based on body composition according to established industry specifications) related to the specifics of breeding and cross-breeding (including breed, semen quality, and the use of sexed semen), feeding regimes (such as milk intake, sillage, grains and pasture) and costs. To effectively research such issues, the retailers integrated extant actor networks in new combinations. For example, Tesco partnered with Liverpool University across studies involving Tesco’s ‘Sustainable Dairy Group’ (CESF, 2013 p. 29). Asda involved dairy and beef farmers in a ‘fantasy farming project’ that ran trials with Askham Bryan Agricultural College (CESF, 2013, p 62-3). Results from such projects were disseminated throughout the forum and more broadly, for example, through the Dairy Show and EBLEX (Beef and Lamb consultancy) publications (*Farmers Guardian*, 2007, September 7).

Industrial standards and measurements suffuse the reports and demonstrate the multiple intersecting decisions required to profitably create dairy-beef compliant to mainstream specification. The optimal grade (by industry standards systems) of carcases, grains, semen and more is investigated and Daily Live Weight Gain, feed quantities, plasma glucose concentrations and more are precisely measured. This science draws on a raft of technical actants – colostrumeters and storage systems, computerised feeders, equipment to enable artificial insemination and semen sexing. The very precise and scientific specification of all elements that contribute to delivery of rigidly defined carcase standards provide stark contrast to the presentation of rose veal with, I have argued, its ambiguous product definition.

However, through the body of knowledge that was developed, one theme is repeated. Calves are slaughtered because they are “poorly bred or poorly presented – which in plain language means they have not been fed sufficient colostrum ... (that is) two litres of colostrum within three hours of being calved – and then fresh milk as well’ (CESF, 2013 p 15). So ‘nature’s perfect food’ (DuPuis, 2002) is blended with science to overturn a matter of fact and profitably produce animals that sit within the mainstream meat market.

Finally, as previously noted, retailers were brought into the forum once open assembly markets failed. The retailers had extant contacts that enabled semi-integration of systems in order for the retailers to present the product to their consumer market by linking their groups of contracted dairy and beef producers (eg Dairy Development Groups). Animals could transfer between specialisms according to defined standards and pricing mechanisms independent of market prices. Bespoke chain management was provided, for example by Anglo Beef Processors (ABP) for Sainsbury’s and Asda from 2009 (*Farmers Guardian*, 2009, August 14). But the retailers remained arbiters of centralised control over semen procurement, ration formulation and sourcing, processing (CESF 2013), contracted veterinary services (*Farmers Guardian,* 2009, August 14). In many ways the retailers gained a powerful position in bespoke systems that industrialised the food chain since genetically replicated stock and identical veterinary and feeding regimes meant that calves could be born, transferred between farmers and then processed in specified batches to maximised transport and production efficiencies. However, this provided price stability and allowed for pricing to be set at each stage of supply based on input costs plus and, as Asda commented, ‘They are unlikely to make a fortune for farmers, but at least we can go some way to help improve their bottom line’ (*Farmers Guardian*, 2009, August 14). Whilst the alternative is associated with resistance to the problems created by the industrialised system, this market version calls into question the necessary association of the industrial with problems and the alternative with solutions – a point to which I return in my discussion.

The dairy-beef market illustrates dynamic agencing. As new members are enrolled by highlighting the intersection of interests, the initial matter of concern is translated. Animal welfare recedes, the ‘matter of fact’, poor quality diary-beef, is acted on as economic concerns come to the fore. Confluence of interests is brought about by other and multiple actants (e.g. Foot and Mouth disease, grain crop failures and the escalation of world food prices, farmgate milk prices). So we must see this as a constantly shifting agencement, its emergent shape always influencing who will engage and how they will act, as act they did, on the initial problem situation. The lead shifted from welfare lobby groups to retailers according to who could leverage and recombine actants able to act on evolving concerns of the moment. The market version also illustrates the failure of dichotomies and boundaries between categories – the human and social (e.g. farmers, retailers), the natural (e.g. the animal, its food and its genetics) and the technological (food manipulation and genetic selection) are so intermingled in the way they work on each other in the production of beef so that clear cut boundaries are no longer sustained. Two points of contrast with the rose veal market version emerge and both unsettle our understanding of the alternative/mainstream duality. Firstly, the dairy-bred market version invites questions about ‘the nature of nature’. Secondly, the semi-integrated supply chains coordinated by large retailers raise questions about retailer power and increased industrialisation. I address these in the discussion but return now to what are presented as alternatives to a mainstream to show how the alternative is neither independent of, nor oppositional to, the mainstream as a pure and perfect category. Rather, ‘the alternative’ is continuously shaped through its points of contact with ‘the mainstream’, rendering their separation problematic.

*The relational proliferation of market versions*

The interlocking character of the two sets of actors has been demonstrated as has the development of industrialised systems and an (re)engineered market object. This section extends our understanding of relationality by looking at the mainstreaming of rose veal and the overlapping, but not overmapping, of food networks that are sometimes treated as discrete (e.g. dairy, beef, organics, animal welfare etc.). In this section I therefore update the narrative in order to illustrate the porosity of networks and the chains of action through which markets are continuously formed and shaped in relation to other markets.

I have previously outlined some limited mainstreaming of rose veal through increased availability in the multiples and argued that rose veal was increasingly associated with gastronomy whilst its association with animal welfare, its origins of resistance, were backgrounded. Recent media coverage illustrates its continued culinary associations: for example, recipe columns combine rose veal with unusual ingredients (e.g. , salsa verde made from anchovy fillets and capers in *The Telegraph*, 2013, April 17th)  or highlight noted food destinations such as a recipe for rose veal and aiolo with a ‘tangle of watercress’ as made in Polpetto restaurant (*The Telegraph*, 2014, April 25).

One Channel 4 TV programme in 2012 sought explicitly to mainstream rose veal through a meatball product in Tesco (‘Jimmy and the Giant Supermarket’). This programme has been treated elsewhere (Hopkinson 2015a, 2015b) but here three factors are worth noting. Firstly, the programme explicitly returned to the animal welfare aspects of rose veal including calf shooting footage and this was taken up only temporarily in other media. Secondly, neither Jimmy nor Tesco drew attention to the forum or the by then extensive production of dairy-bred beef, not least under the auspices of Tesco. Thirdly, the programme did expand increased supermarket availability, but here we can question the causative effects of a reassociation with ethics and see increased availability as agenced also through forum network links and systems – that is, through a transfer of industrialised systems.

Sainsbury’s provides useful illustration. From having seen the market as too marginal in 2008 (*The* *Grocer*, 2008, April 19) and reversing this in 2009 through a bespoke integrated chain (*The Grocer* 2008, December 6; 2009, August 15), in 2012 they established a Veal Development Group, placed an extended range under the premium ‘Taste the Difference’ label and became the largest UK producer of veal (BCESF, 2013). Meanwhile, Tesco too expanded their rose veal offering, introducing products under the Brookfield Farm brand, another forum member. Knowledge, systems and relationships linked the two market versions.

The development of the ‘new dairy-bred calf’ capable of being consumed also illustrates the porosity of networks and the role of the animal as socio-technical actant. Cross breeding, especially with Aberdeen Angus was encouraged (by Waitrose, for example, *The Grocer* 2007, December 15) to boost beefiness in dairy offspring, to the extent that Tesco paid a £40 bonus for Angus sired calves which were then marketed under the Finest brand (*The Grocer*, 2007, December 15). Dairy-bred beef, then, has silently (from the consumer perspective) infiltrated the mainstream beef market and moved into more gastronomic categories to give rise to a nascent alternative. In 2015 the ‘Save Our Sucklers’ campaign was launched to ‘promote the many health, animal welfare and environmental benefits of traditional, naturally raised suckler beef’ (ie beef-bred beef). Minette Batters, campaign organiser and current president of the NFU, argues: ‘dairy beef is hugely important to maintain volume, but we have to be much more bullish about suckler beef ... Get the branding right and we could see a resurgence’ (*Meat Trades Journal*, 2015, November 20). The need to be more bullish might also have been noted just ten years earlier by proponents of rose veal or dairy-beef who were dismayed by the low uptake of dairy bred meat in the UK food chain. Meanwhile, 100,000 calves are still shot at birth – 54,000 shot at birth, 50,000 fail to achieve market value (*The Grocer*, 2013, December 6). The removal of European milk quotas from 2015 will likely add to the number of calves ‘looking for a market’. Processes of mainstreaming and alternativisation will continue.

**Discussion – the alternative/mainstream and the making of markets**

The aims of this paper were to understand how rose veal and dairy-beef developed as versions of markets that addressed the problem of live calf export or slaughter and, through that, to critically explore the widespread dichotomy of alternative and mainstream food markets. The two market versions are well distanced one from the other in the media and in retail presentation. Yet such is the overlap of actors, of knowledge and of systems that attention is continuously drawn to points of similarity and borrowing and this contradicts neat categorisation and makes us question the distance established between the two. I pursue these themes initially by questioning relationality and thereby highlighting how I have advanced knowledge around market making. Then, I delve into the political terrain to question firstly, what the effects of processes of mainstreaming and alternativisation are and, finally, whose interests the notion of the mainstream and alternative as foundational categories serve?

*To what extent and on what dimensions do market versions differ?*

At first glance the market versions exhibit characteristics of an alternative and a mainstream approach but this belies a more complex picture. Rose veal was framed as an explicitly ethical product whereby consumption could address an extant problem of animal welfare. The communication of this message required a sufficient network that in turn depended upon erasing differences and asserting certain values over others. The product, for example, encompassed both organic and conventional husbandry to assert the greater value of animal welfare. Further, this particular articulation of animal welfare values is not espoused throughout the alternative whilst it is partially accepted in the mainstream. For example, a cull of dairy calves was permitted within the organic movement until 2015 and after several multiple retailers had already moved to eradicate calf cull amongst their dairy suppliers. Thus an alternative space for rose veal is carved within the alternative, but overlaps to some extent with other alternative food propositions and values and also with some of those in the mainstream. In effect, the concern of calf welfare and solution of a veal market allowed for coalescence of multiple actors (Geiger et al., 2014) as this concern claimed (temporary) precedence over others. By making a solution to a concern viable, an enrolling those necessary to do so, a space of alterity is claimed, yet this remains open to contest if and when other concerns take the foreground. The alternative is not, by this reading, a foundational category (Lien and Law 2011) and for this reason we might attend to processes of mainstreaming and alterativisation.

Whilst rose veal was explicitly framed as ethical, this played no part in the representation of dairy beef. However, the conditions in which the calves are raised do not necessarily differ and the same animal can be prepared to enter either market through later transfer. From Figures I and II, the calves retained in the UK food chain expanded in the period of study and this was largely through uptake of dairy beef than of rose veal. In this case, then, the problem was more powerfully addressed through the mainstreamed product and through a focus on the delivery of value to consumers rather than an appeal to their values and their reflective resistance to the problems of industrial production.

Elsewhere control of critical steps throughout the supply chain by particular agri-business actors has been illustrated and criticised by Morgan, Marsden and Murdoch (2006). This case has documented the expanded control of retailers and the semi-integration of a supply chain with product transfer between contracted groups of dairy and beef farmers. However, we have also seen that this enabled systems that could incentivise all actors and came about through the failure of assembly markets. Furthermore, once these systems had been developed for the mass market beef they were extended to veal, perhaps being critical to extended availability and increased veal sales from 2010 (Figure II). Although the mainstreaming might be criticised for further marginalising some actors, reducing the terrain, for example, for independent veal farmers to accomplish alterity, in this case industrial systems of production have provided an effective solution to the initial problem.

The case has also shown the mainstreaming of the alternative, which in this case co-occurred with the shift of alterity towards culinary capital (Naccarato & Lebesco, 2012). Similar overlap between the alternative and the construction and display of distinction has been noted elsewhere (Guthman, 2003: Paddock, 2015). In this case I have argued that this effect flowed from the nature of the actor network. Food celebrities had access to the media and were an extant network through which concerns could flow. Over time, however, association with the alternative and the reflexive consumer were loosened whilst rose veal gained (still limited) space in the supermarkets. This study illustrates the creation of ‘the alternative’ by celebrity chefs that, in its birth, was therefore on the path to culinary distinction and which then becomes a viable product through which retailers communicate their brand to a foodie constituency. The food media is ubiquitous and their relation to the retail multiple has been suggested as an important aspect in the politics of food (Goodman, DuPuis & Goodman, 2012). Even without direct relationships (those these clearly exist in some instances), the role of celebrities and the multiple retailers might be seen as an interaction within continuous processes of alternativisation and mainstreaming.

The sucker cow campaign illustrates these continuous processes of market spaces. Pratt (2007, p.291) argues that the alternative is driven into spaces that “the market leaves after it has filtered everything else out”, indicating a marginality. The suckler cow campaign shows how different marginalities are created as the mainstream changes and I suggest that the alternative will always bubble up in the margins. From this it is possible to see the alternative/mainstream as less bound up with the expression of chosen values than as a device that continually refreshes market terrains, provides excitement of a sort and locks in consumers through the construction of distinction.

*What might the effects of mainstream silence be?*

Despite similarity of ethics, dairy-beef animals were specifically bred to be mainstream and ethical credentials appeared neither in the press nor on company websites. At first sight this is astonishing given the potential corporate social responsibility dividend. However, I have shown something of the technical effort and the generation of scientific undertaken to make this market. Whatever motives underpin the silence, (and I do not see this as deceit), the silence has effects and the silence submerges questions about the nature of nature and the relationship between nature and food.

The alternative has been seen as relying on ‘pastoral fantasies’ (Goodman, DuPuis & Goodman, 2012 p.171)) and being romantic in character (Thompson, 2005). This is, to an extent illustrated in this study in that ‘Save our Suckers’ aims to preserve the traditional cows-in-pasture landscape whilst TV representations of the rose veal campaign dwell on, and at times anthropomorphise, contented calves. However, through tracing dairy-beef it becomes apparent that the Holstein cows of our landscapes are far from traditional but both a recent introduction and the result of successive breeding (or engineering) to produce more milk and then re-engineered to be more beefy. This engineering has occurred within both dairy and beef herds as the two specialisms have developed and is the historic backdrop to both rose veal and dairy-beef. Furthermore, colostrum is ‘natural’ although it is carefully graded and measured, whilst artificial insemination and even more so with sexed semen starts to sound decidedly unnatural. The latter had particular potency to re-awaken then recent consumer disquiet of the mad cow disease in the ‘frankenfoods’ era of concern over genetic modification and animal cloning (Soper, 2009). But similar techniques can be applied to both rose veal and dairy beef. The point is that there is no perfect category of the natural and the boundary that allows us to think of the natural and understand certain products in that term, is achieved rather than given. The silence of the mainstream can therefore help to maintain the clear construction of ‘the natural’, and the privilege claimed by the alternative by being natural rather than industrial or engineered, thus sustains the possibility of the alternative.

The effects of the silencing of the mainstream and the claims to the natural staked by the alternative may have a broader social impact. The alternative has been concerned with the lack of connection between producer and consumer (Tregear, 2011) and has re-connected the two in the case of some consumers and some farmers. Yet, consumer connection is partial and slanted – there is one image of farming that we are to ‘know’. Much of the technical-economic aspects of food provisioning remain unknown because they appear to occur in the terrain of the mainstream – limiting the knowledge on which reflexive choices are to be made. This limited vision of food places the population in a poor position to participate in debates over food and at danger of having a skewed knowledge from which to make reflective choices. Given the multiple food-related problems we face, or will face shortly, this, for me, is a concern.

*3/ whose interests are served by those effects?*

Many argue that when the alternative is mainstreamed conventional actors appropriate value (eg Guthman, 2004; Pratt, 2007; Lockie 2009). Whilst this may well have occurred with rose veal, I suggest that systemic commercial interests are served beyond the specific profit around particular products. I suggest that the mainstream and alternative are symbiotic beyond the flow of ideas and practices. The mainstream might be seen as enabling an alternative through its silence and that the constant shifting of terrains and carving out of alternative for particular projects feeds into the influence of celebrity chefs, food media and those with relational power. There is exuberance around food and a continuous appearance of novelty and vogue that excites many consumers and allows food to function as culinary capital. In this way we might see the dynamic and fluid processes of mainstreaming and alternativising as fuelling an interest in food and a continuous hunger for distinction and novelty to the benefit of many of the industrial actors identified in this paper.

**Conclusions**

In this paper I set out by questioning the alternative/mainstream dichotomy and used ANT to explore two market versions that addressed a common problem with the aim of uncovering something of the political processes at play. I have demonstrated the interpenetration of market versions in terms of knowledge, practices, systems and actors, despite considerable differences in public presentation. I have suggested that the construction of the mainstream and alterity is continuous, relational and occurs always in the context of what has previously been constructed. This was developed in the discussion to suggest that a symbiotic relationship fuels and sustains food exuberance which serves the interests of retailers and food celebrity amongst other actors.

The paper has suggested areas for future research that can draw on established areas of marketing scholarship. This paper has followed retailers as lead actors and found that by coordinating and controlling exchange throughout the supply chain they addressed an ethical problem. How do the different relationship possibilities between consumers and either retailers or more distant organisations influence agencing? How might this be used by consumers or other actors in bringing about market change? Further research that builds on marketing themes of celebrity, branding and knowledge of retail should also be deployed in combination since this seems central to develop a fuller understanding of mainstream-alternative relationality.

**Appendix I**

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| ABP | Anglo Beef Processors |
| ANT | Actor network theory |
| BSE | Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (colloquially ‘mad cow disease’) |
| CESF | Calf Export Stakeholder Forum – multi stakeholder group formed in 2006, comprising industry, government, research establishments and animal charities.  |
| CIWF | Compassion in World Farming – International organisation dedicated to farm welfare |
| CJD | Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (human disease associated with BSE) |
| DEFRA | Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – government department with responsibility for farming issues |
| EU | European Union |
| NFU | National Farmers Union – UK’s leading farming body |
| RSPCA | Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – British charity dedicated to animal welfare |

Appendix 1 – Acronyms used in the paper

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1. In 2008 European Union legislation required that the age of slaughter of the animal be evident at all stages in the supply chain and transparent to consumers. ‘V’ and ‘Z’ classifications were introduced to differentiate meat slaughtered under 8 months from that slaughtered at 8-12 months respectively. The appropriate linguistic terminology for consumer labelling was left to national governments and in the UK V class meat became ‘veal’ and Z class became ‘beef’ – however, abrogation could be given (and was given) for ‘rose veal’ (but not rosέ veal since this had a legal status elsewhere in the EU) to be used on the label alongside the more prominent ‘beef’ when animals were slaughtered at 8-12 months. Throughout all the documentation it is stressed that this European legislation had lesser relevance to the UK given the very low consumption of young meat compared to other European markets – and the legislation gained no explicit coverage in the trade and farming press indicating either lack of controversy or silencing of voice. Further information can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2008/271/pdfs/ukia_20080271_en.pdf>

However, EU research conducted in 2015 in markets with high consumption of young animals shows little understanding amongst consumers of the 2008 labelling framework and a continued usage of terms based on custom (<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/evaluation/market-and-income-reports/2015/eu-beef-labelling-rules/fullrep_en.pdf>.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)