

# GRUB FIRST, THEN ETHICS? MORAL STRUGGLES ABOUT CHICKENS AND EGGS.

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FIRST DRAFT, PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE

## **Abstract**

How do markets get moralized? Recently, a number of “moral markets” have developed, such as fair trade or organic markets. Social movements are often driving forces behind processes of market moralization. They advocate new rules and develop new frames of market behavior, acting as moral entrepreneurs. Their opponents – industry associations, corporations – resist challenges and defend existing market conventions. Thus, struggles emerge around ethical values in markets, which can lead to the development of new, “moral” market conventions. To reveal and theoretically understand the processes of market moralization, this paper proposes a case study of the market for eggs in Switzerland, ca. 1970-90. During this period, a ban on cage husbandry systems was widely debated, opposing animal rights activists to the egg industry. Using a broad range of archival data from producers and moral entrepreneurs alike, the paper retraces the struggles around the cage ban in the public arena and in markets. Through a qualitative analysis, the study shows how movement actors promote new forms of moral valuation and how dominant market actors contest them in turn, developing “alternative moralities”. In particular, studying this moral struggle reveals how moral categories clash with the supposed “laws of the market”. Producers use this market logic to fight against demands while movement actors attempt to change the behavior of consumers and producers. The study contributes to understanding of market moralization by bringing together perspectives from economic sociology on the moral underpinnings of markets, theories of market conventions (*économie des conventions*), and theories of moral entrepreneurship.

Dear PPW participants,

This is the first paper I have written on my new research. As you will see, the paper is at the intersection of social movement studies and economic sociology. My goal is to publish it as an article in a general sociology journal, perhaps the European Journal of Sociology, but I would certainly like to hear your suggestions as to possible outlets.

I haven't had any feedback yet on this paper, so I am very curious to hear all kinds of comments that will help me improve this paper. Anything you have to say about the theoretical framework, the analytical categories, the analysis, methods, the paper's structure, editing suggestions, formal issues, literature, etc., is welcome and highly appreciated!

Thanks,  
Philip

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Is an egg an egg, or does the way it is produced make a difference? Should animal welfare be a concern for the producers in this market, and how? Are consumers willing to pay more for eggs produced in “animal-friendly” circumstances, or does “grub always come before ethics”? In the 1970s, these questions were passionately debated in Switzerland. Reporting on a TV debate entitled “Tonight at the chicken farm”, a Swiss weekly commented: “The thing itself belongs to those objects that mother nature has created so perfectly that questions die away in front of it: the egg. On its production, however, a verbal battle has been going on for some time, which would be worth of a more significant object. Since the introduction of battery cages, in which thousands of hens are pent up und reduced to mere production machines, animal protectionist are mobilized and defend the bird against its owners. Chicken farmers, in turn, advance economic arguments (besides reassurances on animal welfare issues): eggs just cannot be produced so cheaply in any other way”. (excerpt from *Weltwoche*, reprinted in the *Schweizerische Geflügelzeitung*, 6, March 17, 1977)

This “verbal battle” speaks to a much broader question economic sociologists raise: what is the relation between markets and morals? How do markets get moralized? In recent times a number of “moral markets” have developed: fair trade, organic, or local farmers’ markets pursue the achievement of moral values like social or environmental justice. Such markets stand in an uneasy relation with neo-classical economic theory, according to which production and market exchange must follow the rules of efficiency, not external moral injunctions. Efficiency is the only morality of markets; using other moral values in devising market strategies would lead to distortions that have ultimately negative consequences. In reality, however, markets do not operate outside of the rest of the social world. Practices within existing markets are widely contested and regulated on the basis of moral judgments that have nothing to do with efficiency. Labor law is perhaps the most obvious case in point. For example, child labor was common in the US and only became morally indefensible in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Zelizer 1994). Changing norms and values can thus become forces contesting existing markets.

Markets and market practices that were once widely seen as legitimate, or were not a public issue of concern, can suddenly become contested when moral entrepreneurs try to limit markets or practices that are widespread within them. Social movement organizations are

often driving forces behind such market contestation and processes of market moralization. They advocate new rules and fight against corporate policies, practices, or products that are criticized. Movements thus act as moral entrepreneurs. An increasing number of studies show how social movements contest and change markets (King and Pearce 2010; Soule 2012; Walker 2012). Within this literature, some scholars have analyzed how social movements can be crucial actors in processes of market moralization. Social movements develop frames and cultural codes that can become the cornerstones of new moral markets (Weber, Heinze and Michaela 2008). Furthermore, directly intervening in markets, social movement organization also develop new product categories and valuation devices such as ratings (Balsiger 2014a; Balsiger 2014b; Dubuisson-Quellier 2013) based on movement goals like ecology or fair trade. Doing so, they contribute to processes of “identification, categorization, commensuration and legitimization of products” (Dubuisson-Quellier 2013) (p.633). Yet most studies on the “contentiousness of markets” (King and Pearce 2010) that look at market moralization focus on the movement side and fail to acknowledge the interactive nature of those processes. Businesses and their interest groups are active players and use a variety of action forms to counter movement activism and shape processes of market moralization (Walker 2014; Walker and Rea 2014). They use a variety of tactics challenging the arguments put forward by movement actors and defending their own practices. Thus, struggles emerge around the place and contours of ethical values in markets, which can lead to a moralization of markets.

How do such moral contests play out? At a basic level, they are about opposing different “orders of worth” (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006): the efficiency and productivity justifying actions in markets are opposed to moral, political, or other principles of justification put forward by challengers. In order to moralize markets, “outside” values are brought into markets, and new forms of valuation are promoted when products are valued for moral qualities and their conformity with movement goals. Struggles take place in different arenas. Lawmakers can force market players to abide to new rules through legislative action; laws are therefore often the most efficient way to moralize markets. But the contest on ethical values also takes place in market arenas, when movement actors target corporations directly or when they build up alternative markets based on their values and goals. Markets can thus be sites of moral struggles and ethical values can be differently embedded in markets.

This paper suggests a “political sociology” of market moralization. Such a perspective places actors in their socio-political contexts and retraces battles around market moralization across different arenas. Doing so, it uncovers the sociohistoric processes of the encounters of markets and morals. It shows both how movement actors promote new forms of moral valuation and how dominant market actors contest them. Studying such moral struggles reveals how moral categories clash with the “laws of the market”, and how producers use this market logic to fight against demands. But it also shows how market players, when facing moral challenges, are forced to construct alternative moralities to counter demands. Inscribing ethical values in markets thus requires “moral work” in order to change market practices by producers and consumers alike. The case study on which this article builds thus contributes to a conflict-based perspective on market moralization and market culture more generally, questioning the separation of market values and morals and highlighting the struggles around new forms of valuation.

To reveal the processes of market moralization, I propose a case study of animal rights and egg production in Switzerland, ca. 1970-90. Many forms of market contention and moral markets originate in the movements of the sixties and seventies, for instance fair trade or organic markets. Animal welfare issues are another, so far often overlooked example. In Switzerland, an animal protection bill was voted in 1978. Its most sweeping and controversial provision was a proposed ban on so-called battery cages for laying hens in the eggs industry. fervently demanded by animal welfare activists fervently advocated such a ban, while the egg industry vehemently opposed it. The emotional debates and public actions around this form of chicken husbandry and its alternatives lasted for more than 15 years and provide us with detailed insight into the battles around market moralization. Using a broad range of data, in particular a database built up of the main publications of industry organizations and social movement actors, other documentary data, as well as expert interviews with key actors, the paper develops a qualitative socio-historical analysis of this controversy.

## ***THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK***

### *Morals and markets*

In a commonly held view, markets and morals don't go well together. Markets are about competition, productivity, efficiency and profit maximizing in production, exchange and consumption. Moral concerns are not part of this picture. For economists but also for some sociological theories, markets are self-contained worlds where rationality and efficiency rules, separated from other social worlds of moral concerns. These theories posit that there are "separate spheres", in Zelizer's words (2011). They are consistent with theories of social differentiation, which state that specialized fields or systems of human activity have developed, such as the economy, politics, art or science, each one working according to its proper autonomous logics. Along with others, Zelizer's (2011) studies on markets and morals, however, have made it clear that such a clear theoretical distinction cannot stand empirical scrutiny. Economic activity does not take place outside of the realm of morality<sup>1</sup>.

Adopting a sociological view of morality where morals are studied not as universal ethical prescriptions but as cultural norms of what is good or bad, appropriate or illegitimate behavior adopted by societies or social groups at particular moments in time (Fourcade and Healy 2007), a number of studies have investigated how ethics and economic activity intermingle. Studies focus on two kinds of relations. On the one hand, the appropriateness of exchanging certain types of goods on markets – the limits of markets, in other words – are inherently moral questions. Certain goods are deliberately kept outside of market exchanges. Organs, for example, are not exchanged on markets, but administered through other forms of distribution (Healy 2006). But these moral limits of markets are empirically variable and susceptible to change. The frontiers of markets are malleable, and market extension (but also retreat) is often justified with moral argumentation.

On the other hand – and this study is an example of this second relation – scholars also increasingly pay attention to the ways market behavior is morally sanctioned. Many debates on market behavior have important moral dimensions concerning producers and consumers alike. What is a fair price for coffee? Should retailers stop giving out disposable plastic bags or should consumers be incited to bring their own bags when grocery shopping? Should hens

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<sup>1</sup> This is but one aspect of the "embeddedness of the economy" (Granovetter), at the core of the economic sociology research program and of which the cultural/moral aspects are a part.

be held in cages? Often, such questions about good or bad, wrong or right behavior with regard to environmental, social, or animal rights issues are politicized and become codified in laws circumscribing economic activity. But they are also directly addressed in markets, not through laws, but through forms of private regulation (Bartley 2007), ethical codes, through the rise of moral niche markets (like green or fair trade products), or on the consumer side through “political consumption” (Micheletti 2003). Moral concerns can become part of product valuation strategies and get integrated into markets as new categories of quality (Beckert and Aspers 2011; Gourevitch 2011).

### *Moral entrepreneurs and moral struggles in markets*

Social movements are often the drivers of market moralization, when they act as moral entrepreneurs in markets. A number of studies have looked at the interactions between movements and corporations in “contentious markets” (King and Pearce 2004, Walker 2012) and at the economic consequences of movements. Studies have shown how movements develop frames and cultural codes on the basis of which new production methods and niche markets like grass-fed beef (Weber, Heinze and Michaela 2008), ethical fashion (Balsiger 2012), or wind power (Vasi 2009) emerge. Most studies focus on movements, their tactics, and contextual conditions.. A “strategic interactions perspective” (Duyvendak and Jasper 2015) carries the potential of an interactionist description of protest dynamics (Balsiger 2014b). This approach focuses on the arenas of interaction that emerge when movement entrepreneurs are successful in launching challenges to more powerful actors and “keep (...) the problem on the “agenda” of institutions and organizations which can provide a response” (Duyvendak and Fillieule 2015). This theoretical perspective thus guides researchers to be attentive to the micro-dynamics of protest interaction and analyze the strategies of all involved players, studying the back and forth of claims and tactics and the resulting processes of social change.

The social movement perspective on market moralization is consistent with the theory of moral entrepreneurship (Becker 1997). While moral entrepreneurs are crucial actors in processes of moralization, their “moral crusades”, more often than not, are met with resistance. The actors whose behavior is singled out as immoral are likely to develop or render explicit alternative moralities, based on other kinds of orders of worth. It is therefore

more fruitful to study the moral struggles that moral entrepreneurship provokes – “the power struggles that exist between competing groups and moral interests” (Massengill and Reynolds 2010) (p. 497). The remainder of this theoretical section develops a framework to study such moral struggles and processes of market moralization.

Market consist of institutional rules, cultural frames, and actor networks (Beckert 2010). In order to hold together these dimensions and study processes moral entrepreneurship and moral struggles in markets, the notion of conventions proves particularly useful. It goes back to Boltanski and Thévenot’s (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2006) analysis of the co-existence of different orders of worth (for which conventions is another name) that underlie forms of justification, principles of (e)valuation, and the coordination of action. For instance, tradition, market efficiency, or artistic inspiration, are conventions that coordinate action. Studies in economic sociology building on this theoretical framework have shown that different conventions orient the actions of market actors (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007; Diaz-Bohne 2007; Thévenot 2001). Markets are not just guided by the convention of efficiency; other orders of worth can also underlie market action, such as innovation or the pursuit of politically defined goals. While conventions co-exist, markets are often characterized by the dominance of a specific convention – which we can call a quality convention (Eymard-Duvernay 1989) or simply a market convention. For example, markets or market segments can be characterized by a traditional-artisanal convention or by an industrial, productivity-oriented convention.

Market conventions encompass the formal and informal rules and cultural understandings that guide coordinate the interactions of participants in a market and are followed and enacted equally by producers, distributors, market mediators, and consumers. The first step of an analysis of market moralization consists of identifying and describing the market convention that guides the market under study. It is this initial market convention that comes under pressure in processes of market moralization. External actors – moral entrepreneurs – question certain aspects of the market convention that they denounce as immoral. Economic values of market efficiency and productivity clash with social values such as environmental or social justice, and moral orders collide (McInerney 2014) (p.11).

How do moral struggles play out when they concern the functioning of specific markets?  
First, such struggles are about the institutional and cultural aspects of dominant market



conventions; they can concern both formal rules governing production or market exchanges and the cultural frames that guide markets. Second, in moral struggles, the active and interactive moralization of markets is pursued through discourses and practical techniques – petitions, information campaigns, lobbying, certification, etc., mobilizing on behalf of different values and putting forward different conventions – “whether self-consciously (as in the case of social responsibility) or in the name of neutrality and objectivity (as in the case of efficiency)” (Fourcade and Healy 2007) (p.304). Third, the term moral struggle designates an interactive fight where parties on both sides – moral entrepreneurs and their targets – pursue their goal with practices and discourses. The moralization by moral entrepreneurs is met with resistance from established market actors (and/or their industry organizations) defending the existing market convention. In this struggle, the latter are forced to develop (or render explicit) their own moralities; moral struggles are thus struggles between opposing alternative moralities building on various orders of worth and grounded in different conventions (Abend 2014). Fourth, moral struggles are likely to play out in different arenas, in particular the political (regulative) arena (with further distinctions between parliamentary, administrative, judicial or direct democratic arenas) and directly in the market arena (that is, more precisely, the arenas of market exchange between producers and consumers and the production and distribution arenas). Political arenas are important because markets are subject to regulation and often, the most efficient way of enforcing new moral rules is through the law. In this sense, market moralization is thus, at least in part, a political process. But very often, moral struggles also (and in parallel) take place directly in markets, either because moral entrepreneurs direct their actions towards markets – as for instance through the development of labels or shaming and blaming of producers – or because established market actors prefer dealing with moral issues directly on the markets, for instance through voluntary self-regulation in the form of ethical standards rather than through state regulation. Moral struggles in the market arena thereby need to address the core question of price and valuation (that is, who pays for “market morality” and how much). It is thus both in political (regulative) arenas and in market arenas that the contours of a new “moralized” market convention are negotiated in the course of moral struggles.

Finally, by relating moral struggles to the social positions and dispositions of actors and to the broader general context it is possible to give elements of explanation for given processes of market moralization. This step goes beyond the descriptive nature of much of the work developed within the broader framework Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) sociology of

critique, by adding historical and social contextualization and highlighting the political nature of disputes on valid conventions. Gusfield's classic study of the temperance movement (Gusfield 1984 [1963]) has shown the status dynamic that underpins a moral struggle that on the surface is only about values. Relating moral struggles to social positions leads to a political sociology of market moralization with actors pursuing a diversity of goals. Such a perspective is especially interesting if one looks at corporate responses to moral challenges, as market moralization must not necessarily be a cost but can also become an economic opportunity thanks to strategies of valuation. In other words, one needs to relate moral struggles to the broader contexts in which they take place and make sense to actors.

When market moralization is successful, a new dominant market convention – new rules, practices, cultural frames, and possibly also new network structures – emerges integrating the moral issues raised by moral entrepreneurs into market exchanges. Conventions can also be fragmented and characterized by a differentiated integration of moral issues into the market. This is very often the case when niche markets with very high standards co-exist with less strict standards.

### ***METHODS AND CASE ANALYSIS***

This paper consists of an in-depth case analysis of egg production and animal welfare in Switzerland, 1970-1991. In this time period, a controversy emerged around chicken husbandry in the egg industry (see detailed case description below)<sup>2</sup>. Many studies on morals and on valuation dynamics in markets look at goods and practices that are very controversial (i.e. life insurance, child labor, organs), highly differentiated and volatile (i.e. art, wine, fashion). Yet also very common and weakly differentiated goods can become the object of moral struggles. In particular in food production and consumption, moral categories have become increasingly important (Johnston and Baumann 2009; Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011). Eggs are a characteristic example of this: an everyday good that becomes invested with new moral meaning around the question of the relation between humans and animals and the industrialization of food production. Switzerland is in many ways a forerunner of market moralization. 'Ethical consumption campaigns' were a central part of the social movements in the 1970s (Balsiger 2014b), leading to an early moralization of markets, in particular of food.

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<sup>2</sup> 1991 is when the provision on the cage ban was finally fully implemented, after a ten year transitional period. 1970 is a couple years before the controversy on animal rights in the egg industry started to emerge.

The goal of the empirical analysis was to retrace the moral struggles around animal welfare in the egg industry, studying the strategies and discourses of the main actors on all sides of the moral struggle. Through a preliminary explorative study based on a literature and press review, I identified the main actors of this controversy on which I focused the analysis: the egg industry and in particular its main industry and professional associations during the historical period under study – the Schweizerische Eierverwertungsgenossenschaft (SEG) (Swiss cooperative of egg distribution) and the Verein Schweizerischer Geflügelhalter (VSGH) (association of Swiss poultry farmers), as well as the Schweizerische Geflügelzuchtschule (Swiss poultry farming school). On the animal welfare advocacy side, the Schweizerische Tierschutz (STS) (Swiss animal protection) and the Konsumenten Arbeitsgruppe (KAG) (Consumer working group), a group promoting free-range eggs. To a lesser extent, I also studied the positions and discourses of core political actors and other economic actors, in particular retailers. The analysis is qualitative and historical and builds on a broad range of sources. Most importantly, I built up a data basis consisting of the main publications by the core collective actors. For the egg industry side, my main source is the Schweizerische Geflügelzeitung<sup>3</sup> (Swiss poultry journal), a bi-weekly (and later monthly) trade journal of the industry, edited at the Swiss poultry farming school. I looked through all the journal's editions from 1972-1992 and digitalized articles relating to the animal rights issue. For the STS, my main source is the organization's publication, called Schweizer Tierschutz: Du + die Natur (Swiss animal protection: you and nature) for which I proceeded in the same manner. Importantly, this journal also published the STS' regular three-year activity reports. For the KAG, I also consulted the organizations newsletter, publicly available from 1985 on. For the prior years (1975-1984), the organization published only infrequent, most of the time yearly newsletters, which I obtained directly from it. The contents of these documents, as well as all other assembled data, were analyzed using standard techniques of qualitative data analysis. The main sources were complemented through other publications by the different organizations (booklets or brochures), some archival material that was either publicly available or handed to me by interviewees; by a press review; as well as by 9 interviews with core past or present actors of the controversy (3 from KAG, 2 from STS, 2 from poultry industry, 1 from retailers, 1 from public administration).

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<sup>3</sup> Before 1974, the journal was called Geflügel und Kleinvieh (Poultry and small livestock)

I will now turn to a rapid factual overview of the fight between animal welfare advocates and the egg industry on the question of chicken husbandry in Switzerland. From there, I go on to describe the market convention ruling before the animal welfare issue was raised, followed by an analysis of the discourses and practices used by both sides in the moral struggle and the conventions they refer to – focusing first on the political arena, then on the market arena. Finally, I end with a section explaining the moralization of the market for eggs by linking it to broader changes in agricultural policy, economic constraints and opportunities for egg producers.

### ***EGG PRODUCTION AND ANIMAL WELFARE IN SWITZERLAND, 1970-1991***

#### *The market for eggs in the early 1970s: productivity, efficiency, low prices*

In the early 1970s, the production of Swiss eggs was guided by an imperative of rationalization. In the course of the previous decade or so, new systems of chicken husbandry had been developed and widely introduced. More and more, egg production was done in specialized “farms”<sup>4</sup>, with producers focusing exclusively on egg production and not having any other farming activities. This was not the case for all egg producers, but even those who had mixed forms of agricultural production started to use newly developed systems of chicken husbandry during the 1960s. These systems were called chicken batteries and consisted of cages for up to four hens, each occupying the approximate space of a sheet of paper. Cages were stacked on each other, building four or even more levels. In these cages, hens would lay their eggs on a grid from which the eggs rolled down on a kind of elevator, which carefully transported them to the ground floor’s band-conveyor. From there, they were carried to a screening machine where a big broom cleaned them. Feces – the unwanted by-product of these laying hens - would fall down into a container below the battery, where it was kept to dry. After a few days, it was then peeled off into a defection canal. Thanks to such systems, the collection of eggs was fully automatized. Actual farmers were not needed; human activity resembled more to what one finds in an automated factory on an assembly line, with workers checking from time to time whether everything is in order and supervising the production. It was like a machine – an animal machine, as Ruth Harrison famously coined it (see picture 1).

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<sup>4</sup> I put “farm” in quotation marks because such specialized farms do not resemble what one usually imagines a farm to be, and because this precise point – are they farms, family farms, factory farms, animal factories, etc., became a central issue of contention.

At this time, this was the dominant form of egg production in Switzerland. In many countries, in particular the US, it still is (Bittman 2015; Garner 1993). If not all producers had the latest chicken battery models – they were, unsurprisingly, quite expensive – the large majority of them did hold chicken in batteries, and a major part of Swiss eggs were produced in specialized units. According to statistics published in the *Schweizerische Geflügelzeitung* (SGZ), in 1973 more than 50% of all laying hens were held in herds of 2000 or more, with 24.1% in herds of over 10 000 birds. And while there are no clear statistics about how many of them were held in cages, estimations for 1981 range from 65%<sup>5</sup> and 95%<sup>6</sup>. Battery cages are a highly efficient way of producing eggs. Full automation means that very few workers are needed, and costs can thus be brought down significantly. Because hens can hardly move in their cages and eggs automatically roll down, the eggs are rarely damaged and do not need to be collected by human workers. And the hens cannot fight with each other for lack of space – batteries thus also have certain advantages in terms of hygiene and longevity of the animals (Garner 1993).

Batteries were not just the most efficient way of producing eggs; the chicken farmers were also very proud of this highly rationalized production. The description above of the functioning of a chicken battery comes from the poultry industry's trade journal (SGZ). In an article with the headline 'An exemplary battery plant', the author raved about the unprecedented cleanliness and efficiency of the plant. No word was lost to how the hens might feel, trapped as they are in these cages, reduced to their value-added function of ponding eggs. In early 1972, when this article was published, such questions were hardly discussed, and certainly not taken seriously by egg producers. Their goal and professional pride was to produce eggs that could compete with imported eggs while still paying chicken farmers a living. It was possible thanks to an "extraordinary development" in the egg industry, which had allowed producers "to make up for cost increases through heightened efficiency and performance and the rationalization of methods of husbandry and thus offer eggs to consumers for the same price as twenty years ago" (SGZ, 7, May 30 1974).

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<sup>5</sup> The number mentioned by the egg producing industry; SGZ 8, August 22 1991

<sup>6</sup> The number put forward in a report by A. Nabholz, who was director of the federal veterinary ministry 1966-77; "10 Jahre eidgenössisches Tierschutzgesetz und -verordnung", see also SGZ 8, August 22 1991

### *The crusade against battery cages*

In the early to mid 1970s, the welfare of farm animals became a major issue in Swiss politics (see figure 1 for a timeline of the major events). In 1973, Swiss citizens had approved a constitutional amendment on animal protection with a large majority of 83%, making animal protection a federal competence. Animal welfare activists had pushed for such an article for a long time, and the early 1970s were a favorable context for them. While the traditional *Schweizer Tierschutz* (STS), the biggest Swiss animal welfare organization and roughly the equivalent to the humane societies in the US had been around for nearly a century, their field of activity had mostly been limited to pets and wildlife, with scarce attention on farm animals. Yet the 1960s had brought along a new critique of the use of animals in industrial food production, and a new generation of activists criticizing the detrimental effects of industrialization and economic growth on various others – the environment, developing countries, but also animals (Garner 1993; Jasper and Nelkin 1992). Ruth Harrison’s “*Animal Machines: the New Factory Farming Industry*” (1964), published in the UK and quickly translated in other languages (the German translation “Tiermaschinen” was published in 1964), had a great impact on animal rights activists<sup>7</sup>. In this context, the traditionally rather conservative STS became a vocal advocate of farm animal welfare.

Once the constitutional amendment was approved, animal welfare activists put pressure on legislators to vote a strong federal animal protection bill. The battery cages in which hens were held for eggs production quickly became the focus of activist campaigns and public debates. Animal welfare activists accused the egg industry of animal cruelty and called for a ban on cages. In 1973, STS launched a petition demanding such a ban, which gathered more than 200’000 signatures. In parallel, activists were busy informing the public on the realities of what they called “chicken factories” or “egg factories”. From 1973 on, they put in place an impressive amount of activities whose effect was to unveil the existence of hens held in cages and document cruelty. This included an audiovisual exhibition (it’s 1973), brochures, articles in newspapers and magazines, documentaries, and even a fiction movie. The movie, called ‘De Grotzepuur’ (1975) (a Swiss-German title meaning The Grotze Farmer), was financed by the STS and broadcast on Swiss public TV after being screened in movie theaters all over the

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<sup>7</sup> The WWF, for instance, published an illustrated book for children which featured a chapter entitled ‘Die Maschinen-Tiere’, picturing and juxtaposing the lives of farm animals on traditional farms and on factory farms. The STS reprinted this chapter in its members’ magazine in early 1975 (*Zeitschrift Schweizer Tierschutz*, Nr. 1/2, February 1975).

country. It featured some famous Swiss German actors of the time and tells the dramatic story of an old, grumpy farmer abusing his animals, and the farmer's daughter-in-law who is enraged by this and calls the farmer out<sup>8</sup>.

The public campaign was initially successful: the draft of the bill contained a ban of cage husbandry for chickens. But this success was not long-lived. Following the customary Swiss legislative process, the draft bill was then sent to all concerned parties (i.e. interest groups, political parties, the cantons) for consultation. In their responses, many expressed opposition to the ban on cages; at least in part, this was also due to the fact that in the meantime, the organizations of egg producers had reacted to the threat and started, in their turn, to intervene publicly and to lobby. Most notably, they launched a broad campaign with the goal of objectively informing the public on chicken husbandry. In early 1977, at the end of the consultation process, the government decided to withdraw that cage ban from the bill and inserted a less stringent formulation instead. The bill that was finally voted by parliament (and widely approved by a popular majority in a referendum in December 1978) stipulated that “the government prohibits forms of husbandry clearly contradicting the principles of animal welfare”. Which forms this should entail was left to be decided in a governmental provision. The fight between advocates of a cage ban and egg producers thus continued to yet another round. Animal rights activists were disappointed, yet their main organizations supported the bill nonetheless, and reinforced pressure on authorities through further public campaigning, in particular a new petition. It became increasingly clear that the government, under pressure from public opinion and animal welfare activists, was determined to actually ban cages. The provision was finally enacted in 1981; it prohibited conventional cages and put in place a

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<sup>8</sup> For those who speak Swiss German: the movie can be watched on YouTube [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYzrC\\_jeVHM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYzrC_jeVHM) (accessed December 2, 2014). A lone commenter on the movie's IMDB site says he remembers a screening of the movie at a St Gallen movie theater: “I remember the audience's reaction to this movie in a St. Gallen cinema in 1975 when it came out. Women were crying, men were shouting that the director of the movie should be shot [the director was the committed American-Swiss animal protector Mark R. Rissi]. Children uttered their wish to go to the next farm and liberate the animals”. He then goes on to say that thanks to the movie, several hundred thousands of signatures for the petition could be gathered in just a few days, prompting the government to change its policies and the biggest retailer to immediately withdraw cage eggs from its shelves – facts that are unquestionably exaggerated and even plain wrong – in reality, it took a long time for the animal welfare activists to achieve these goals. However, his account of the public's strong emotional reaction to the movie is, however exaggerated, consistent with many contemporary testimonies – not least the strong rebuttals by egg producers – and bears witness to the emotional debates the question provoked. (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0214736/>, accessed December 2, 2014)

commission charged with testing and authorizing new husbandry systems, but also gave egg producers using cages a transitional period of ten years.

### ***WHO KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE? OPPOSING MORALITIES IN THE STRUGGLE ABOUT CAGES FOR CHICKENS***

The basic issue animal rights activists brought up was the question of animal welfare. In their interventions, they took a clear-cut moral stance: holding hens in cages is animal cruelty. Pictures and documentary movies were meant to show how hens suffered in such conditions. Just seeing chickens in cages was evidence enough that there was animal cruelty – it was a question of common sense. For a “normally feeling person with ethical responsibility, there can be only one answer” – it is animal cruelty and therefore cages should be banned (STS 11/12, December 195). “It is sufficient to stand in front of a cage for five minutes and to observe a hen to be seized by the anger against the shallow welfare society, which does not realize the cost of its well-being”. (STS 3/4, April 1975). It is an immediate emotional and moral reaction to a reality that is shared by every “normal-feeling” person.

However, if the STS’ position was morally motivated, it was also a pragmatic one. Another faction of the animal welfare movement (in particular the KAG group which promoted free-range chicken husbandry) thought that the alternative promoted by the STS – cage-free hens held in big barns – was still a case of animal cruelty. And some voices were opposed to the very idea that chicken husbandry could ever be ethical if the hens are used for production: “The chicken is just a good, a production machine, regardless of the type of husbandry” (STS, March 1977). There was thus a critique from within the animal welfare movement. The boundary of the morally acceptable was drawn very differently depending on actors’ ideological stances, and reflects the classic ideological orientations one finds within animal rights movements everywhere between animal welfarists and abolitionists (Jasper and Nelkin 1992). But if they disagreed on which (if any) husbandry practices actually *were* ethical, they all agreed that cage husbandry certainly was *unethical*.

The chicken farmers contested this apparently “common sense” and emotional view of the moral issue. For one thing, representatives of the egg industry said, activists did not know what they were talking about: “We chicken farmers are in contact with our animals day in day out. We feed and water them, we take care that they are not too cold and not too warm, that



they have enough fresh air without being caught in a draught, that there is enough space at the feeding trough, and that every animal feels secure in the existing social order. In short, we are professionals and have learnt how to keep animals, and yet we are increasingly confronted with accusations coming in most cases from people who come into contact with chickens or poultry products at the earliest when they are put in the pan or on the dinner table. From those people, of whom no one has learnt the profession at the professional poultry school (Geflügelzuchtschule), we get lectured about how to treat chickens”. Common sense, it goes on, is not enough; one needs specific knowledge on chicken genetics, behavior, husbandry, nutrition, health, anatomy, to judge animals’ well-being (SGZ 17, October 17 1974).

Poultry farmers thus put forward their specific, professional knowledge that authorizes them to evaluate what qualifies as animal welfare. Animal rights activists who argue with ethics and common sense lack this professional knowledge and can therefore not be taken seriously. Poultry farmers denied their opponents the necessary authority to speak about animal welfare; only those who are in daily contact with animals and who have learnt the profession can really know what chickens need, how they like to be treated, how they feel. The issue at stake here is the basis on which one can assess animal welfare, and who is authorized to this kind of assessment – in other words, how moral claims can be grounded (Abend 2014). For animal welfare activists, this basis is moral outrage felt by everyone with common sense. For poultry farmers, only professionals can have a say, because they are the only ones who have the knowledge to actually understand. In addition, poultry farmers also presented this clash of opposing orders of reference – emotional/moral judgments vs. professional competences – as an opposition between rational and emotional arguments. They accused activists of letting emotions guide their judgments and, worse, of using emotional strategies to mislead the public. In this way, poultry farmers dismissed and ridiculed animal rights activists<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> They did so often in combination with gendered categories, presenting themselves as objective, knowledgeable, (and exclusively male) specialists who are suddenly bothered by sentimental, irrational (and not infrequently female) activists who do not understand anything about animal husbandry. This dismissive attitude is visible in many articles written in the SGZ. It can be illustrated by a statement of the poultry farmer organization (VSGH) in response to the draft for the animal protection bill. The newspaper *Der Landbote* (cited in STS , 9/10 October 1975), covering the VSGH general assembly where it voted a resolution condemning the draft, reported that ‘one cannot spare the organization’s leaders the reproach that they left the most foul-mouthed attacks on their opponents without comment. Considering the mostly positive feedback the draft bill got in the press, they should be interested to do something against their battered image. But it does not help [improve the poultry farmers’ public image] that they accuse the STS of sending ‘a few old aunties to the streets’ for its signature collection’.

Instead of animal welfare activists' emotional rhetoric, the poultry industry pleaded for a rational, objective, calm assessment of the situation. As one article heading said, one needs to say 'goodbye to emotions' and let rational arguments take over the public debate. It is with this goal that the main organization of egg producers launched a wide public information campaign. They wanted to inform the public more objectively, speaking from the point of view of their practical, professional knowledge.

But in this quest for objectivity, poultry farmers could not only rely on their knowledge as professionals; they needed external validation, too. Since the beginning of the controversy, they built their arguments also on scientific evidence, citing statistics and scientific findings that supported their position. If animal wellbeing must be assessed with objective measures, the most legitimate way of doing this is science. According to the egg industry's interpretation of scientific data, evidence actually indicated that chickens were faring particularly *well* in cages. Compared to other types of husbandry, cages had lower chicken mortality and higher performance (i.e., hens lay more eggs). For the industry officials, this meant that hens in cages were doing well: "Empirically, one observes that hens in cages perform better while consuming less food than hens in barns, *and from this one must conclude that they also feel better*" (SGZ 4, April 18 1974) (my emphasis).

How does one measure animal welfare? There is no easy answer to this question. Ethology, the science of animal behavior, had only started examining this. The first study to look at animal wellbeing was the Brambell report on the welfare of farm animals, issued by the British government in 1965. Most studies on farm animals were applied studies often funded by the agricultural industry and carried out in laboratories close to the industry. They were more preoccupied with productivity than actual wellbeing. Performance and mortality measure productivity, but they were now interpreted as indicators of animal wellbeing. The industry had simply concluded that these same measures must also indicate animal wellbeing: if hens live long and lay many eggs, this surely must mean that they also feel good. But the 1970s were also a time when new approaches were developed to measure farm animals' welfare, "with experiments focusing on the effects of single factors under controlled circumstances", which allowed the new discipline to be established as a science (Carenzi and Verga 2009). Animal wellbeing came to be defined in a different way. In Switzerland and other countries, scientists developed an approach defining wellbeing around the satisfaction of

needs and the reduction of harm (Interview with former government official). This led to a very different way of measuring welfare than through performance and mortality; it was about observing whether animals could satisfy their natural needs in modern husbandry systems. Such research was increasingly done at Swiss universities and also gained clout in the federal veterinary administration, which was in charge of overseeing the animal protection legislation (Interview with former government official).

Animal welfare activists, sensing that they could not solely rely on emotional outrage but needed to ground their arguments in science, too, started funding comparative research with the goal of scientifically proving that barn systems were superior to cages in terms of animal welfare. “In the absence of other arguments, we animal protectionists are repeatedly accused of sentimentality and professional incompetence by our opponents. This is why we are eager to substantiate our arguments by professionals and prominent professors of veterinary studies. We have realized that so-called scientifically backed statements can only be confronted by even better scientific counter-evidence”. (Yearly report, STS, 11/12, December 1975).

Science thus became one of the major resources in the battle over battery cages. The moral question should be decided by rational arguments and rigorous scientific studies. But each side cited experts who supported their position, and it proved very difficult to empirically assess animal welfare once and for all, without any persisting doubts. For the egg industry, the inconclusiveness of scientific studies could only mean that it was better to wait; as long as scientists could not say whether or not cages were bad for animal welfare, or if the proposed alternative systems were any better, it was best not to ban cages yet. In December 1976, the industry called for a “truce” with animal rights activists until the scientific controversy was settled. ‘Only polemical articles but never serious examinations have found animal cruelty in impeccably managed battery systems’ (SGZ, 25, December 9 1976). To attack the findings of comparative studies, they claimed that the problem was not so much the system as such, but its handling by professionals. When batteries were badly managed, this led to animal cruelty, but it was not the system’s fault; the same could happen in other husbandry systems. Questioning the scientific results of the more scientifically rigorous studies that started emerging, the eggs industry thus put forward, once again, the importance of professional norms and know-how to achieve animal wellbeing.

In sum, producers denied the moral claims of their opponents. Chicken batteries were not immoral; on the contrary, they respected animal welfare just as much as alternative forms of

chicken husbandry. By putting forward their own professional competence to evaluate animal welfare and pointing at the lack of scientific proof, producers hoped to create a rational and objective account that would unveil the groundless nature of activists' moral outrage. In response, animal rights activists also grounded their arguments in scientific arguments to foster their credibility. However, they did not deny that theirs was also an emotional appeal, a more immediate moral reaction that was just as legitimate. 'How could one confront the misery of animal cruelty in an objective way?' an editorial of the STS magazine asked rhetorically (STS, 4, December 1977). It cited a speech by the German publicist and animal rights activist Horst Stern, with the title "The audacity of emotions". In it, Stern argues that emotions are the most human part of humans. They should therefore not be depreciated, but on the contrary fully embraced. Their opposite is not objectivity, but numbness, callousness, which should not guide humans' relationship to animals.

The upper part of table 1 resumes the moralities both sides relied on in their arguments. For activists, grounded in a view of animal rights and dignity, it was an emotional, immediate moral reaction to a perceived abuse. Egg producers in turn questioned the activists' competence to judge animal welfare and advanced their own professional identities and knowledge. Doing so, they developed an alternative morality where they appeared as being in a close relationship to animals, as the caretakers of animals who know, thanks to professional experience, what animals need. While the formers' morality was thus grounded in a philosophical worldview where animals are entitled to compassion, the latter was anchored in an instrumental view of animals and in strong professional ethics built on expert knowledge. In order to objectify and generalize their respective positions, both sides searched for help from science. The different arguments and the practices they were linked to - the funding of scientific study, the development of information campaigns built on all sorts of tools - were devised to convince public opinion, lawmakers, and administrators. But egg producers did not only object to the authority of animal rights activists to speak on matters of animal welfare; they did not just question the very fact that battery cages qualified as animal cruelty. Actually, their most powerful argument was not about how to define animal welfare; it was about economic issues. More precisely, it was about the economic costs of a cage ban and about the "laws of the market" that demanded that the most rational production methods had to be adopted. In other words, for producers, the issue was not so much one of moral judgment, but of economic soundness and rationality. Even if there were more animal-friendly and moral production methods, the reality of the markets could not accommodate them, and the

economic and social benefits of the ruling market convention should not be jeopardized. But contrary to the industry's convictions, the question of morals came to be debated directly within the context of the marketplace, too.

### ***HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR EGG? CONSTRUCTING DIFFERENT MORALITIES OF THE MARKET***

For egg producers, the demands for a cage ban endangered the economic efficiency of egg production and alternative husbandry forms lacked economic feasibility and “market acceptance”. Production costs would inevitably rise and eggs would get more expensive, without consumers being willing to pay more for cage-free eggs. What activists promoted, in other words, could not possibly compete on markets, and the economic effects would be catastrophic. Swiss egg producers would be driven out of markets, consumers would have to pay higher prices or opt for imported eggs, and the Swiss economy at large would suffer.

We need to put this assessment in the perspective of the market convention guiding the eggs market before animal welfare issues come up. Through the statements of the egg industry's organization, it appears that in their understanding, the market for eggs was moral in the sense that it provided consumers with the affordable eggs they demanded. In this view, egg producers fulfilled a social function, which was to provide the Swiss economy with eggs and thus maintain at least an appearance of national food sovereignty. The references to the WWII war economy were still frequent and the importance of having a powerful agricultural production that could fulfill the basic needs of Swiss consumers was one of the goals of agricultural policies and a source of pride for producers. At the same time, the government was wary of overproduction and its effect on prices, and thus tried to limit production outputs too. These contradictory goals had led to a complex market regulation around three pillars: limits to the size of production unities (through a system of authorization for production facilities with more than 2000 hens, which was, however, hardly enforced), a tax and an obligation for importers to sell an equal amount of imported and Swiss eggs, and a regulated price for the eggs exchanged within this system. These eggs, called ‘system eggs’, were sold through a few regional eggs cooperatives (the main one of which was called the SEG), which collected and then redistributed eggs from the different producers. Besides these system eggs, there were also so-called ‘grey eggs’, for which there was no regulated price and no purchase guarantee. Those eggs were sold directly to intermediary traders, and most of the time came

from the specialized chicken farmers who had the biggest production capacities, almost exclusively using cage systems.

In the producers' view, production had to be rationalized (i.e. industrialized) because consumers were not willing to pay more for eggs. Confronted with rising costs, the only way to keep prices down was this rationalization. According to the egg industry, so-called intensive animal husbandry developed out of economic survival needs, not out of greed, as animal welfare activists sometimes claimed. For instance, one of its main organizations, VSGH, said in a press release that its "task [was] to produce a cheap egg for the whole population, which [was], as proved by inquiries, only possible with modern cage husbandry" (SGZ 21-22, December 19 1974). The higher costs of alternative, cage-free systems would have to lead to higher prices for consumers, or else producers would lose money and be ultimately driven out of business. Swiss eggs might even disappear from the market altogether, to the profit of cheap imported eggs. In other words, the economic and social costs of a cage ban were significant: poultry farmers would be driven out of business, jobs would get lost, and food sovereignty could no longer be aspired to. Only cages could guarantee profitable production and they were thus necessary in order to maintain a functioning, efficient market for Swiss eggs.

### *Moralizing the market*

Egg producers were convinced that consumers were driven by narrow self-interest, and would thus always buy the cheapest products. They might claim that they cared about animal rights, and even sign petitions demanding a ban on cages, but when purchasing eggs at the supermarket, 'grubs first, then ethics' would always prevail. The egg industry believed in the economic theory of consumers as self-interested actors, not moral beings. It expressed doubts about consumers' real concern with animal rights issues, which they saw as being in conflict with the "laws of the market". The two things could not go together, they constituted "separate spheres" (Zelizer 2011) that were opposed to each other. But it turned out that the egg industry organizations were wrong about that: actually, many consumers proved willing to pay more for cage-free eggs. Even more so, producing animal welfare eggs could actually be an economic opportunity for producers, a fact most of them failed to see for a very long time. Animal welfare could become a quality of eggs and add value to this otherwise largely undifferentiated good. This integration of ethical concerns and markets was the result of a

process of product valuation in which the main animal welfare organizations played a crucial role.

For animal welfare activists, something was wrong with a market whose goal was to produce cheap eggs for self-interested consumers. Was it really so important to produce cheap eggs if the price to pay was animal cruelty? “The probability that Switzerland decays from a lack of egg white is smaller than the danger that it be doomed by a lack of decency” (STS 3/4, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1975). The imperatives of profitability and cheap prices had evacuated all other concerns from this market, in particular issues of animal rights or environmental justice. The animal protection bill should enable these ethical concerns to put limits on profitability, so that purely economic and material interests would not rule animal husbandry. But at the same time, the STS as the leading animal welfare organization wanted to make it clear that it did not advocate a nostalgic, unprofitable form of chicken husbandry. It was trying hard to develop an alternative that was capable of reconciling ethics with markets. Rather than just lamenting the dominance of profitability to the detriment of animal welfare, the activists wanted to demonstrate that animal welfare could in fact be compatible with markets.

Initially, the STS had the project of using the courts to fight against chicken cages, on the basis of an animal protection law in the canton of Zurich (STS magazine 11/12, December 1975, yearly report). But this strategy was dismissed in the favor of a proposal to fund an experiment that “will point at a practicable way for an animal friendly chicken husbandry”. This included the funding for comparative research on cage and barn husbandry. But it also led the way for a distinctively market-based strategy. “For the commission [on farm animals], it was clear that only the demonstration of a feasible alternative solution could provide the basis to fight credibly for a ban on cage husbandry.” The commission therefore decided that it would identify the still existing cage-free chicken farms, start publicity actions in order to raise interest among consumers, and organize a sales test for cage-free eggs.

The STS thus pursued a conscious strategy of building up a market for cage-free eggs as a viable alternative to dominant egg production<sup>10</sup>. It organized a market test in the city of

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<sup>10</sup> At the same time, another such development was under way: the build-up of an exchange circuit (a “circuit of commerce”, Zelizer 2011) around free-range eggs. This went much further in terms of animal welfare than the cage-free eggs from the STS. It significantly contributed to the development of alternative, animal friendly categories and forms of valuation on the market and to the rise of

Winterthur. Collaborating with a farmer who had a cage free production facility, these eggs were sold on the local market with a label clearly designating them as cage-free, for a price around 15% higher than the regular price. The egg industry associations did not like the experiment and scolded the farmer for taking part in it. At the start, they “distance(d) themselves from this short-term experiment, which does not give indications neither on chicken husbandry nor on market behavior of a broad range of consumers”. Later egg producers rejoiced, however, at the test results: they indicated that only a rather small percentage of consumers bought the animal-friendly eggs. For the industry, this was clear evidence that consumers did not put ethics before cost. “Around 90% of consumers were not ready to support the postulates of the animal welfare activists financially, through the price premium of the eggs”. Consumers, they said, had proven that one could not negate economic necessity and that the use of emotional, yet not objectively founded arguments could not dupe consumers: “the idealism of the majority of consumers stops at the price” (SGZ 5, March 4 1976).

For the STS, however, the test only proved that consumers were not yet sufficiently informed about the cruelty of cage husbandry. They continued to believe that consumers would be willing to put ethics first, if there was an alternative and enough information. In April 1976, they teamed up with a major Swiss-German women’s magazine, called Annabelle. Over several months, the magazine would publish (often quite graphic) reports on the egg industry, revealing the cruelty of cage husbandry. In parallel, eggs from cage-free producers were put on the market with the label “Annabelle-Ei” (Annabelle egg), certified cage-free by the STS. Again, the eggs were sold for a slightly higher price than regular eggs. For a few months, the magazine published lists with grocery stores where they could be purchased – a list that contained dozens of stores, including Jelmoli, one of the biggest and most fashionable department stores in Zurich. In the course of the Annabelle campaign, the STS made over 80 contracts with egg producers, covering around 250 000 hens (STS, 1, March 1978, yearly report 1975-77).

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consumer consciousness. But it could not constitute a viable economic alternative for mainstream producers. It was a much more far-reaching critique of industrial farming, and the organization behind it was very critical of the type of husbandry promoted by the STS. The latter was designed precisely to be something conventional large-scale producers could switch to quite easily, and could accommodate the industrial nature of egg production by allowing for big quantities.



Through this action, the STS and Annabelle catered a message that managed to reach out to many consumers, most of them women. For the STS, it was a crucial step in its effort to show the market potential of cage-free eggs. “The goal of [this action] is to rebut the claim of chicken farmers [that consumers will purchase the cheaper egg if the price difference is 3 to 5 Rappen, even if they know that it was produced under conditions of animal cruelty]. [...] This action *must* be a success. Opponents haven’t succeeded in convincingly attacking animal welfare arguments advocated by activists from animal welfare, conservation and environmental organizations. If we now also succeed to break into the economic front and to demonstrate that consumers are willing to pay a premium price, an additional essential step toward a ban on cages will be done” (STS, 3/4, April 1976, emphasis in original). Breaking into the economic front meant showing that ethical concerns could be part of consumers’ purchase decisions and were not opposed to it. If animal welfare advocates could both scientifically show that cages were animal cruelty *and* demonstrate that consumers wanted cage-free eggs, the egg industry would have no more arguments left.

#### *A new quality of eggs*

If consumers were to pay a higher price for cage-free eggs, this meant that the issue of chicken husbandry had to be made into a quality of eggs that could justify valuation. An egg would need to be seen as more valuable if it came from cage-free hens. The campaign in the Annabelle magazine was explicitly designed to do so. A letter by the editor-in-chief of Annabelle to the Swiss Minister of Economic Affairs, published in the STS magazine (5/6, May 1976), explained the campaign in those words: “The eggs regulation pushes producers to promote, in particular, “the quality [of eggs]”. With an information campaign running over several months, we would like to show that there is also a non-palpable, ethical quality [...]. Mass media and advertisement are often accused of creating needs that did not previously exist. Maybe we will succeed in creating a need for an ethical quality with regard to eggs, a modest and yet so important food product”. The goal was thus to expand the notion of what egg quality entails: not just freshness, taste, or size, which were the qualities usually attached to eggs, but also the ethical aspect of conditions of production, the issue of chicken husbandry. It was about creating new needs in consumers, needs of a moral order; making consumers realize that when they want eggs, they don’t just want fresh eggs, they also want eggs from hens held in animal-friendly conditions.

What the activists did is akin to a fundamental process of value creation in markets: processes of qualification-requalification that are at the heart of the dynamics of economic markets and through which qualities are “attributed, stabilized, objectified and arranged”. (Callon, Méadel and Rabeharisoa 2002) (p.199) Economic agents – in particular producers – are the main actors driving this process of qualification, which helps distinguish products on markets and thus value products for their difference and singularities. But as we can see here, moral entrepreneurs do this, too, at the service of establishing moral criteria as criteria for distinction and choice on markets. The new “moral quality” of eggs was created by animal welfare activists through the information campaign and, in parallel, through the identification of producers of cage-free eggs and the development of a label clearly designating those eggs and making them visible at the stores. At the same time, the new quality had to go along with greater valuation, which could justify the eggs’ higher price. This aspect of the higher price was crucial because it responded to the producers’ concern of cage-free production’s producers, sellers, and consumers higher costs<sup>11</sup>.

The egg industry, however, was more than skeptical, and refused, in their majority, to embrace this new quality for eggs. For the organized egg producers, there could be no difference between cage, cage-free, and free-range eggs: it was all the same. “Annabelle concedes that there is no identifiable quality difference between cage and cage-free eggs. What will be the reaction of consumers, when they find out? Two kinds! First, the majority of them will hardly be willing to pay 15% more, as the market test [...] clearly showed. Second, they can become suspicious of the declaration and think that they have been coned when they find out that a so-called Annabelle egg or a free-range egg does not differentiate itself at all from a regular egg, possibly from cages and 5 cents cheaper. No difference from the inside or

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<sup>11</sup> The STS was not the only actor that contributed to establishing the ethical criteria of husbandry conditions as a quality of eggs. The group promoting free-range eggs (KAG) did the same, if with stricter criteria of what animal-friendly forms of husbandry are. Building up a circuit with producers, sellers, and consumers of free-range eggs, KAG clearly designated and controlled eggs as free-range, which was their distinctive feature. Thanks to the work of the KAG volunteers, who identified small-scale farmers with chicken and enrolled them in the free-range circuit, consumers could purchase free-range eggs. The KAG as an organization did not claim that these eggs tasted better – although they sometimes said that they were fresher, because they came directly from farms. The defining quality of these eggs was their ethical quality. And for this, KAG also fixed a significantly higher price, in order to allow farmers to sell the eggs with a profit. It was an explicit policy of the KAG to defend this price premium; without a higher price, the market for free-range eggs could not be sustainable, and consumers should not get the impression that free-range eggs could be had at the same price as regular eggs.

the outside, in taste, smell, or appearance” (SGZ 8, April 15 1976). The author here completely ignores the point made by the advocates behind the Annabelle campaign. Only taste, smell, appearance can be qualities of eggs that might justify a higher price; chicken husbandry cannot. Further on, the author argues that the problem with husbandry is that it can’t be controlled, and therefore should not be declared on packages. But why can’t husbandry be controlled? And how can the things that are admitted as qualities – taste, smell – be controlled? The distinction and the argument made by the egg industry was not linked to immutable objective facts. It is a consequence of its strong stance in favor of battery cages, which are not, in the industry’s eyes, against animal welfare. Just as the animal welfare advocates were trying to ‘create a need for ethical qualities’ and establish this new value category on the market, the producers, fearing not just a legislative ban on cages but perhaps even more consumers’ changing preferences, were trying to prevent this category from rising. It appears that the identification of new qualities is as much a political as it is an economic process. It is in pursuit of their political (or moral) goals that activists want to establish chicken husbandry as a quality of eggs, and it is for political reasons that the egg industry, in its majority, refuses this.

Yet in spite of the egg producers’ denial, there are indications that the distinction and the category were gaining increasing acceptance in the population, if not among the main organizations of the egg industry. A quite telling anecdote, in this regard, happened at the margins of a demonstration organized by Swiss egg producers in summer 1976, reported in the poultry journal. The demonstration was about the problem of plummeting egg prices, not about the ban on cages. As part of the action day, chicken farmers would sell eggs. But when they applied for an authorization, administrators asked whether they would sell cage or cage-free eggs? After all, “one shouldn’t advertise cage eggs”. “Swiss eggs”, the farmers responded. To the administrator, the ethical quality made sense. But for the egg producers, the only category that counted was Swiss eggs, never mind in which conditions chickens were raised (SGZ 18, December 2 1976).

Increasingly, however, some producers tried to take advantage of the segment of consumers demanding cage-free eggs. In spite of the egg industry’s political opposition, declarations that implied in one way or another that eggs were held cage-free or even free-range, started to appear. Most significantly, this was the case of those producers collaborating with the STS through the official STS label, as well as the free-range eggs certified by KAG. But many

other declarations were proper inventions by producers or egg traders. Imagination was running wild. At the beginning of the 1980s, one could find on the market names such as ‘Sunn-Ei’ (sun-egg), ‘Nest-Ei’ (nest egg), Landei (land-egg), Kikeriki, or simply ‘eggs from the farm’<sup>12</sup>. Those names suggested that chicken had somehow more space than in cages. They refer to the outdoors – sun, land, the natural habitat of chickens (nests, or farms), and packaging often made explicit reference to free-range or cage-free production modes. All this suggests that the categories cage-free and free-range gained acceptance and importance on the market. For some producers, they could be valuable.

### ***MORAL STRUGGLES IN POLITICS AND MARKETS: TOWARDS A MORALIZED MARKET CONVENTION***

Two parallel and interconnected struggles characterized the process of market moralization. One is in the political arena, around animal welfare regulation and particularly the ban on cage eggs. Consider, once more, Table 1, this time looking at all the information. It gives an overview of the opposing moralities the two sides put forward and the conventions they were grounded in. Egg producers countered the moral arguments of animal welfare advocates referring to their professional knowledge, science, costs, and the realities (“laws”) of the market. Only a productivity-oriented and rationalized system could ensure Swiss food sovereignty and provide consumers with affordable eggs. For egg producers, the realities of the market would unmistakably demonstrate that consumers’ purchases had nothing to do with morals. Yet the market proved much more malleable than that. Animal welfare advocates put forward ethical principles of animal protection and maintained that economic and political objectives should not be achieved through violating basic standards of animal welfare. They argued that the two could go together and thus did not dismiss market efficiency as an important convention. Instead, they set off to show that it was possible to reconcile efficiency and moral goals, by moralizing the market. Ethical categories became central qualities of eggs. This did not happen over night or spontaneously, but was the result of a process in which moral entrepreneurs played an important role, but also faced resistance from the established egg industry. The marketplace was thus the second battleground, the site of a struggle around (for the egg industry) the appropriateness and (for animal welfare

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<sup>12</sup> The KAG criticized these names and published a list in its newsletter in 1981, from where these examples are taken.

activists) the establishment of new categories of quality and valuation building on ethical criteria.

Politically, moral concerns gradually penetrated agricultural food production, first in the form of general laws, and then of much more precise regulations, themselves limited, however, through long adaptation periods. On the market, ethical categories took hold in the mid-70s with the emergence of cage-free and free-range eggs. The ascendance of cage-free eggs ultimately outpaced the political change. Swiss cage eggs were slowly driven out of the market even before the adaptation period came to an end. But contrary to the egg industry's expectations, this didn't happen to the profit of imported eggs: Swiss eggs actually kept their market share constant over the transition period<sup>13</sup>. Through regulation and moral entrepreneurship, the respect of animal welfare became an increasingly important feature of the new market convention – valued by more and more producers, retailers, and consumers who didn't put grub before ethics.

Eventually, by the early 1990s, even the organizations that had most resisted the changes embraced this feature of the new market convention. They finally acknowledged consumers' moral inclinations and now wanted to take advantage of it. In 1992, the producer organizations launched an action called "The Swiss Egg", with the slogans "for the good of the animal" and "a taste of liberty". Swiss egg producers wanted to thank consumers for buying Swiss eggs and incite them to continue doing so. Through the label, "they want to remind the Swiss population of the animal friendly production of Swiss eggs, so they prefer Swiss eggs and reward Swiss egg producers for their commitment to convert their production facilities in due time to animal friendly husbandry systems" (SGZ 7, July 16 1992). Egg producers even abandoned earlier calls for import bans on cage eggs, because they "had faith in the maturity of consumers" and wanted to draw profit from "the primacy of traceably animal-friendly production" (SGZ 4, April 16 1992). This was a long way from earlier claims that husbandry conditions could not be qualities attached to eggs and that consumers would not be willing to value such eggs through a higher price. Now, it had become the main distinctive characteristic of the Swiss egg, the singularity that distinguished it from its foreign competition. The egg industry's argumentation had made a volte-face, and was now fully part

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<sup>13</sup> At around 63% (SGZ 4, April 16 1992)

of the modified market convention where animal welfare lay at the center of its economic model.

### ***EXPLAINING THE TRANSITION TO A MORAL MARKET CONVENTION***

How can we explain the success of this process of market moralization? Why did the egg producers lose their moral battle and why did animal-friendly eggs become so popular as to hasten the change on markets even before the regulation took hold? Certainly, the moral work done by animal welfare activists was an important factor. This included the information campaigns and, even more importantly, the efforts made to specifically moralize the market, to develop a viable alternative and make it available through labeled products and public campaigns. But this process is only part of the story. We also need to look at the other side and analyze the failure of egg producers to impose their own point of view and succeed with their alternative morality. Often, agricultural interests are very strong and have networks reaching deep inside state administrations, and Switzerland is no exception. Here, it helps to situate egg producers within the broader field of agricultural production of Swiss farming. Their position was actually very peculiar. As mostly highly specialized production units, they differed from most farmers in other production sectors who had more diversified and much less intense and industrialized productions. Indeed, chicken farmers – in their majority egg producers, since poultry meat production was never an important economic sector in Switzerland – were by far the most industrialized sector of Swiss agriculture. The rationalization of egg production, the concentration, specialization, and size of these production unities had no equal in other segments of Swiss agriculture, such as dairy production, cattle or even pork. As such, chicken farmers were outliers within Swiss agriculture – especially those most vocally opposed to the cage ban, the ones organized in the VSGH who were specialized egg farmers.

This weakened the egg industry. They did not enjoy the full support of the “agricultural lobby”, the Swiss farmers association. Their business model made them especially vulnerable to the rising critique of industrialized farming, a critique that was shared, at least in part, by the Swiss farmers association. For many, not least for fellow farmers, they were not real farmers. The controversy around the moral treatment of animals was thus part of a much larger debate around the right way to do farming. Should the goal be an ever more efficient, industrialized type of farming, which would mean concentration, bigger and more productive

farms? This is what Swiss agricultural policy supported in the postwar years, with subsidies depending on farm sizes. But this model was increasingly criticized, building on different points of view: not only an animal rights perspective, but also an environmental perspective and what could be called a conservative perspective, favoring traditional small-scale farms rather than the development of a concentrated agro-business. Egg producers found themselves in an uneasy position within this fight. They came to represent the business side of agriculture, a role they struggled with and refused to identify with. But the egg producers' position was contradictory: They were proud of their efficient and specialized production units that allowed them to compete on "free" markets. Yet they strived to be perceived as family farmers, as your typical and traditional farmer who is close to his animals and struggles to make ends meet. Yet they ridiculed the "egg nostalgia" of animal welfare activists, who thought hens wanted to go back to picking corns on open fields and "renounce well-balanced food in sufficient quantity, a secure and hygienically immaculate house with sufficient protection from foxes and other animal" (SGZ 13, August 22 1974). They embraced efficiency, but they did not want to be called factory farmers either. Not size should determine whether a farm is a factory farm, but the relationship between a farmer and his animals (SGZ 6, March 16 1978).

Appearing as family farmers rather than factory farmers was thus a strategic identity in the moral struggles around cage bans. But this strategic identity was contested not only by the industry's main opponents, the animal welfare activists. It came also under increased critique by members of their own trade. Not all farmers identified with the quest for rationalization, and many reproached egg producers of not being real farmers. Already in 1974, the pages of the poultry journal complained about "incomprehensible and misplaced friendly fire from our own side" when the agricultural press agency published an article highly critical of factory farms attacking in particular poultry farmers (SGZ 8, June 13 1974). Letters from individual poultry farmers published in the journal repeatedly criticized the intensification and rationalization process guiding the egg industry.

These internal conflicts clearly show that in reality, neither the farmers at large nor the smaller group of poultry farmers were unified categories. Farmers were divided by different production sectors and also between large-scale and small-scale farmers. This distinction also characterized the egg industry, where a high number of small producers, supplying the protected market for "system eggs" with herds of often much less than 2000 hens, was facing

a much smaller number of big, specialized producers mostly selling directly to traders and retailers on the so-called gray market. It was the latter who were the most vociferously opposed to cage bans. They had a strong and combative professional identity, having managed to develop a successful business model at the margins of the regulated agricultural sector. Inside the circles of the egg industry, they were called “the wild ones”, referring to their maverick status (Interview with representative of egg industry). But now they were the ones who had the most to lose from a system change, because transitioning for them was the most costly. And they were the ones most frequently singled out, since they corresponded to the image of factory farmers, whereas smaller producers resembled more the image of traditional farmers (although both groups used cages). They were therefore criticized not only by animal welfare activists, but also by other farmers who thought that they were not really farmers anymore.

In the end, this division, along with the announced structural changes in agricultural policy away from a strategy of promoting size, specialization and concentration towards rewarding differentiation and small-scale farms, helped establish cage-free eggs on markets. For smaller producers, transitioning to cage-free systems was much less costly. Selling cage-free eggs could be a business opportunity for them, especially in the early stages. The producers participating in the Annabelle campaign and then searching certification from the STS were such small-scale poultry farmers who could quite easily transition. In addition, with its goal of production diversification, a new federal policy subsidized so-called replenishment productions, which further favored the rapid development of cage-free systems. Many of the producers advertising cage-free eggs were thus new on the market; they had never had cages and directly started with cage-free production facilities. Together with egg traders and the egg distribution cooperative, coop builders approached small farmers, inciting them to build cage-free systems and supply a market that was demanding more and more of them. In sum, this meant that the quite rapid transition to cage-free systems was also favored by a division within the poultry industry and new policies advantaging small-scale producers. The powerful big egg producers were on the losing side of a much broader shift that was under way. The moral struggle they were involved in did not just concern the question of animal welfare, but more generally the orientation of Swiss agriculture. The controversy on the ban on chicken cages and the change from one market convention to the other unfolded on the background of a paradigm shift in agricultural policy, from a productivist paradigm towards one of diversification, ecology, and animal welfare.



## *CONCLUSION*

Moral considerations are incorporated into markets in many different ways. This paper has offered an analysis of the process of market moralization through a case study of animal welfare in the Swiss market for eggs. It conceptualizes market moralization as an active and interactive process of moral battles, where moral entrepreneurs – often social movement-like actors – bring moral grievances to market actors, who in turn defend existing market conventions by developing and rendering explicit alternative moralities. Through the case study, I have shown how such battles take place both in the political arena and directly in the market place. The case further demonstrates the role of social movement actors in market moralization processes. In particular, it shows that movements' actions in markets – through consumer information and awareness-raising, market tests, developing of moral market alternatives and their marketization, drive the moralization of markets. On the flip side, the case demonstrates how producers in turn insist on the beneficial and moral character of their actions and resist characterizations by moral entrepreneurs. Putting the struggles into their socio-political context, I finally show how market moralization was part of larger struggles around agricultural policy objectives and how the success of this process were also dependent on the egg industry's divisions.

The study contributes to our understanding of market moralization and moral valuation of goods. First, most existing studies on morals and markets are interested in the moving frontiers of markets, not in the moralization of specific markets. In addition, as a largely undifferentiated product of everyday consumption, eggs are a particularly interesting case to study market moralization and valuation struggles. These issues have often been addressed in the context of highly controversial goods, such as organs (Healy 2006) or nature (Fourcade 2011), or status goods where valuation is seemingly more problematic, such as art (Velthuis 2005). Yet this case can show that ethical questions can also concern markets for standardized products that appear, at first sight, as rather banal. Indeed, for such standardized products, moral categories may often turn out to be a highly profitable way of product differentiation and valuation. But this requires a process of market moralization. Second, while an increasing number of studies show the role of movements in the rise of moral markets (Balsiger 2014b; McInerney 2014; Weber, Heinze and Michaela 2008), too few of them convey the resistance these moral entrepreneurs provoke from the part of dominant market actors. Third, the study shows how such processes evolve as moral struggles on values and valuation in markets, but

also how these struggles are a part of specific socio-political contexts. It thus reveals the political dynamics in which market moralization takes place and shows how market valuation is also a political question, stepping towards a 'political sociology' of processes of valuation (Beckert and Aspers 2011), which puts markets into their socio-historic and political context. Finally, by studying the role of social movements in market moralization, the study takes up and extends Boltanski and Chiapello's (2007) ideas on capitalist dynamics and justifications. It shows how moral questions can become integrated into markets, but departing from their approach, it is more attentive to the contentious dynamics and broader contexts of changing market conventions, as well as on the specific tactics and techniques that lead to such changes.

The study analyzes a successful example of market moralization; while it addresses thus an important dynamic characterizing capitalist development over the past few decades, this is also a limitation. Perhaps a case study on a failed attempt by moral entrepreneurs to moralize a market – or a comparison with such a case – could help better understand how dominant market actors can resist market moralization. Future research on market moralization and moral valuation might be well advised to turn to such negative cases. The study' is also limited because it concerns a specific case in a specific time period. Nonetheless, the theoretical perspective developed here can be useful to understand processes of market moralization in general. Obviously, the debates on morals in markets, the clash and combination of social values and market values is not restricted to the Swiss case of cage systems in the egg industry. Similar fights take place all over Western countries in markets for many different products. In the USA, a fight around battery cages for egg production is on the way at this very moment. The people of California accepted a ballot measure in 2008 effectively banning battery cage systems, and the law took effect on January 1 2015 (Bittman 2015). The arguments of the egg industry were remarkably similar to the ones put forward in Switzerland 40 years ago (Promar International 2009; United Egg Producers undated). The egg industry questioned the animal welfare benefits of alternative barn systems, defended its professional knowledge on animal welfare and brought in scientific experts to compare and evaluate animal welfare. In addition, they raised economic arguments about rising prices for eggs, consequences for consumers, and the danger of driving egg production out of the US to

countries where control is impossible.<sup>14</sup> In sum, just as in the Swiss case, the development of alternative moralities and the opposing of economic and social values is crucial here, too.

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<sup>14</sup> Contrary to what happened in Switzerland, the governor of California decided to apply the new regulation also to eggs coming from other states.

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*PICTURES, TABLES, FIGURES*



Picture 1: The battery cage described as exemplary by Swiss egg industry in 1972 (SGZ [Geflügel und Kleinvieh] 3, February 10, 1972)

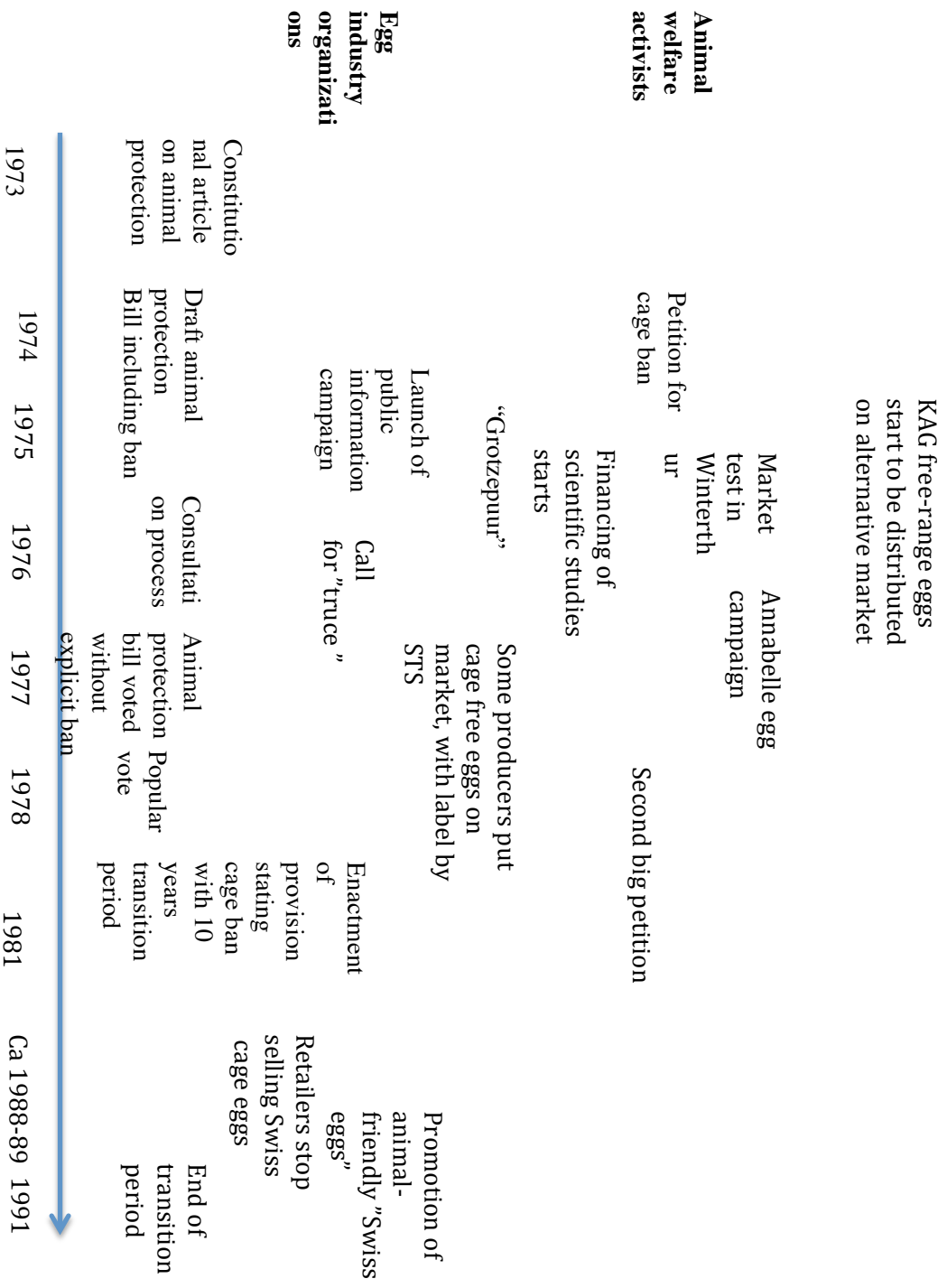


Figure 1: Timeline of main events



<b>Animal welfare activists</b>	<b>Egg industry</b>
Battery cages constitute animal cruelty and therefore should be banned	Battery cages do not constitute animal cruelty and therefore should not be banned
<i>Emotional reaction</i>	<i>Professional knowledge and ethics</i>
<i>Grounded in science</i>	<i>Grounded in science</i>
Food should not be produced at the expense of animal welfare. Small-scale and sustainable forms of production should be promoted	The costs of alternative systems endanger Swiss economy, food sovereignty, farmers' livelihood.
<i>Alternative principles of food politics</i>	<i>Food politics paradigm of productivity and industrialization</i>
Productivity and efficiency are compatible with animal friendly production systems	Existing production system alone can provide Swiss consumers with affordable eggs
<i>"Laws of the market"</i>	<i>"Laws of the market"</i>
Consumers are morally inclined if they are sufficiently informed	Consumers are not morally inclined and prefer cheap eggs
<i>"Moralized markets"</i>	<i>"Laws of the market"</i>

Table 1: Opposing moralities and conventions they refer to