

HealthyGrowth

From niche to volume with integrity and trust

FULL CASE STUDY REPORT

The Danish Food Communities



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Most local organic market chains have inherent problems in moving from niche to volume, and mainstream large-scale market chains have inherent difficulties in securing and advancing organic values. The project “Healthy Growth: from niche to volume with integrity and trust” investigated a range of successful mid-scale organic value chains in order to learn how they are able to combine volume and values, and to use this knowledge to support the further development of organic businesses, networks and initiatives. Research teams from ten European countries contributed with 20 case studies. More information and documentation can be found at: www.healthygrowth.eu

1 Introduction



Københavns Fødevarefællesskab (The Food Community of Copenhagen) - <http://kbhff.dk/english/>



Aarhus Fødevarefællesskab (The Food Community of Aarhus) - <http://www.aoff.dk/>

The Food Communities was chosen as a case for HealthyGrowth because they constitute a major novelty within the Danish foodscape. As indicated in section 3, the Food Communities have emerged as the latest incarnation of a series of attempts to forge alternative food networks operating beyond the supermarket system. Denmark is distinguished by a large market share of organic food being sold via supermarkets, but The Food Communities are a novelty due to two factors, (1) they have experienced a rapid growth since the outset in 2010, and (2) they are organised in a decentralised manner, where they continue to split up the network in chapters, each operating within their distinct local area. This can be described as a matter of 'upscaling by multiplication'. The Food Communities are a predominantly urban phenomenon, as the farmers are not formal members of the organization.

2 Case-study approach: materials and methods

The main empirical cases in our inquiry is the Danish food communities in Copenhagen and Aarhus. The Food Communities of Copenhagen consists of 11 neighbourhood-specific communities, each of which functions as a separate association, even though they are based on a common set of principles (KBHFF 2014a). In addition, 7 new food communities are in development in the Copenhagen area. The Food Community of Aarhus is one association, and has not yet branched out into separate chapters (AAFF 2014). There are now 17 Food Communities across Denmark (DKFF 2014). The two food communities in have been studied using semi-structured qualitative interviews, supplemented with analysis of available written sources, including websites. Until now, 9 respondents have been interviewed. Each interview lasted for approximately 2 hours. The respondents were selected using snowball sampling. Furthermore, content analysis was applied in relation to public documents and websites (Krippendorff 2004).

Table 1: The documents used as information sources

	Data type	Document reference	Short description of content
Home page	Webpage	http://aoff.dk/ , http://kbhff.dk/ , http://døff.dk/	The webpages of the Food Communities of the Aarhus and Copenhagen chapters were used, and the common portal of all Danish Food Communities
Student essays/research reports	-		
Newspaper articles		Derived via Google search, and Infomedia (university library database of media documents)	Some press clips were used in the initial phase
Commercials	-		
Magazines	-		
Leaflets	-		
Legal documents (e.g. founding)	Written documentation	Supplied by the Copenhagen Food Community, and via http://kbhff.dk	Templates regarding organizational matters, supplied by the Copenhagen chapter, were used
Contracts with suppliers/customers/members	-	As stated during the interviews	Only oral agreements are used
Internal strategy papers	-	http://aoff.dk/ , http://kbhff.dk/ , http://døff.dk/ and other websites of local food communities	Internal strategy are only documented in minutes of general assemblies, available via the websites
Minutes of internal communication/meetings	Audio recording	Anonymously referenced	Decisions at meetings were elaborated on during interviews
Internal newsletters	-		
Quality assurance documents	-		
List of	-	As stated during	Only oral agreements,

suppliers/customers/members		the interviews	no formal supplier lists available
Financial accounting	-		Financial accounts are reported to the general assembly
Other (specify) annual reports, official registers, social media, training programs	Social media (Wordpress, Wiki, Facebook)	Derived via links supplied at http://aoff.dk/ , http://kbhff.dk/ , http://døff.dk/	The Copenhagen chapter supplies the other FCs with material from a Wiki; Facebook forms the main interface with members; Wordpress is used as blogging tool for other mediation

Table 2: Interviews and interviewees

Interviews		Date	Duration, hours			Remarks
			I-1	I-2	I-3	
<i>Participants</i>	<i>Role</i>					
FF01	Chair, FC Aarhus			x		See reference list (FF01 2012)
FF02	Activist, FC Aarhus			x		See reference list (FF02 2012)
FF03	ViceChair, FC Aarhus			x		See reference list (FF03 2012)
FF04	Producer, FC Aarhus			x		See reference list (FF04 2012)
FF05	Activist, FC Copenhagen			x		See reference list (FF05 2012)
FF06	Producer, FC Copenhagen			x		See reference list (FF06 2012)
FF07	Producer, FC Copenhagen			x		See reference list (FF07 2012)
FF08	Activist, FC Copenhagen			x		See reference list (FF08 2012)
FF09	Activist, FC Copenhagen			x		See reference list (FF09 2012)

3. Overview of the case

Denmark is distinguished by a highly modernized food and agricultural sector. Historical studies of the development of the Danish food system has emphasized that already from the late 1880's, a significant focus on 'efficient' and export-oriented farming emerged within Danish agriculture (Henriksen et al. 2012; Ingemann 1999,2002,2006). As Denmark had few other natural resources but agricultural land, urban industrialization had some disadvantages in terms of readily available natural resources. Thus the advancement of agricultural modernization became an important objective for the Danish state, and the government played an active role in the modernization process. State funding of both research institutions and agricultural extension service created close links between state, agricultural and veterinary science and food systems development. The result was a food sector distinguished by highly efficient farms, farmer-

controlled cooperative processing firms and farmer-owned extension services. In terms of product quality, the development of industrial quality standards such as Danish Bacon and Lurpak Butter has been a historical stronghold of Danish agriculture. These development trajectories have had a significant impact on the relation between 'alternative' and 'mainstream' in the Danish food sector. As several studies of the development of the Danish organic food sector has demonstrated, organic farming was included in the 'mainstream' food sector at a relatively early stage of its development (Kjeldsen & Ingemann 2009,2010; Michelsen 2001). Specifically, the Danish government created an organic labelling scheme in 1987, at a point where organic market shares were marginal. The introduction of the government-approved organic label facilitated the entry of organic products into the established retail system. One of the indicators of the level of professionalization within the organic sector is that the average farm size within the Danish organic dairy sector is bigger than within their conventional colleagues (Dalgaard et al. 2008). With the organic sector being included in the 'mainstream' food sector, there is a relatively minor 'alternative' food sector in Denmark. There is not much systematic data available on consumption of food outside Danish retail chains, but several recent estimates state that approximately 10-12 percent of the food market in Denmark takes place outside the established retail sector (DST 2007; Kjeldsen 2005; ØL 2009). Food networks operating outside the 'mainstream' include many different types of networks. Examples include regional box schemes, national level box schemes, specialty shops as well as ecological communities, consumer purchasing groups and others. These examples exhibit a diverse array of 'taskscape' (Ingold 2000), different fields which are distinguished by different actors, practices, rationalities and ideologies. Even though these alternative food networks only constitute a minor part of the food market, they might be very important as examples of social innovation within the Danish foodscape, since they have helped forging new quality conventions within the field of organic production and consumption.

The scale of Danish food networks operating outside the established retail sector is relatively minor. Still, some of the most significant developments, in terms of social innovation, have taken place outside the mainstream. During the 1990s, fueled by the emerging interest for organic food among Danish consumers, several attempts had been made to create alternative sector organisations like independent dairies and slaughteries. Many of these projects failed, and by the late 1990s most of the 'alternative' food market took place within established retail chains or via localized systems of provision, such as box schemes or direct selling. From the year 2000 and onwards, several new innovative approaches could be observed on the Danish 'foodscape' (Kjeldsen & Ingemann 2009). One of the important projects was the web-based box scheme Aarstiderne.com (aarstiderne.com 2003). The enterprise started out as a local box scheme, supplying 100 local families with fresh vegetables. This business setup proved relatively unsuccessful in economic terms, but also in terms of a heavy workload on behalf of the producers. The owners of the enterprise then decided to transform their business into a national-level box scheme, capable of supplying virtually all Danish households, but with the market stronghold being the Danish capitol of Copenhagen (AA01_direktør 2002). More than 10 years later, Aarstiderne.com delivers 35.000 boxes with fresh organic fruit and vegetables every week to consumers all over Denmark. As mentioned above, the main part of the market is within the greater Copenhagen area. The enterprise is one of the few examples of the successful transformation from being a local-level box scheme into becoming a highly professionalized e-business operating on national level. Other important initiatives taking place from the year 2000 and onward, was the creation of the first Danish CSA Landbrugslauget. Landbrugslauget was a consumer-owned cooperative farm, managed by skilled farmers, who also had shares in the cooperative. The CSA was, like many similar initiatives in North America, based on the direct involvement of urban consumers, both in terms of ownership but also in terms of doing field work. These projects paved new paths across the Danish foodscape. Aarstiderne was the first Danish food network to utilize web-based means of consumption on a national scale, and Landbrugslauget was the first farm in Danish history which was owned by a group of consumers (the cooperative had 500 members, including 3 farmer members). These developments forms

the background context, from within which the food communities emerge. The Danish food communities have experienced a rapid growth since the organization emerged in 2009, and in terms of the number of members (more than 3000 members in 2012), they have grown far beyond the scale of any of the former community-based initiatives mentioned above.

3.1 Presentation and trajectory

The Danish food communities¹ are food networks, which emerged for the first time in late 2009 in the Danish capital Copenhagen. The first food community was started by a group of concerned customers, who wanted to establish a direct link to regional producers of organic food. More specifically, organic vegetables were chosen as the main product (meat and other products such as dairy products are yet to emerge in the food communities). From the outset, the consumers organized the food community as a

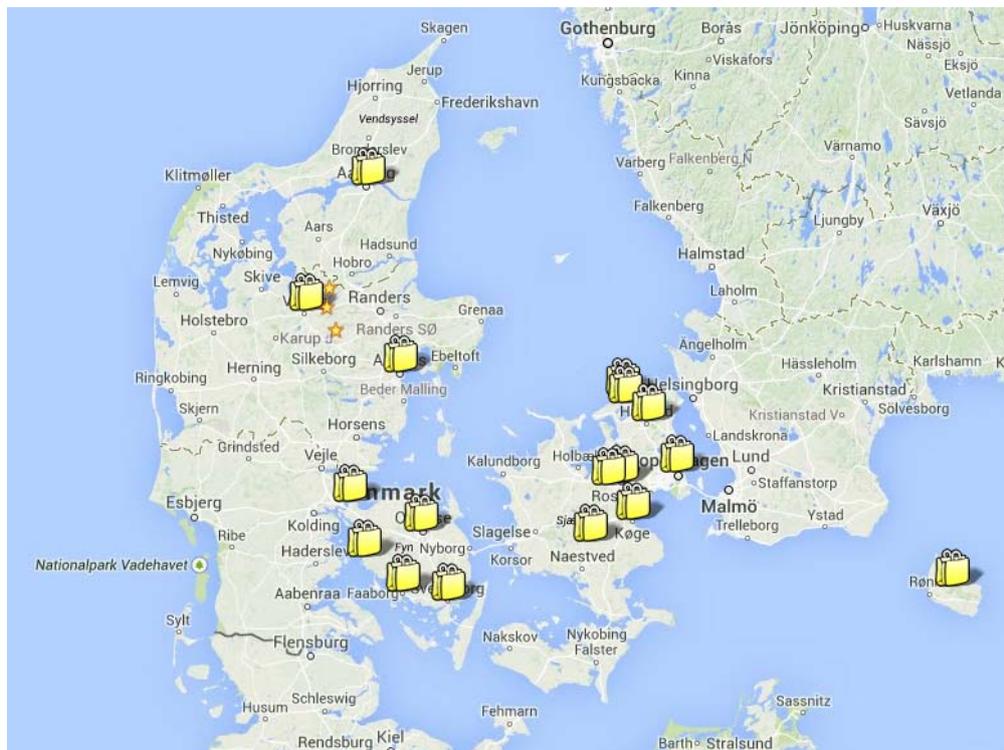


Figure 1: Overview of Danish Food Communities (DKFF 2014)

cooperative association, where the highest authority is the annual general assembly. The first association was formed in Copenhagen in late 2009, and after the initial general assembly, the food community activists started the search for producers interested in supplying the food communities on a weekly basis.

From a modest start in Copenhagen, the movement has spread to several major as well as medium-sized cities of Denmark, including the second-largest city of Aarhus where a Food Community was initiated in 2010. The food communities in Copenhagen now count more than 3.000 members, organized in local networks within 9 different neighborhoods of Copenhagen. The food community of Aarhus counts 300 members today. The network started one and a half year later than the one in Copenhagen and is not yet differentiated between neighborhoods within the city. The food community in Aarhus received significant assistance from the activists in Copenhagen, when starting up their own network. The basic organization of the food communities is that they (as a group) source fresh vegetables from regional farmers. The

¹ See common website for the Danish Food Communities at <http://døff.dk/>

regional farmers² delivers their produce once a week to a distribution central in the city, operated by the consumer-activists. It is then the responsibility of the consumer-activists to pack the vegetables in boxes which are picked up on the distribution central by each individual member. In that manner, the food communities seek to meet one of their main objectives, to provide affordable, fresh and organically as well as locally grown vegetables. The Danish food communities are based on a set of common principles³. The principles, the 'ten commandments of the food community' (*our term*), state that:

- (1) Food should be grown and produced in organic quality
- (2) Food shall be as local as practically feasible
- (3) Food supply shall mirror seasonal variation
- (4) Trade should be fair and direct
- (5) Production and consumption shall be environmentally friendly
- (6) The food communities shall raise awareness about food and organics
- (7) The food communities should be economically sustainable and independent
- (8) The food chain should be transparent and trust-building
- (9) Food should be widely accessible and affordable
- (10) The food communities should be powered by local, collaborative communities

Table 3: Overview of development of the Danish Food Communities

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Estimated total members	15	30	500	2000	3500	4000	4500
Estimated turnover, in Euro	9.664	19.329	322.148	1.288.591	2.255.034	1.932.886	2.899.329
<i>Associations active:</i>							
Copenhagen	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hillerød						X	X
Ramløse						X	X
Tisvilde					X	X	X
Roskilde						X	X
Lejre					X	X	X
Tybjerg						X	
Odense				X	X	X	X
Svendborg						X	X
Fåborg						X	X
Assens							X
Middelfart							X
Aarhus			X	X	X	X	X
Aalborg						X	X
Viborg						X	X
Bornholm				X	X	X	X

² The farmers supplying the food communities are typically placed in the urban periphery, even there are examples of the Food Communities of Copenhagen sourcing from specialized producers on the island of Funen, in the central part of Denmark.

³ See <http://kbhff.dk/om-kbhff/10-grundprincipper/>

The food communities have established distribution centres, shops, in Aarhus and Copenhagen, where the farms deliver their produce each week. Each member of the food community takes turns in the shop packing the vegetables in boxes. The operation of the shops is coordinated by the individual neighborhood groups. So far, only Copenhagen is divided into such groups. Apart from the local groups, the food communities are differentiated functionally in the shape of working groups, which manage different aspects of the operation of the network. Examples of working groups include retail, communication, finance, events and many other categories. The activists in the working groups are recruited among the food community members.



Figure 2: A family picking up their weekly supply of vegetables at a Food Community distribution centre in Copenhagen



Figure 3: A group of activists from the Copenhagen Food Community, Vesterbro, picking apples at the Danish island Fejø, autumn 2013



Figure 4: Vegetables arriving at a Food Community distribution centre in Copenhagen



Figure 5: Activists packing vegetables at a distribution centre of the Food Communities of Copenhagen

3.2 Basic facts

The Food Communities seek to apply a domestic fair trade principle in their business model, which in practice means that they aim to pay farmers a fixed price premium which is linked to a reference price list from a major Danish organic wholesaler, Solhjulet. In that way, the Food Communities make sure that the farmers are paid a rate which is apprx. 25% above the market price for organic products. The price list from Solhjulet spans a wide range of organic products being sourced for the Danish food market. Price variations follow in principle the market price, but the premium is maintained. However, some changes does take place. As something new, the activists from the Food Communities in Copenhagen met with the producers in late 2012 to discuss whether the prices should be adjusted (FF08 2012). Several models for price formation were discussed, including the possibility of long-term agreements which were supposed to extend collaboration beyond short time spans, but the meeting did not reach a clear conclusion, and so far the existing pricing model is still applied. Regarding the range of products, it has so far not included other products than seasonal vegetables. The activists did report some inquiries regarding the possible introduction of meat or dairy products, but so far the Food Communities only source vegetables. The range of vegetables offered differs between the individual food communities, as each chapter might have individual arrangements with producers. The regional producers near Copenhagen, which were interviewed, did supply several of the Copenhagen Food Communities. Given the decentralized organization of the food communities, it is difficult to offer an exact measure of how many farms are involved, as it would involve distributing a survey among every chapter of the Danish food communities, thus exceeding the scope of our case study. Judging from the number of members of the Food Communities, the organization has not yet reached a scale where a significant effect on patterns of peri-urban land use can be observed.



Figure 6: Activists from the Food Community in Aarhus visiting their supplier, farmer Svend Rasmussen in 2011



Figure 7: Vegetables ready to be picked up at a Food Community distribution centre in Copenhagen

3.3 Stakeholder network

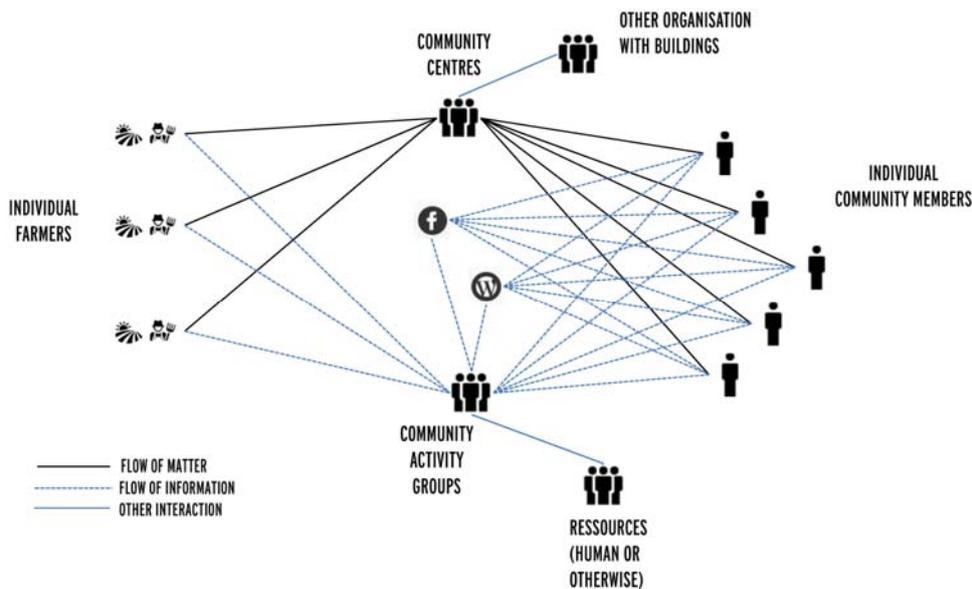


Figure 8: Basic structure of the food communities – organizational template for food community chapter

The Food Communities are a network of separate independent organisations, all of which are organised as a cooperative association. Each of the food communities share a basic model of organisation, as shown in figure 1. The stakeholders in the food communities are individual consumers, activity groups and farmers. The farmers are not members of the community and are recruited on a week-to-week basis, even though most of the current producers have maintained links with the food communities over several growing seasons. In terms of physical space, the food communities are dependent upon having access to physical space, where they can pack the products delivered by the farmers. This necessitates the establishment of partnerships with already established institutions, which own buildings. The startup kit for new food communities, which are offered by the Copenhagen Food Community (KBHFF 2014b), mentions institutions like schools, churches, elderly homes, scout organisations or public kitchens as relevant institutions to consider to approach. Both for starting up new food communities or maintaining existing food communities, the activists interviewed were very proficient in mobilising resources throughout their personal networks. The resources which have been mobilised in that regard, include skills from various fields such as carpenting, web design, photography, and more.

4. Analytical perspectives

This section is partly organised after a range of analytical perspectives which have been developed throughout the project, and which supply a range of perspectives on the cases selected for a closer study.

4.1 Organisation and governance

Analytical question 4.1.1:

What are the main values put forehead by the different stakeholders of the organization (or network), the differences and controversies over these values and the possible adjustments over time?

The individual Food Communities (in Copenhagen the Food Communities consists of different associations, placed in different suburbs and parts of the inner city) are governed by their annual general assemblies, and have a large degree of autonomy in choosing which parts of the overall values they may wish to emphasize. Therefore, some variation regarding how the “ten commandments” of the Danish Food Communities are prioritized can be expected (see section 3.1). However, values such as accessibility and affordability were frequently mentioned among the interview respondents. Even though organic food is a mainstream commodity in Denmark, being able to offer economically accessible, fresh, seasonal organic vegetables appeared to be a major priority to the Food Communities studied. As an example, the food communities are able to offer weekly boxes of vegetables to prices which are considerably lower than the prices offered by the major Danish web-based box scheme Aarstiderne⁴.

Analytical question 4.1.3:

What kind of agreements and arrangements (both formal and informal) were established in order to secure long term strategic cooperation along the value chain and to secure proximity and trust? How were they adjusted over time?

The Food Communities recruit producers relative to their past knowledge or personal connections. In some cases the choice of producers were narrowed down to being a question of finding farms of required diversity and scale, which could match the needs of the consumer activists. Some of the activists in Aarhus described this process as a matter of “finding someone suitable on the yellow pages”, meaning that selection in their case was perceived as being more or less random. The activists in Copenhagen had more established, but still informal, contacts to regional producers. These informal contacts have been established through different mechanisms. One mechanism is personal interaction between regional producers and regional consumers. An important driver for this interaction could be that the organic market of Greater Copenhagen is a very ‘mature’ market with relatively high market shares and a broad product range. Some of the producers are thus already known by the consumers, as the producers have a prolonged history of supplying other distribution channels throughout the Greater Copenhagen area.

Regarding cooperation along the value chain, the fact that farmers are not members of the organization poses some limitations to establishing long-term strategic cooperation. The meeting between farmers and members in Copenhagen in late 2013, where different alternative models of cooperation were discussed is an example of how the Food Communities have sought to establish a more long-term relationship with the farmers. Still, the meeting did not result in a reorientation of how farmers are embedded within the Food Communities. What concerns cooperation between members, the Food Communities rely to a great deal on the capabilities of social media with regards to facilitating cooperation. One of the examples of this is found in the rapid rate at which the Food Communities are able to recruit new members for new associations. In the case of Aarhus, it took only a few weeks of rallying via Facebook to mobilize the required members for the Aarhus Food Community (FF01 2012; FF03 2012). In earlier community-based projects such as Landbrugslauget (Kjeldsen 2005; Unger 2002,2003) the recruiting of new members were more complicated, as the project was embedded within radical left-wing community, which were physically sited within a distinct neighbourhood of Central Copenhagen. This project had to rely on word-of-mouth or printed media, which is a considerably slower method of reaching out to potential members.

Analytical questions 4.1.4:

How is the overall influence of public policies on the initiative and its values seen? (e.g. changes in the EU organic regulation might have had some impact) What relationships and alliances did the

⁴ A comparison of prices between box schemes are in principle very difficult to make, as the product range as well as a lot of other factors differ between different box schemes. In the specific case of price differences between Aarstiderne and The Food Communities, a rough estimate of price differences could be appr. 30% difference (with the Food Communities being the cheapest).

organization establish (at the beginning, and along its trajectory) with the civil society, either locally (local CSOs) or at the wider (national/international) scale, e.g. organic organizations? And how did it influence the way values were discussed and maintained?

There is only an indirect influence, in so far that regulation and policies might influence organic standards. However, the Food Communities are not necessarily influenced by developments, as they have the possibility of making direct agreements with farmers. Still, the active involvement of the Danish government in the field of organics has some importance for the dynamics going on within the Food Communities. In a recently accepted paper based on a case study of the Food Communities (Thorsøe & Kjeldsen 2015) we argue, that the high level of credibility of the government-approved organic label is mutually constitutive to the high levels of trust between consumers and producers in the Food Communities. To illustrate this, most of the members interviewed emphasized that it was of utmost importance that the products were certified organic. In an analytical perspective, we thus concluded that high levels of personalized trust directed towards the farmers should not be seen in isolation from the systemic trust directed towards the organic label. Without high levels of trust within one domain, high levels of trust in the other domain would not be possible.

The Food Communities are in themselves a sort of NGO organisation, but with no extensive 'upscale' links. Some of the activists (especially in the case of the Aarhus chapter) have some connections within the organic movement, but there are no formal linkages with the established organic NGOs, such as the national association for organic agriculture. Their main links, as indicated by the interviews, is to similar (grass-root driven, community scale) initiatives. One example is the urban gardening project Himmelhaven in Aarhus, with whom the Aarhus chapter shares experiences and ideas, as well as activists who have been active in both associations. Another example is from North-west Copenhagen, where the local FC chapter were allowed to use workshop space at Ungdomshuset at Dortheavej, which is a workshop area for the autonomous movement. That particular association would continue until the two parties entered a disagreement. The issue emerged when the local food community started sourcing fresh spice herbs from Danish prisons (produced by inmates in the prison), which the autonomous activists strongly dissented. As a result, the FC chapter was banned from Ungdomshuset and had to find new space for packaging their weekly baskets.

4.2 Business and management logics: the process behind ensuring economic performance and efficiency in mid-scale food value chains

4.2.1.1 What is the legal form of the business(es)/initiative (ltd, coop, assoc., trust?)

The Food Communities is a network of associations, each of them having very little physical infrastructure, as their distribution centres tend to be rented spaces. They are cooperatively organised, and in terms of legal structure, each of the associations forming the overall Danish Food Communities are organized as separate associations. Each of them has separate economy, even though some of them share workshop space. One example is that the Copenhagen chapters use common distribution centres, thus making it more feasible for the farmers to deliver their produce.

4.2.1.2 Does total sales revenue cover all (monetary) costs?

The Food Communities are in practical terms a non-profit enterprise. If costs rise, the weekly price paid by the consumer will be adjusted.

4.2.1.4 Is a written strategy of the business/initiative/chain available?

Only in the shape of the overall mission statement, see section 3.1

4.2.1.5 What is the core sentence/motto/philosophy? (please quote)

See 4.2.1.4

4.2.1.7 How important are transparency, communication, fairness, trust, responsibilities, contracts/formal agreements and participation for the internal organisation of businesses/initiatives ?

As the Food Communities are based on volunteer work, there is no formal board, and all members are putting work into upholding the communities, and the board is only elected for 2 years, in a shifting rotation. The principles of the Food Communities, and in particular the 10th 'commandment' regarding the role of the local community, has a significant impact of the level of functional differentiation within the Food Communities. When all members of the board are elected, it can be expected that the board might not be specialists within the field of management and organization. This also applies for members signing up for voluntary work in the various activity groups. Few of the members interviewed had any specialized expertise within the field of food and farming. Several of the respondents expressed during the interviews that they did not feel confident about discussing issues of food quality with the farmers due to their (self-perceived) lack of expertise.

There is a high level of accountability in terms of how the activists' work is being valued among the other members. Several of the activists expressed their concern about using social media such as Facebook in a dynamic and forthcoming way. Specifically, that involves doing frequent updates of the Facebook group, through which they communicate with the other activists.

4.2.1.8 How did the management of the farms, business(es) or initiative change during the growth process or in challenging periods (organisation of internal decision making processes, definition of core strategies, selection and application of business strategies/instruments)?

The farmers are not formally a part of the network, but are recruited on an ad-hoc basis. Deliveries are agreed upon through oral agreements, and they don't work out written contracts and state formal quality criteria, apart from the basic requirement that the food should be produced according to organic standards (certified or not, even though all of the produces interviewed were certified organic producers).

4.2.1.14 Is there a price premium paid to primary producers? Alternative question: Are product prices paid within the values-based chain higher than common or officially published market prices for the product in the country/region?

Yes, see section 3.2.3

4.2.1.15 How are margins handled? (split up equally?). Alternative question: If the products are sold as premium products realising consumer prices which are higher than average market prices: Do all chain members profit from the "over-average" product prices or will selected chain members profit mainly from the premium price? Is "Fairness" between chain members an issue for chain partners? If yes, what happened in periods of crises?

See section 3.2.3

4.2.1.16 Which actors are considered strategic partners from the perspective of the chain members?

The farmers/producers are seen as strategic partners. One example of how they seek to integrate farmers, is the meeting between members and producers in the Copenhagen FC (mentioned in section 3.2.3). At this meeting, the perspective of entering a long-term strategic partnership was discussed. However, they did not reach a conclusion to these discussions. The Food Community in Aarhus do acknowledge that they do not establish long-term, reciprocal relations with the producers, but they still try to focus on the individual producer in the 'branding' process taking place on their website. A specific example is that they describe the motivation of the producer for growing organic on the website, and try to present the producer as an individual. Still, the overall conclusion on our behalf is that there is an intention on the long term for farmers to become strategic partners, but the present organization of the Food Communities does not facilitate that. Today, what constitutes 'strategic' behaviour is contingent on the distinct Food Community in question, and how they wish to evolve in the long term.

4.2.1.17 How dependant/independent is each business partners from the down/upstream business partner?(Dependency risk)

The farmers expressed during the interviews, that a core strategic concern on their behalf was to ensure a suitable diversity with regards to distribution, as they had no interest in being dependent on just one distribution network, such as the Food Communities (FF04 2012; FF07 2012). This seems to indicate that the producers value their individual autonomy as farmers quite a lot. Furthermore, they did not express any wish to be more closely integrated with the Food Communities, even though this had been expressed. Another aspect is that the farmers had other distribution channels such as restaurants, which had quite specific demands in terms of product quality. In that context, being able to sell minor volumes of products to the Food Communities, which might otherwise fall outside the requirements of such discerned customers such as restaurants, did make good sense for the farmers. In order to achieve this level of flexibility, the farmers have no obvious good reason to become more closely integrated with the Food Communities.

4.2.1.19 Can you identify an overarching business logic that links business goals, strategies and instruments internally in the core businesses/initiatives and/or within the values-based chain? (yes/no; explanation)

Yes: the logic of supplying affordable, seasonal organic food (vegetables).

Annex 1 List of (potential) business objectives/goals	Ranking 1= high priority objective... 2, 3, 4, 5= little importance
Profitability: Maintaining profitability means making sure that revenue stays ahead of the costs of doing business; Focus on controlling costs in both production and operations while maintaining the profit margin on products sold.	3
Employee retention: Employee turnover costs always money in lost productivity and the costs associated with recruiting, which include employment advertising and paying placement agencies. Maintaining a productive and positive employee environment improves retention.	5

<p>Growth: Growth is planned based on historical data and future projections. Growth requires the careful use of company resources such as finances and personnel.</p>	2
<p>Maintain a solid financial base: Even a company with good cash flow needs financing contacts in the event that capital is needed e.g. to expand the organisation. Maintaining the ability to finance operations means that the management team can prepare for long-term projects and address short-term needs such as payroll and accounts payable.</p>	5
<p>Altruistic objectives: Apart from the mentioned above objectives, businesses or initiatives might have altruistic objectives which are to achieve when the economic viability is ensured. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Ensuring (family/peasant/small) farmers' existence <input type="radio"/> Contribution to income and employment in the region (strengthening the rural economy) <input type="radio"/> Protection of the natural environment (water, soil, ecosystems, landscape, climate) <input type="radio"/> Animal welfare <input type="radio"/> Realising the "organic idea" <input type="radio"/> Social care 	1
<p>Annex 2 List of (possible) business/management strategies (please tick/check relevant boxes and add further strategies if needed; then, please rank them)</p>	<p>Ranking 1= high priority objective... 2, 3, 4, 5= little importance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Supplying a particularly high product/service quality <input type="radio"/> Good customer service: This helps to retain clients and generate lasting revenue <input type="radio"/> Maintaining good and trust-based long-term business relationships <input type="radio"/> Product differentiation <input type="radio"/> Building on a better understanding of consumer trends <input type="radio"/> New/alternative marketing channels <input type="radio"/> Maintaining local/regional production base <input type="radio"/> Reduction of transports <input type="radio"/> Ensuring transparency <input type="radio"/> Professionalization of management <input type="radio"/> Maintaining of social standards <input type="radio"/> Collaboration along chain and with market partners, developing business partnerships <input type="radio"/> Promotion of innovation <input type="radio"/> Networking <input type="radio"/> High animal welfare standards <input type="radio"/> Preparing the business/initiative for growth <input type="radio"/> Creating a dynamic organization that is prepared to meet the challenges <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	5

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Annex 3: List of (possible) management instruments	Ranking 1= high priority objective... 2, 3, 4, 5= little importance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Quality assurance systems <input type="radio"/> Quality testing (own laboratory) <input type="radio"/> Regular negotiation of 'fair' prices <input type="radio"/> Top-up of consumer price transmitted to local producer <input type="radio"/> Competition analysis to better understand where the products rank in the marketplace <input type="radio"/> Preference for local chain partners <input type="radio"/> Transparency systems such as marking of delivery units, animal passports etc. <input type="radio"/> Forward contracting of supply volumes <input type="radio"/> Payment within a few days <input type="radio"/> Supply up to needs of chain partner (quality, quantity, in time) <input type="radio"/> Control of social standards <input type="radio"/> Joint marketing <input type="radio"/> Chain partner meetings and cultural or regional events <input type="radio"/> Knowledge transfer <input type="radio"/> Qualification measures <input type="radio"/> Sharing stalls at a fair, joined organisation/sponsoring of seminars/events <input type="radio"/> Animal welfare standards, definition, control, communication <input type="radio"/> Open communication within the organisation <input type="radio"/> Flat hierarchies <input type="radio"/> Clear responsibilities on each level <input type="radio"/> Definition of social standards plus controls <input type="radio"/> Kindergarten, health care (family friendly) <input type="radio"/> Informative attitude (own magazine/journal, newsletter et.) <input type="radio"/> Profiting from own production (free breakfast in bakery, contingent of beer in breweries, reduced vegetable prices of shop assistants etc.) <input type="radio"/> Annual team building events <input type="radio"/> Regular sponsoring of events/projects in the community (local sports team, local nature conservation project, youth project etc.) <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	5

4.3 The balance/trade-off between quality differentiation and volume and economic performance

Analytical questions 4.3.1:

Which quality differentiating strategies is the organic mid-scale value-based food chain focusing on in relation to conventional and mainstream organic food chains, and how and where in the chain are these qualities developed and how are they maintained?

Which changes/strategic choices according to volume growth have challenged quality differentiation strategies and economic performance among chain actors that have required adaptations in order to achieve a balance?

Which strategies/activities did the value chain actors choose to solve/adapt to meet these challenges and thus manage to combine the concerns of volume, quality differentiation and economic performance in a new and sustainable way?

By offering regionally embedded, fresh, seasonal organic vegetables at an affordable price, the Food Communities create a distinction in relation to supermarkets, where even discount retailers will need to maintain a certain level of premium prices paid by the consumer. The second distinction is made by the consumers participating in an urban community of concerned consumers, who take direct control over their supply of vegetables. By investing 3 hours of voluntary work every month, the activists are (according to statements made during the interviews) provided with a sense of being able to make a difference with regard to seizing control of their supply.

Both the Aarhus and Copenhagen chapters expressed another objective, which membership of the Food Communities were supposed to attain: learning and disseminating knowledge on sustainable food. However, according to the interviewees, this objective has been harder to meet, as most members were content by doing voluntary work. One example was the activist in Aarhus working with staging events within the Aarhus chapter (FF02 2012), who stated that there was very modest interest in participating in events. The members did not show any interest in going on farm visits, and very few wanted to take part in events involving guest speakers, workshops etc.

In conclusion, we have not been able to identify trade-offs between volume and quality differentiation. Issues of volume is being addressed by forming new Food Communities, if a given Food Community is growing beyond the scale which are feasible, given the size of the distribution centre and the number of members. Regarding quality differentiation, one of the surprising observations emerging throughout the interviews was that the apparent lack of quality differentiation. The members of the food communities did not feel confident about asking the farmers to introduce new varieties of crops. In fact, some of the cases where new crops had been introduced, happened after initiatives taken by the farmers (FF06 2012). Thus there are significant indication of introduction of new crops being a primarily farmer-driven initiative.

4.4 Communication of values and qualities among the members of the food chain

In terms of communication structure, the Food Communities is a loosely coupled network between consumers and producers. There is however limited direct communication between farmers and consumers, as illustrated in figure 2. Figure 3 is an overview of which spaces of interaction can be found within the Food Communities. There are four main spaces where interaction takes place: at individual farms, at community distribution centres, virtual spaces and finally within homes of individual members of the community (see figure 3).



Figure 9: Communication structure of the Food Communities



Figure 10: Spaces of interaction within the Food Communities

The member of the Food Communities communicate quite frequently via social media such as Facebook or the website, which is powered by Wordpress. One of the Aarhus activists even described the community in Aarhus in slightly ironic terms as a “*Facebook community*”, indicating that the primary social integration after his opinion took place via social media. Both chairs from the Aarhus community put great emphasis on maintaining a continuous flow of information among the members via social media. The website, as well as the Facebook group, constitute the primary interface between the individual members and the various activity groups of the Food Communities. The activity groups are ‘gate keepers’ or interfaces in relation to the producers, who communicate primarily with the representative of the activity group. In practice that is primarily the supply group which deals with sourcing and setting the arrangement with the farmers regarding what should be included in the weekly delivery. This communication takes place via email or over the phone, as indicated in figure 2. There are thus not much direct contact between producers and consumers, as most inquiries pass through the activity groups. One example is that inquiries regarding product quality is being gathered by the supply group, which conveys the feedback to the farmers and subsequently reports the reply from the farmer via Facebook or the website. The supply group in Aarhus, as one example, stated that it was an important objective to reply to inquiries from individual members within a few days.

The Food Communities have been concerned with presenting the farmers via their website and via Facebook, thus allowing the farmer to assume a distinct identity in relation to the members of the community. In Aarhus, they put a distinct emphasis on the farmers’ account of why they converted to organic. In dramaturgical terms, they were very concerned about staging a certain image of the farmer – in this case a person devoted to organic farming, following personal motivations and beliefs. Within the food community in Aarhus, some of the activists had expressed their interest in doing further interviews with the main supplier and to produce video introductions to the farm (FF02 2012). The specific activists had a keen interest in web-based

video production and saw this as an appropriate way of communicating principles of organic farming. However, this project has yet to be actualised.

Which means are in place to allow consumers articulate his/her wishes/desires/concerns upwards the food chain to the producers?

Via the Facebook communications, the supply work group (both Aarhus and Copenhagen) present the farmers with the feedback acquired from the members. The farmers then try to accommodate the concerns by reporting back to the supply group of the food community. The cases which emerged from the interviews, was, among others, questions regarding the physical quality of vegetables. In Aarhus, some of the members wondered why the vegetables were of moderate size compared to earlier growing seasons, and had posed a question to the supply group via Facebook and emails. The farmers reply was a post on Facebook (posted by the supply group) trying to explain why the cabbage was moderately sized, which had something to do with the particular growth conditions that year.

Which (unique/innovative) communication methods are used?

Social media – even though it hardly counts as something unique or innovative, given that social media has found widespread use during recent years. Communication with farmers take place via phone or emails, not via social media.

4.4.1.1 What is the communication between partners within the supply chain about?

Some of the activists expressed their concern with facilitating social learning on food and sustainability issues in more general terms. However, that particular aspect had shown to be hard to address. One of the members expressed that there might be several different factors in play (FF02 2012). One of the factors he mentioned, was the level of food literacy among the consumers. He perceived, that few members felt confident staging dialogue with farmers or even other activists regarding food quality and wider issues of sustainability. One of the activists in Copenhagen also emphasized that she did not feel like knowing enough on food or organic agriculture to embark in a dialogue with farmers (FF05 2012)

4.4.1.2 Via or through which channels do partners communicate with each other?

Social media (Facebook), phone, email

4.4.1.3 How often do partners communicate with each other?

Communication is quite frequent, several times per week.

4.4.1.7 If, in how far does growth and respectively also the type of growth (scale or scope) have an influence on the communication?

No. One of the important factors might be the ‘upscaling by multiplication’ principle, which limits the size of the individual food communities, thus enabling more direct interaction between members.

4.4.1.8 Are there feedback loops installed for consumers to channel appreciation or critique?

Yes, the ‘line of command’ is that the supply group reports back to the farmer. The farmer then responds by phone to supply group, who in turn communicates the farmer feedback on Facebook. This typically takes place in the matter of a few days.

4.4.1.9 Are there any meetings, seminars, workshops, events, fairs etc. where actors can exchange, interact etc outside usual structures?

Yes, but the interest has been very limited on behalf of the members of the community. Given that the remaining 15 Danish Food Communities were not covered by this study, it is hard to claim general validity of that statement.

General points to consider with regards to communication

Social media, specifically Facebook groups of the individual Food Communities and their Wordpress-driven websites, plays an important role for the communication process across the food communities. In terms of connecting the consumer activists, the potential of social media has been utilized to a large degree. Two of the members of the board of the Aarhus food community emphasized that social media was a very important ingredient in the process of recruiting interested consumers in the initial phase (FF01 2012; FF03 2012), as it enabled a rapid spread of the initiative. Another aspect was the role of the Wiki supplied by the Copenhagen Food Community (KBHFF 2014b). Among many other resources, the Wiki contains a startup kit for new food communities, which was instrumental for the activists in Aarhus in the startup process. The startup process for the activists in Aarhus did also include personal contacts and face-to-face guidance with activists from Copenhagen, who functioned as ‘founding fathers’ for the Aarhus activists.

In terms of establishing internal coherence among the activists, social media is an important glue for the food communities, as social media is the primary meeting space for the activists (see figure 3 for an overview of spaces of interaction). Apart from the virtual spaces of social media, the activists do also meet in physical space. This interaction takes place in two physical spaces. The first is the community distribution centre once every week, when the packages are being assembled. This meeting typically involves extensive informal communication, while the activist are working together. The other is meetings in the individual homes of the activists, which are used for hosting meetings in activity groups, which also involves extensive informal communication. Both of these venues contribute to building connections between the activists. A third kind of physical space where interaction has been staged, is the farms of the producers. This has however only been utilised to a minor degree, as there has only been a limited number of farm visits. As emphasized by several of the activists, there was only limited interest to participate in farm events among the members of the community. As a result, the farmers only serve as ‘food ambassadors’ via the ways by which they are presented on the website of the food communities. Still, the members of the community have the opportunity to meet the farmer in person at some of the individual community distribution centres, as some of the farmers transport their vegetables in their private vehicle and distribute them in person. The interviews did not indicate whether this was common, as in many other cases someone else took the products into town.

The relative absence of food ambassadors point towards some of the complexities involved in the constitution of trust in the food communities. This theme is explored in a recently accepted paper, which is based on a study of the food communities (Thorsøe & Kjeldsen 2015). One of the main points discussed here is that constitution of trust cannot be reduced to either face-to-face contact or distant mediation via certification and labelling. Instead, the Danish food communities are a case of a market where the historically evolved high levels of trust towards the Danish government-approved brand is mutually constitutive of personalised relations of trust, stemming from face-to-face interaction as one example. Using terms from Anthony Giddens (Giddens 1984), the food communities entail both processes of social integration taking place among the members of the community. This occurs simultaneously with processes of system integration where trust displayed towards the consumers is driven by general trust towards the organic label, which does not encompass face-to-face communication.

4.5 Quality dimension of primary production and mediation through the chain

As the farmers are not formally members of the network, and as none of the farmers are dependent on the Food Communities as their main sales outlet, there is not in strict terms much co-evolution taking place between production and consumption. However, the farmers do take up challenges posed by the consumers. Requests for new varieties have been met by the farmers, who subsequently tried to introduce new crops. In that regard, the relatively small part of the deliveries from the farmers which are being sourced by the Food Communities, can serve (and has) as a test laboratory for introducing new crops. During the interviews, the interviewers posed questions regarding quality development to all interviewees. Many of the members expressed that they did not feel qualified to provide detailed requests for new products, including seasonal crops. Ensuring just prices were a more tangible pursuit, for which they saw themselves better suited.

The qualities which are enacted throughout the Food Communities have been highlighted during the interviews. A brief comparison between the principles of the food communities and the observations emerging from the interviews can be made:

Table 4: Values of the Food Communities, and their development

Principle/Quality	Observed during the interviews
Food should be grown and produced in organic quality	All sourced produce is organic
Food shall be as local as practically feasible	The food communities source vegetables from producers located in the urban periphery, the majority of them being small to mid-scale producers in terms of acreage
Food supply shall mirror seasonal variation	The food communities supply a wide range of seasonal vegetables, which are appreciated among the members of the food communities (several instances of appreciation was referenced by the respondents)
Trade should be fair and direct	A domestic fair trade principle is being implemented, which implies a 25% price premium, relative to a reference price, paid to the farmers
Production and consumption shall be environmentally friendly	The food sourced by the community is as environmentally friendly produced as other similar organic products. With regards to consumption, it is hard to say if it is relatively more environmentally friendly, apart from the effect of organic quality.
The food communities shall raise awareness about food and organics	This has only taken place to a minor degree, mostly due to limited interest in events involving communication regarding food and organics
The food communities should be economically sustainable and independent	The objective is being met, primarily via the adherence to the 'ten commandments' of the food communities.
The food chain should be transparent and trust-building	The food chain is transparent with regards to where the food comes from, and how it is managed from farm to fork. Trust is being built, but a rather complex process of interaction between generalised trust towards organics coupled with specific trust towards producers can be observed
Food should be widely accessible and affordable	Since prices are considerably lower than other box schemes as well as retailers, this objective has been met.
The food communities should be powered by local, collaborative communities	This has been taking place, even though the interaction might not have extended as much beyond the formal obligations in terms of community work, as expected by some of the activists.

4.6 Resilience of the value chain and the initiative/business – long term perspective, change and social-ecological links

As mentioned above, The Food Communities seek to apply a national fair trade principle in their business model, which in practice means that they aim to pay farmers a fixed price premium which is linked to a reference price list from a major Danish organic wholesaler, Solhjulet. A meeting was held between activists from the Food Communities in Copenhagen and their Zealand producers in late 2012 to discuss whether the prices should be adjusted. Several new models for price formation were discussed, including the possibility of long-term agreements which were supposed to extend collaboration beyond short time spans, but the meeting did not reach a clear conclusion, and so far the already established 'Danish Fair Trade model' is still in use. This meeting indicates that awareness regarding establishing long-term, reciprocal relations (strategic partnerships) between members and producers do exist, even though no specific initiatives have been initiated. As long as the farmers are not members of the communities, co-evolution between farmers and consumers are primarily regulated via the established quality standards (certified Danish organic), which sets some limitations.

The success of staging social learning processes throughout the network has been somewhat limited. Still, given that members invest work hours at the local distribution centres, the Food Communities do continue to forge 'weak' links between urban consumers. In a resilience perspective, the Food Communities are organized in flexible manner, allowing the network to source vegetables from many different producers across or even beyond their 'home' region. The decentralized principle of organisation allows for a high degree of flexibility, as when networks reach a given size, they split up in smaller units, which might restore the mutual feeling of responsibility among the members. The 10 principles of the Food Communities does pose some limitations to the degree of functional differentiation within the individual communities, which might reinforce social integration within the Food Communities, but which might limit the range of food qualities which can be appreciated within them.

5 Future orientation of the initiative/business and the value chain

The Food Community members interviewed did not have a history of being active in organic grass roots organizations such as the National Association of Organic Agriculture. Given that, they did not relate very much to the history of organic agriculture, even though they put great emphasis on certified organics as the backbone of product quality. Regarding growth, the members did not perceive any limits to how much they could grow, due to the principle of constantly branching out in new chapters and divisions throughout the land. In that regard, they perceived that they would not face any significant obstacles with regards to scale, at least as long as they kept sourcing from medium-sized or small farms. One of the producers were a major operator within the field of organic vegetables, but were able to grow crops in smaller batches so they could match the scale required by the Food Communities. In Copenhagen, some issues of scale were encountered during the growth phase, something which was addressed by using common distribution centres for vegetables. The activists from the individual neighbourhood-based associations would then go to the distribution centres to pick up their produce and take it to the local workshop space to pack the produce in individual bags.

The Food Communities are a grass-roots driven, decentralized organization, which poses some challenges with regard to generalization of observations of producer-consumer linkages. The main challenge is that the multiple networks which comprise the organization, are not inscribed via a generic business logic – rather, the network evolves through multiple negotiations of meaning. This poses a methodological challenge, as valid, *general* claims should be supported by empirical inquiry into a broader, representative range of Food Communities than in the present study. Another distinct factor is that the farmers are not part of the core case, if the associations constitute the border to the surrounding world. We can thus not identify long-term engagements such as strategic partnerships, and study the co-evolution between consumption and production dynamics and how they might be able to co-evolve. Instead the farmers interviewed perceived their individual farm autonomy as being very important. None of them perceived any need to become further integrated with the Food Communities, as they already had well-established market channels suitable for small-scale supplies. Still, the spatial structure of the Food Communities are very interesting in the context of Healthy Growth. The notion of decentralizing growth processes can be described as ‘upscaling by multiplication’, where the network will branch out into new chapters everytime a threshold scale has been reached. That has been the case for the Food Communities in Copenhagen. That raises some interesting issues regarding scalar politics, which, however, can not be addressed by the present report.

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