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Researching European ‘alternative’ food networks: some methodological considerations

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Recent European literature on ‘alternative’ food networks (AFNs) draws heavily upon an apparently accessible and diverse body of non-conventional food networks in the agro-food sector and whilst researchers frequently refer to individual examples of farmers markets, box schemes, producer cooperatives and community-supported agriculture projects, less attention is given to the methodological processes that facilitate the identification and examination of these networks. From the preliminary stages of a research project focusing on examples of AFNs,² this paper examines the process of operationalizing AFNs research and reviews the difficulties associated with identifying, comparing and characterizing AFNs.

Key words: European, alternative food networks, methodology, producer–consumer relationships

Introduction

Recently there has been a wealth of papers reviewing the emergence of ‘alternative’ food networks (AFNs) in the developed world and the diverse ways in which they are attempting to reconfigure relationships between food producers and food consumers (Marsden *et al.* 2000; Renting *et al.* 2003; Sage 2003). Much of this research suggests that these novel food networks are a response to the dominant industrial food system that distances and detaches food production from food consumption. Agriculture, as noted by Holloway and Kneafsey (2004), has become an increasingly specialized activity undertaken by relatively few people, and remote from the experience of most urban, and many rural, dwellers. Due to industrialized

methods of food production and just-in-time efficiencies of the retailer distribution networks, few consumers fully appreciate the processes behind delivering ‘seed to shelf’ (Morris and Young 2000), or have the chance to encounter the people or places associated with food production. In contrast to the elongated international supply chains inherent in the conventional food system, proponents of ‘alternative’ food networks draw attention to the ability of these novel networks to ‘resocialize’ and ‘respatialize’ food through supposedly ‘closer’ and more ‘authentic’ relationships between producers, consumers and their food (Marsden *et al.* 2000; Renting *et al.* 2003).

To evidence such relationships researchers often draw upon an apparently large and accessible body of cases and frequently refer to individual examples of farmers markets, box schemes, farm shops, direct

retail initiatives and so on. Less attention, however, has been given to the methodological processes that facilitate the identification and examination of these AFNs. Thus, beyond the market trend reports (Mintel 2003) and non-governmental reports (Sustain 2002; Foundation for Local Food Initiatives 2003; Working Group on Local Food 2003) that suggest an exponential growth in the organic, speciality and local food and drinks sectors, there is a paucity of information concerning what actually constitutes AFNs and subsequently the breadth and size of the AFNs population. Therefore, operationalizing research can be problematic as researchers must first attempt to determine the characteristics of the target population from academic conceptualizations and through the examples of individual cases presented in previous research.

This paper attempts to demystify the collection and classification of AFNs by reflecting on the experience of reviewing existing AFNs as part of a research project aiming to understand the relationships inherent in such networks. The first section reviews the methodologies and case studies identified in some of the key literature and outlines academic conceptualizations of AFNs. The second section presents results of the preliminary review which depict differing academic and lay discourses that, in turn, highlight a broader array of schemes, initiatives and agendas than previously have been acknowledged.

'Alternative' food networks research

A marked interest in food-related producer–consumer research is evidenced by numerous journal special editions³ and a proliferation of papers on the emergence and increasing significance of quality and speciality food production (Nygard and Storstad 1998; Gilg and Battershill 1998; Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000a 2000b; Murdoch *et al.* 2000). Within this research agenda several papers have been published which specifically focus on the emergence of non-conventional or 'alternative' (agro) food networks (AFNs). Whilst an agreed definition of AFNs remains elusive, in the broadest sense, AFNs and the producers, consumers and food that they include are understood to embody alternatives to industrial modes of food supply (Murdoch *et al.* 2000). Marsden and his colleagues posit that the interest in more 'local' and more 'natural' foods (see Nygard and Storstad 1998) comes at a critical time for the land-based production sector as:

[it] offers the potential for shifting the production of food commodities out of their 'industrial mode' and to develop supply chains that can potentially 'short-circuit' the long, complex and rationally organised industrial chains. (Marsden *et al.* 2000, 424)

Central to these networks, and which aids differentiation, is their apparent capacity to 'resocialize' and 'respatialize' food. According to Renting *et al.* (2003), the critical difference between 'alternative' or short food supply chains (SFSC) and conventional networks is that the food reaches the consumer embedded with information. In other words, information and quality cues attached to food and communicated by the people selling the produce, allow consumers to make value judgements about the relative desirability of specific food in accordance with their own knowledge of, or experience of, the place or type of production (Marsden *et al.* 2000). Given the alleged benefits for both producers and consumers and the ample reference made to examples, it is not surprising that scholars have been eager to explore the potential role of AFNs in the agro-food sector in order to contribute to debates concerning agricultural reform, evolving cultures of consumption and the potential paths of future rural development.

The reported 'empirical richness of emerging alternative food networks' (Renting *et al.* 2003) is apparent when reviewing the incidence of papers on these emerging food supply chains and networks. Since 2000, over 56 papers exploring new and novel food chains and networks have been published in seven prominent journals (see Table 1).

A review of these papers demonstrates that geographers have largely engaged with the production side of AFNs, documenting the different modes of food production including organic, regional and artisan foods (e.g. Ilbery and Kneafsey 2000a 2000b; Morris and Buller 2003) and the various spaces of exchange, for example, providing in-depth accounts of box schemes, farm shops and farmers markets (e.g. Archer *et al.* 2003; Youngs 2003a 2003b; Holloway and Kneafsey 2000; Holloway 2002). However, researchers from other disciplines have exposed broader sociological and psychological dimensions of such networks. For example, those interested in food poverty, food deserts and food access have done much to present the case of community food cooperatives and the impact of such projects in low income areas and on personal diet and health (Donkin *et al.* 1999; Dowler *et al.* 2001a

Table 1 European 'alternative' agro-food supply chain research in various academic journals (2000–2004)

Journal	No. of papers	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<i>Area</i>	2	32	–	34, 1	–	–
<i>British Food Journal</i>	13	102, 1 102, 10	–	–	105, 4–5 (×2) 105, 8 (×6) 105, 11	106, 3 106, 4
<i>Environment and Planning A</i>	9	–	–	34	35, 3 (×5)	36, 3 (×3)
<i>Journal of Rural Studies</i>	12	16, 2 16, 3	17, 4	–	19, 1 (×6) 19, 2	20, 1 (×2)
<i>Progress in Human Geography</i>	2	–	–	26, 3	27, 4	–
<i>Social and Cultural Geography</i>	3	–	–	–	4, 1 (×3)	–
<i>Sociologia Ruralis</i>	17	40, 1 (×2) 40, 3 40, 4	41, 2	42, 1 42, 4 (×7)	43, 2	44, 1 44, 2 44, 3

Note: Numbers in the table refer to journal volumes and issues

2001b; Wrigley 2002; Wrigley *et al.* 2003). Problematising our understanding of what might be considered 'alternative', such research helps us to recognize that the whole notion of the 'alternative' agro-food sector needs broadening, especially with regard to the conceptualization of AFNs and the need to account for the entire range of stakeholders involved, including consumers.

In an attempt to illustrate the range of academic conceptualizations of AFNs, a review was conducted of the numerous European empirical papers that have engaged specifically with the notion of AFNs and presented case studies to reinforce their conceptualizations (see Table 2). These conceptualizations were sought in order to construct an eligibility framework for identifying and selecting cases for further study whilst simultaneously contributing to the development of more specific concepts and tools that reveal the variability of AFNs as called for by Renting *et al.* (2003).

In concert with the numerous theoretical and conceptual papers regarding AFNs, the majority of empirical papers highlighted in Table 2 draw attention to the particular social, ethical and geographical characteristics of such networks, contrasting these with those of 'conventional' food networks. With cases ranging from producer cooperatives to Internet-mediated food marketing schemes (see Murphy 2003), the great diversity of form, motivation and practice (Holloway and Kneafsey 2004, 272) involved with these networks is self evident. However, structural or organizational diversity is also accompanied by theoretical similarities as cases

are commonly portrayed as new assemblages formulated to reconfigure or (re)connect producers and consumers. In Holloway and Kneafsey's (2004) exposition of four case studies, attempts to foster relations of 'closeness' and 'connectedness' are positioned as the central tenet of many schemes, associated with the establishment of particular sorts of ethical relationships between producers and consumers.

Evidence of such ethical frameworks is also to be found in the examples of producer cooperatives where shared desires to farm 'responsibly' and provide quality, artisanal products are capable of drawing together producers from a specific region or locale to reap the rewards of sharing expertise and endogenous knowledges in an attempt to circumvent the homogenizing legacy of conventional food production. A recent special edition of *Environment and Planning A* provided three in-depth accounts of producers cooperating in order to champion regional (artisan) food production, these accounts giving detailed insights into the complexities and evolution of the Coprosain Belgian beef cooperative (Stassart and Whatmore 2003), the Dutch Zeeuwse Vlegel (Wiskerke 2003) and Fruitnet (Collet and Mormont 2003). Whilst such cases illuminate the advantages of producer cooperation, and demonstrate the diversity of what can be labelled AFN, the majority of papers remain largely production/producer orientated.

In addition to reinforcing the emphasis on 'quality' food and the relocalizing tendencies of numerous AFNs, these cases highlight the importance placed on socially embedded relations within these new supply configurations and the effort expended on

Table 2 Selection of European papers that present and review cases of 'alternative food networks'

Author (year)	Description of AFNs/population	Cases/participants	Sampling	Methods
Collet and Mormont (2003)	Embedded in social and geographical relations building through personal links competencies and knowledge. Define consuming as public, continual and communal action not private, one-off, isolated action.	FRUITNET – Producers cooperative. Orchard operators in the Lower Meuse Region. GEOG SPEC – Growers Story.	One specific case study.	Interviews with technical advisors.
Holloway and Kneafsey (2004)	Alternative relates to an ethical framework (i.e. ethic of care) and the desire to foster relations of closeness or connectedness.	Regional speciality foods Stratford FM. Small-scale alternative farming. Internet-based adoption scheme.	From their own previous studies.	Case studies.
Marsden <i>et al.</i> (2000)	Capacity to engender different relationships with consumers. SFSCs can resocialize and respatialize food allowing consumers to make value judgements. Three types – face to face, spatially proximate, spatially extended.	Identifies 5 cases from the 12 in the EU Impact programme.	One specific case study – The Llyn Beef producers cooperative.	Survey.
Murdoch <i>et al.</i> (2000)	Quality food production systems embedded in local ecologies (social and ecological).	Welsh producers (organic yoghurt, cheese makers, Welsh beef).	From their own Welsh research.	Case studies (apply actor network theory and conventions theory).

Table 2 *Continued.*

Author (year)	Description of AFNs/population	Cases/participants	Sampling	Methods
Renting <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Underpinned and aided by new food supply chain configurations which aid the strategies of organic farming, quality food production and direct selling.	Census data on organic farming, quality production and direct selling.	From EU IMPACT research programme.	Statistical comparison of organic farming, quality production and direct sell from seven European countries.
Sage (2003)	Territorially based production systems.	SW Ireland Good Food Network. Organic farmers and growers, artisan food producers (200), one farmers market and the people involved.	One geographically specific case study.	Participant observation, 12 semi-structured interviews, 20 informal discussions.
Stassart and Whatmore (2003)	Reconfigure relations between farmers, consumers and animals.	Three stories, the flagship produce, trademark and distribution networks.	Corprosain – Belgian meat cooperative of 50 farms.	Cases.
Wiskerke (2003)	Represent a shift from productivism to quality production.	Zeeuwse Vlegel – Dutch wheat and bread producer cooperative.	One specific case study.	Interviews. Multi-level analytical framework (macro, meso and micro level).

establishing and maintaining transparent, 'shortened' chains of connection between food producers and food consumers. Yet, whilst individually these papers provide interesting accounts of specific AFNs, such a collection of papers, arguably, tells us little about the population of AFNs or the transferability of the conclusions from these often highly localized case studies.⁴ With the exception of the recent EU Impact projects (Renting *et al.* 2003), which also experienced difficulty in attaining a picture of the target population from EU statistics relating to quality production, organic farming and direct selling, the scope and scale of AFNs in a broader context remains elusive. This is, in part, due to the focus on individual cases of non-conventional networks such as those presented in Table 2, and the limited attention paid to the population from which individual cases were sampled and the paucity of information from commentators relating to how such examples were discovered. As a result, the reader can often only assume that contact and selection of such cases was due to geographical proximity and/or prior knowledge of, or interaction with, members of the scheme, as many papers fail to reflect or comment upon the identification, selection and wider relevance of their cases (see Markusen (1999) for a broader discussion on the documentation of evidence).

In an attempt to reflect on some of these questions, the eligibility criteria used within the research was constructed from the academic conceptualizations presented in existing literature. As such the framework used for sourcing AFNs contained four parameters. Each food project, scheme or initiative identified during our review had to encompass at least one of the following to be included in the project database:

- An attempt to connect consumers, producers and food, in a new economic space which re-embeds food production and consumption.
- Non-conventional supply/distribution channels – detached from industrial supply and demand distribution and corporately controlled food chains.
- Adopted principles of social-embeddedness – founded or working on the principles of trust, community and often linked with a specific geographical location.
- Based around a notion of 'quality' – promotes quality, either conventional or alternative, preserving traditions or heritage.

These four points relate specifically to attributes of AFNs that have been highlighted by previous

research and explored within the empirical papers presented in Table 2. For example, schemes claim to possess the ability to connect producers and consumers in potentially new and different spaces from those employed in conventional chains. These spaces have been described as facilitating a re-embedding of food and food production through the promotion of new dimensions of quality and distinguishing characteristics, such as local systems of production that actively differentiate goods and distance these assemblages from the industrialized and conventional food supply chain. However, as noted by Ilbery *et al.* (2004), AFNs potentially face difficulties when trying to distance themselves from the conventional food chain given the current shortfall of intermediaries able to cope with alternative forms of production, i.e. local abattoirs, transporters, wholesalers. Hence, our search did accept that enterprises might need to 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' of conventional chains, where few 'alternative' substitutes yet exist. Nevertheless, the criteria were useful as indicators of attempts to relocalize or respitalize food and identify schemes that potentially could be considered as examples of AFNs.

Sourcing AFN examples

Schemes, initiatives and projects were identified using a number of different sources of information. The Internet, industry-specific journals, the media (newspapers and radio programmes), academic journals and previous research were all used extensively in an effort to collate as many examples as possible of 'alternative' networks of food supply. It should be noted that the database of AFNs focused on attaining a representative breadth of operational examples rather than seeking an exhaustive list, due to the often highly localized, ephemeral nature of the subject of study, and a recognition that many initiatives exist without broadcasting their existence over the Internet or through the print media. Furthermore, the review had to negotiate the conflict between conducting a comprehensive review versus a pragmatic search to gauge a snapshot of the different examples of AFNs. At present there are over 140 entries; however, it is important to note that a number of these entries are umbrella bodies or organizations, e.g. Somerset Food Links, Food Initiatives Group, Nottingham, and as such the number of individual enterprises acknowledged well exceeds the number of entries. The database highlights the range of schemes and

numerous examples that demonstrate the wider breadth and variety of AFNs than previously acknowledged. Furthermore, a content analysis of schemes' promotional material reveals differing scheme positionalities and exposes the numerous ways in which schemes are attempting to connect with consumers.

Grounded conceptualizations of AFNs

In an effort to compare and contrast the entries contained within the database and highlight the aims and objectives of the initiatives, schemes were subjected to a content analysis. This involved recording the main descriptions of each enterprise and the main activities promoted through scheme websites and literature in a spreadsheet to identify the discourses employed by scheme organizers.

Significantly, the concepts used by those involved in AFNs differed from those used in academic discussion, and this provided a valuable opportunity for examination of how actors in AFNs represented their particular projects and what they considered their primary role. Such a focus also facilitates an interrogation of exactly what the academic conceptualizations might relate to in practice. As such, analysis of how schemes represent themselves provides a grounded understanding of how those involved in AFNs conceptualize and aim to achieve connection between producers and consumers, and the many forms that such undertakings adopt at the grass roots level (see Table 3). Furthermore, a significant number of activities reported by schemes did not fit within the existing academic interpretations. These have been labelled 'lifestyle programmes' and may include health projects (e.g. weight classes, diet courses, nutritional education), educational programmes (e.g. training, independent living skills), empowerment courses (e.g. skills sharing, assistance to low income families, marginalized, disabled and youth groups) and also social cohesion ventures (e.g. intergenerational projects, drop in cafes, farm walks and specialist interest groups). It is also important to note that for many of the schemes that offer lifestyle programmes, food is often simply one part of a broader set of aims and objectives, albeit under an umbrella of reconnecting food producers and consumers.

Importantly, these activities demonstrate that AFNs are not necessarily always driven by the food producer and may encompass different agendas and goals beyond commercial profit maximization and

market penetration. In numerous instances, consumer and community groups utilize food procurement as a mechanism or tool for tackling social injustices and inequalities, and consequently issues of food access and affordability are equally legitimate attributes in numerous 'alternative' food networks as product differentiation.

Evidently, there are differences between how practitioners and academics conceptualize schemes, in particular those involved with schemes on the ground associated a number of activities with these networks which have not been explored previously within research. To understand how such agendas are executed and the nature of relationships that ensue from such networks, the database also facilitated a categorization of schemes (see Table 4). Unlike the individual examples of AFNs frequently listed in academic papers, Table 4 focuses on the different types of producer–consumer relations and the nature, and/or degree of involvement, of the consumer in the arrangement to highlight the inherent differences between examples of AFNs. Given the vast array of enterprises and schemes that proactively differentiate themselves by purposely, or necessarily, trading at the margins of mainstream food production or on various aspects of 'alternative' producer–consumer relationships, it is no longer sufficient, or accurate enough to simply merge them all under the heading of AFNs. In an attempt to depict the diversity and differing starting points of schemes, we suggest four different AFNs sub groupings.

The four categories differentiate the schemes according to the relative 'connectedness' of food consumers to the act of food production. The first category of 'producers as consumers' relates to instances and examples where food is produced and consumed by the same people (i.e. community gardens, community food cooperatives etc.). In these examples the distinction between 'producer' and 'consumer' identities becomes blurred. Furthermore, these examples bear witness to the agency of consumers, demonstrating the increasing occurrence of consumers seeking and devising their own solutions to food procurement, reinforcing the participatory nature of schemes and moving away from representations of consumers as passive recipients of such networks. In many of these examples, and in the case of the 'producer–consumer partnerships', consumers gain a certain amount of control and agency through such mutually beneficial arrangements, which previously has been under-explored in existing AFN research. Nevertheless, it is still unclear as

Table 3 Comparison of academic and lay discourses

Lay discourse and practice	Academic discourse and interpretation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder involvement (supporters' groups, participatory planning) • Work days, host open days • Communal food growing and individual family beds • Open access – demonstration farms • Local procurement, school projects • Internet ordering • Bag/Box schemes (organic, biodynamic and conventional) • Farmers markets/specialist markets • Producer–consumer partnerships (bulk purchasing) • Direct farm gate retail (PYO, Mobile) • Supply independent food shops • Involve community access • Run community courses (cooking) food clubs • Circulate newsletters and host social events • Create community belonging • Access to affordable, quality produce • Consider environmental, biodiversity and conservation issues • Restore/saving land • Run seedbanks and exchanges • Health projects (weight classes, diet courses, nutritional education) • Educational programmes (training, independent living skills) • Empowerment courses (skills sharing, assistance to low income families, marginalized, disabled and youth groups) 	<p>Reconnect consumers, producers and food, in a new economic space which re-embeds food production and consumption</p> <p>Non-conventional supply/distribution channels – detached from industrial supply and demand distribution and corporately controlled food chains</p> <p>Socially-embedded – founded or working on the principles of trust, community and place-based production</p> <p>Quality – promotes quality, either conventional or alternative, preserving traditions or heritage</p> <p>Lifestyle programmes (intergenerational projects, drop in cafes, farm walks and specialist interest groups)</p>

to whether consumer participation denotes an increase in consumer activism as consumers source schemes that satisfy personal ethical frameworks or whether participation is purely driven by schemes being in existence and offering innovative and attractive alternatives to the mundane conventional offerings. Irrespective of whether these represent significant shifts in consumer values, the first two categories do represent marked shifts in consumer engagement with the process of food production. The third 'direct-sell' category, similarly, facilitates closer producer–consumer relations with the actual food producer, either through face to face or spatially extended supply chains, offering consumers the chance to procure food with visible provenance. However, in these instances consumer contact with the people, process or place of production is confined to a single 'moment of connection', this most likely being at the point of actual purchase (Holloway and

Kneafsey 2004). Yet, these 'moments of connection' may not necessarily be one-off occurrences, as people may regularly engage in a particular 'moment of connection', i.e. through weekly contact at a farmers market. The fourth category can also be understood as seeking to create 'moments of connection'; however, whilst 'specialist retailers' frequently pay close attention to food provenance and methods of production, consumers are less likely to come into direct contact with the food producer, specialist retailers acting predominantly as intermediaries within an, albeit shortened, food supply chain. Nevertheless, such retailers do provide consumers with an opportunity to know more about where their food came from and how it was produced, which may in turn create a feeling of connection.

In addition to the four producer–consumer categories, there are also two key groups of allies to 'alternative' food networks that whilst not actually

Table 4 Categories of AFNs identified through the scoping review

Category	Explanation	Examples
Producers as consumers	Schemes where the food is grown or produced by those who consume it. Often promote healthy lifestyles. Extent of commercial orientation varies. Produce is usually sold on a local level but may be targeted at specific groups, e.g. low incomes, ethnic minorities.	Community gardens Community centres with specific food projects Community food cooperatives Allotment groups
Producer–consumer partnerships	Partnerships between farmers and consumers, where the risks and rewards of farming are shared – to varying degrees – due to subscription or share arrangements.	Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Direct sell initiatives	Farmers or producers cut out middlemen and sell direct to consumers. Can be direct face to face or over the Internet.	Farmers markets Farm gate sales Adoption/rental schemes Mobile food shops Box schemes Producer cooperatives
Specialist retailers	Enable producers to sell to consumers more directly than through conventional supermarkets. Often sell high value-added, quality or speciality foods and may be targeted at tourists.	Online grocers Specialist wholesalers Tourist attractions

creating direct producer–consumer linkages should be acknowledged. First, non-governmental and campaigning organizations, such as Slow Food, and second, public sector agencies like Food Links, both play important roles in the alternative food sector and, as such, are frequently referred to in empirical papers as champions and icons of the growing interest in non-conventional food chains. Whilst development assistance, support, training and funding are instrumental to the progression and existence of many networks, such enterprises and schemes do not, in the main, participate in actual food production. Nevertheless, their contribution is significant as these types of organization often play a key structural role in the AFNs sector and, as a result, are able to point scholars in the direction of interesting cases and emerging examples of non-conventional relationships between producers and consumers.

Conclusion

In recent years the term ‘alternative’ food network has experienced increasing popularity and has developed

into something of an all-encompassing term applied to a vast array of emerging food schemes and initiatives that in multiple, and often very diverse, ways are seeking to reconfigure producer–consumer relations. Although ubiquitous, the term has served to highlight the growth in food initiatives and renewed interest in forging ‘closer’ and more ‘authentic’ links between the supply and demand ends of the food supply chain.

As producers, and to an increasing extent consumers, demonstrate ingenuity and openness to more innovative food marketing solutions, from direct sales arrangements to the growing use of new technologies, to more closely fit peoples’ daily lives, sourcing food is no longer confined to single location, space or time. Hence, describing anything that is not a conventional retailer outlet as an ‘alternative food network’ is perhaps no longer sufficient, as this undermines the depth and diversity of this growing sector and does not do credit to the array of creative/innovative relationships orchestrated through new consumer–producer partnerships.

Whilst previous studies in this field have sought mainly to portray this innovation through carefully

crafted, detailed accounts of individual examples, such cases only partially reveal the nature of the sector through the context-specific lenses. Consequently, details regarding the broader sector and scope of such networks remain opaque. In addition to the popular examples of farmers markets, box schemes and direct sell initiatives, this review suggests a working categorization of four types of producer–consumer relationships and, in particular, addresses the increasing evidence of heightened consumer and institutional involvement in developing novel food networks. As such, future research must pay closer attention to the role consumers play in creating and maintaining innovative producer–consumer relationships, recognizing that AFNs are not the sole preserve of food producers, nor only legitimate as business development and marketing strategies. Furthermore, the review demonstrates that food, as in the case of many community food projects, is often used in conjunction with other objectives or themes as the 'glue' to achieving communitarian or social goals. Finally, researchers must acknowledge that academic conceptualizations are often quite abstract and alien to those involved at the coal face, where activities that have been described as 'alternative' are often not considered as such. Furthermore, the terminology may even be seen as pejorative.

Notes

- 1 We work as a team in planning, executing, discussing and writing this research. The order of authors denotes principal writer(s) and responsibilities only.
- 2 Re-connecting consumers, food and producers: Exploring 'alternative' networks is an ESRC and AHRB three-year funded project as part of the Cultures of Consumption research programme. Further details can be found at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk>.
- 3 Journal special editions: *Environment and Planning A* (2003) Vol. 35, No. 3; *Social and Cultural Geography* (2003) Vol. 4, No. 1; *Journal of Rural Studies* (2003) Vol. 19, No. 1; *British Food Journal* (2003) Vol. 105, No. 8; *Sociologia Ruralis* (2001) Vol. 41, No. 1 – Organic farming; *Sociologia Ruralis* (2002) Vol. 42, No. 4.
- 4 The IMPACT project was a European-funded project titled: The socio-economic impact of rural development policies: realities and potentials (CT-4288), financed under the Fourth Framework FAIR-Programme by the European Commission.

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