

Complexity and trust – experiences from local Danish Food Communities

Authors

Martin Thorsøe – Department of Agroecology, Aarhus University

Chris Kjeldsen - Department of Agroecology, Aarhus University

Abstract: Generally food consumers in Denmark do not trust the food production and distribution systems and the management of risk related to food consumption has become part of the daily life of many (Halkier & Holm, 2004). This paper explores how relations of trust are formed in two local Danish Food Communities (Fødevarerfællesskaber) in Aarhus and Copenhagen. Food Communities are communities of consumers organized around the provision of local fresh vegetables directly from local producers. The Food Communities, together with local farmers, share the responsibilities, normally carried out by other market actors, such as logistics, sale and price formation. The vegetables are sold to the members of the community, at a relatively low price, if they take part in the duty work related to the food provisioning. The community functions despite no binding or long term agreements are made between the communities and the producers. The aim of this paper is to evaluate what role trust plays in order for the communities to function. Focus is given to 1) the mechanisms that create and maintain trust between the actors and 2) the challenges that the relations of trust are exposed to and 3) how the communities are dealing with these challenges.

1. Introduction

“The geography of the modern food system reveals that, as food chains become stretched further and in more complex ways across space, we experience both the physical and psychological displacement of production from consumption, and all of the other disconnections and disembedding which follow in that stead – loss of rural agricultural resilience and diversity, degradation of the environment, dislocation of community, loss of identity and place.” (Feagan, 2007: 38)

Like other features of modern society, food is an ambivalent phenomenon. As preceding decades of food scholarship have demonstrated, apart from being a source of nutrition, food is important in relation to identity, social distinction, political consumption, environmental pressure and many other dimensions. Consumers experience that consuming food is also an exposure to risks and uncertainty through food scares, like the BSE-scandal, Salmonella outbreaks, hormones and pesticides residues in the food (Halkier &

Holm, 2004). At the same time the flow of information regarding the products and the production becomes increasingly abundant, but also opaque and food consumption thus takes place in a space of food scandals and limited information (Coff, 2006). Food scares have been described as an unintended effect of the modernization of food chains, which is distinguished by the extension of food chains in space and time (Nygård & Storstad, 1998). One of the significant features of modern industrialism is *“the separation of people and places and products from their histories”* (Berry, 2002). Some have argued that the longer the distance between the sites of production, processing, marketing and the consumer, agro-food-chains become less transparent and trust decreases (Freyer & Bingen, 2012). An important negative outcome of the large scale conventional food network is thus a similarly large scale production of uncertainty and mistrust from consumers and producers alike towards the food system. In a way confirming the thesis of German sociologist Ulrich Bech, that the *“modern society is increasingly producing risk as a natural outcome, we have risk as a natural condition of our modern society”* (Beck, 1997: our translation). This has led scholars as to claim, that we live in a post-trust society, in which the public trust in the institutions of the civil society has been eroded. If this assumption is correct, this is a problem since trust is needed because the modern society requires consideration and risk taking and trust is a public good that facilitates and lubricates the cooperation (Miztal, 1996 ; Beck, 1997)

A quantitative study from the Danish food system confirm that *“in general Danish consumers do not trust that the public system of control or the market mechanism will ensure that trust can be displayed towards foodstuff* (Halkier & Holm, 2004: 24 - our translation). Uncertainty is not restricted to the consumers, producers also have to act in a system, that is increasingly uncertain, due to variations in production and sale (Lamine, 2005), changing consumer trends and the pressures from the global competition. According to Lamine (2005) the emergence of Alternative Food Networks can be seen as a way to settle this uncertainty between producers and consumers and might *“indicate a growing preference for local and tangible actions of engagement and commitment on the part of both sets of actors”* (Lamine, 2005:342). An important feature of Alternative Food Networks are shorter supply chains, AFN's thus provide a new way to reconfigure the link between the producers with the consumers and can be seen as a reflective reaction against the uncertainties created by the modernization of the food system (Feagan, 2007). Because as several authors notes, that the shortened food chains brings consumers closer to the origins of their food and in many instances a more direct interaction between producers and consumers of their products (Hinrichs, 2000 ; Renting et al., 2003 ; Seyfang, 2006 ; Eden et al., 2008 ; Jarosz, 2008)

It is often mentioned, that one of the main positive outcomes of Alternative Food Networks is the potential to reconfigure the trust between producers and consumers, but often this claim is often not explored in greater detail empirically. The purpose of this paper is twofold first we will discuss the concept and different forms of trust and how this can be applied in the analysis of the social relations of Alternative Food Networks. We will do this by introducing the concept of trust from a sociological perspective and afterwards explore how trust is seen in the recent Alternative Food Networks literature. This will show that trust is a complex phenomenon and various forms of trust acts in Alternative Food Networks, trust therefore cannot be seen just as the outcome of the interactions in Alternative Food Networks, but also as the foundations of the interaction. Secondly we will study the relations of trust in the an Alternative Food Network Food – the Food Communities of Copenhagen and Aarhus (*“Fødevarerfællesskaberne”*) and try to understand what function trust has for the network function and which mechanisms contribute to the formation of trust in the network.

2. Trust - in theory

“Trustworthiness, the capacity to commit oneself to fulfilling the legitimate expectations of others, is both the constitutive virtue of and the key causal precondition for the existence of any society.” (Dunn, 1984: 287)

The definition highlights some important aspects of the ambiguity of trust as a concept it is both, a moral duty and a precondition for the social order. According to Luhmann (1999) trust would not be needed if the world was familiar and predictable; therefore trust fundamentally has to do with how we relate to risk and uncertainty. Trust works as a functional element reducing the complexity of social action and if trust is absent we inherit the full complexity of the situation. Since the world has grown increasingly more complex the need for trust has also increased, and trust is not an option but it is a need in order to be able to act in the world (Giddens, 1994 ; Misztal, 1996 ; Beck, 1997 ; Luhmann, 1999). Trust is also essentially related to a lack of knowledge or as Simmel note it is a phenomenon that exists in the tension between knowledge and the lack of it (Misztal, 1996). The idea is central since a complete lack of knowledge makes our actions completely unpredictable and full knowledge (though never really an option) will remove the need for trust. In relation to knowledge there is also an asymmetry between trust and distrust, since only little knowledge can trigger our distrust, but even large amounts of knowledge can not in itself be an argument for trust. Similarly there is a temporal dimension to trust - trusting is something we do in the present but we can only know whether our trust will be met in the future, so in that sense trust is also a leap of faith (Luhmann, 1999 ; Knudsen, 2001).

According to Thyssen (2001) trusting is also a way of expressing what has value to us trust thus presupposes a normative basis. Norms are important since they stabilize the expectations we can have towards each other by revoking the problem of double contingency (that we condition our actions on others actions, who also condition their actions on our actions)(Bordum, 2001). We can only expect others act according to our trust, if there is a common normative basis defining what is right and wrong and therefore a legitimate basis for our expectations and a possibility for criticizing wrongful actions. A degree of “closure” of the social system is therefore needed for the existence of effective norms and to allow the proliferation of obligations and expectations (Thyssen, 2001). Since some of the institutions on which traditionally have given us our norms gradually have diminished in importance, now more than ever trust is something which have to be build and negotiated actively (Giddens, 1994). At the same time trust has a value on its own as psychological need and a mechanism constituting the coherence of voluntary and selforganizing social systems (Giddens, 1994).

Several authors within sociology distinguish between two fundamentally different forms of trust, trust as something which is related to persons and trust related to systems (Giddens, 1994 ; Misztal, 1996 ; Luhmann, 1999 ; Knudsen, 2001).

- **Personal trust** is strictly related to the persons involved in the interaction and the actors only have their bodies available as a means of communication. According to Luhmann (68) there are several conditions for forming a personal bond of trust, there should be a risk, that the trusted will not meet the trust, in fact he must have an interest in not meeting it and the trustee should indicate an interest in being trusted. In relation to understanding personal trust the self description of the actors is an important mechanism, since the actors in their self-description define what can be expected of them in an interaction (Knudsen, 2001). Trust is therefore also something that is actively constructed and needs to be socialized. Past experience or what Luhmann calls “small steps” – that initial trust is met, is also the basis for trust (Knudsen, 2001).

- **Systemic trust** is a generalized form of trust towards systems - that systems work and performs the tasks they are supposed to perform. Systemic trust therefore minimizes the need for direct personal contact since the expectations is directed at a third party above the actors is able to secure the expected outcome or sanctions in case expectations are not met. Luhmann (1999) in his later writings therefore applies the term confidence towards this form of trust, because the possibility of disappointment is neglected (Misztal, 1996). According to Giddens (1994) we engage with the system through "access points" where we meet representatives, therefore we can interact face-to-face with the system, but our expectations are still "faceless", and thus not directed towards the representatives, but towards the function of the system they represent.

Both Luhmann's (1999) and Giddens' (1994) work acknowledge that the relations of trust has changed in the modern society in a manner so today we have come to rely more on systemic than personal relations of trust as the basis for upholding the social system. Therefore according to Giddens (1994) the nature of intimacy has also changed. A problem is that routines which are structured by the abstract systems have more to do with effectiveness and are thus not as emotionally rewarding as the personal trust relations.

Studying trust as a social mechanism involves explaining people's actions by their motives and their beliefs. How trust functions can only be appropriated by looking into what kind of expectations and obligations the different actors have towards each other and the system they are a part of (Misztal, 1996). Trust is thus one of the most complicated phenomena to explore since people are act according to by a multiple motivations and circumstances (Misztal, 1996).

Drawing on experiences from the Kansas City Food Circle, Hendrickson & Heffernan (2002) argues that trust is not something which is associated with the product, but to the notion that the consumer can trust the farmer to produce in a safe way. The notion captures an interesting feature of Alternative Food Networks they are not just about the products alone, but also about social relations. At the same time empirical evidence suggest that trust is an important factor for smooth cooperation and reducing transaction cost for small businesses in rural areas (Kjeldsen & Svendsen, 2011). According to DuPuis and Gillon (2009) alternative markets like Alternative Food Networks depend on trust and solidarity for maintaining participation and legitimacy. Trust is therefore also related to the governance of the network. The vitality of the network thus depends upon the democratic engagement of the members in a continual practice of maintaining legitimacy.

Analogue to the distinction between systemic and personal relations of trust, Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine (2008) distinguishes between "delegation" and "empowerment" as two fundamentally different types regimes of involvement practiced in local food networks that rely on two different sets of operating mechanisms. "Delegation" takes place through market mechanisms and consumers are expected to make consumption choices based on the information provided through labels, brands and trademarks. Empowerment on the other hand is based on negotiated contractual obligations between producers and consumers and consumption choices are collectively co-constructed, between producers and consumers. The required need for the consumers to be activated thus varies from network to network and within each network, from consumer to consumer and in practice it will be a mix of the different forms.

3. Alternative Food Networks

As a broad generic definition Alternative Food Networks can be defined as “alternatives to the more standardized industrial modes of food supply” (Renting et al., 2003: 394). According to Jarosz (2008) the term Alternative Food Networks is applied to denote the networks which are characterized by (1) shorter distance between producers and consumers (2) Small farm size and scale and organic or holistic farming methods (3) Food purchasing venues such as food cooperatives, farmers markets and CSA’s (4) by commitment to social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable food production and distribution and consumption.

The term alternative implies that these networks can be seen as in opposition to the mainstream and industrialized forms of production. However, other authors have placed greater emphasis on which objectives, functions or processes Alternative Food Network seeks to actualize (Whatmore et al., 2003). In general there are many ways in which the Alternative Food Network is practiced. Drawing on Lyson (2004) several authors for also applied the term “Civic” to conceptualize the “*new forms of “food citizenship” in which consumers and producers together regain control over the ways in which food is produced and relations between state, market and civil society within food governance are actively reshaped*” (Renting, 2011). It is therefore a point to make that the Alternative Food Networks are not homogeneous entities but differs quite a lot and encompass such diverse networks as, Famers Markets, CSA’s, Box Schemes, farm shops and organic or sustainable farming in general. According to Holloway et al. (2007) the conventional-alternative dualism is unfortunate, since alternative food projects exhibit a great variety. Instead they propose a multidimensional analysis of six heuristic fields to qualify in what way the food network is alternative (1) Site of food production (2) Food production methods (3) Supply chain Arena of exchange (4) Producer-consumer interaction (5) Motivations for participation (6) Constitution of individual and group identities. The the social relations and dynamic within each food networks also differ and each network thus must be dealt with as something unique and situated in specific contexts, in which there are specific conditions and problems constituting the network. Our aim with this paper is to focus on these processes and functions as they manifest themselves in Alternative Food Networks.

Face-to-face interaction

The local scale, short supply chains and direct interaction in “Alternative Food Networks” is a feature often described as an important benefits for or the formation of trust, because this enable a direct interaction between the actors in the food network (Sage, 2003 ; Kirwan, 2006 ; Jarosz, 2008). As Renting et al. (2003) notes: it “*bring consumers closer to the origins of their food and in many cases involve a more direct contact between farmers and the end-users*” (Renting et al., 2003: 398). In an Alternative Food Network the buyer in addition to the product gains an insight into the production system, status and identity associated with the product (Sage, 2003). Going beyond the simple description of product flow and instead addressing the social relations is thus an important focus of inquiries into Alternative Food Networks (Renting et al., 2003).

Sage (2003), Kirwan (2006) and Milestad (2010) inspired by Offer (1997) applies the concept of regard to understand the non-market benefits of the face-to-face interaction are embedded in the exchange between actors in the food network. Regard can take many forms, acknowledgement, attention, acceptance, respect, reputation status, power, intimacy, love friendship, kinship, sociability (Offer, 1997). According to Offer (1997) the exchange of regard is facilitated by the direct interaction, it is also an important source of mutual satisfaction both on part of the consumer and the producer and provides a powerful

incentive for trust. The exchange of regard is thus of value above the commercial aspects of commodity exchange at the market, in addition to the product the buyer gains insight into the production system, status and identity of the products (Sage, 2003). Experiences from Farmers Markets in the UK suggest that both producers and consumers are aware of their roles as market actors. Still the personal interaction is important for consumers as a means of developing trust in the producers, but that the producers also value feeling esteemed as individuals, which arises out of the interaction with the consumers (Sage, 2003). The interaction at the farmers market therefore enable the consumers to directly assess the quality of the products and the trustworthiness of the producers.

Mount (2012) criticize the approach and argues that trust is not necessarily the result of the direct interaction and the information mediated in the exchange, but *“trust in the direct exchange may be as much a predisposition as an outcome; as much an absence of distrust as it is the creation of trust”* (Mount, 2012: 114). His argument is that (1) the direct exchange stands as a symbol of alterity, Alternative Food Networks therefore might be a relatively safe place to express meaningful trust (2) the direct exchange owes its legitimacy as much to skepticism and distrust of conventional food networks as to the trust in Alternative Food Networks (3) consumers are overwhelmingly willing to grant trust to farmers and small scale farmers in particular (Mount, 2012).

Spatial orientation

Milestad et al. (2010) argues that spatial proximity enable face-to-face interaction between the food actors and the shared values were important features for sustaining the regard between the actors. At the same time they warn against drawing a causal link between “high quality” of relations and a local scale, since the actors in the study also has high quality relations with actors that are not located spatially proximate. Sage (2003) find indications that the alternative good food network of southwest Ireland share a set of moral values that would comprise a commitment to the locality, and an ethics of animal welfare, a sympathy for sustainability and a strong belief in the basic integrity of livelihoods built around the growing rearing preparation and marketing of food.

Kirwan (2006) argues that spatial proximity is indirectly important since local actors are perceived to have a stronger “local” responsibility for the produce since their reputation is on the line. Hinrichs (2000) argues that being close and interacting face-to-face not necessarily implies a high quality of social relations and that the spatial relations therefore should not be conflated with social relations. Therefore she argues that it is important to qualify the debate about the social relations. Experiences from France suggest that other forms of interactions like, telephone hotlines and weekly leaflets becomes more important when the consumers and producers are spatially separated and are unable to communicate directly (Lamine, 2005). Being spatially proximate might therefore not be the only way that trust is build in an Alternative Food Network. It is also important to note that the internet provides opportunities for establishing novel forms of face-to-face communication (Renting et al., 2003).

In spatially extended networks products are sold to consumers outside the region of production who may have no personal experience of that locality, products therefore must become embedded with value-laden information to enable consumers to make a connection to the space, values and the people involved in the production. According to Renting et al. (2003) These types of networks therefore come to rely on complex institutional arrangements for securing the authenticity of the products, rather than trust and confidence. The idea behind is this that when consumers are supplied with more information and

knowledge about the food production system, they will avoid food coming from damaging production systems and be reconnected with the producers (Eden et al., 2008). Empirical findings however suggest that this reconnection does not necessarily occur since the assurance information is not always received positively by the consumers and may in fact sometimes increase consumer skepticism. It is therefore not necessarily viable to found trust on knowledge.

Discussion

Going through the literature on Alternative Food Networks indicate an understanding of trust in many cases is seen as a phenomenon which arises out of the interaction. We think that the notion of regard is not sufficient for understanding the constitution of trust in the Alternative Food Network since trust and direct interaction is conflated. Mount (2012) also warns against drawing a causal relationship between direct exchange in the food network and positive outcomes of the exchange, since the interactions takes place in a complex web of perceptions, and interactions, and outcomes (Mount, 2012). Consumers are different and become involved with Alternative Food Networks for various reasons and with various desires regarding the interactions in the food network. The notion of regard places too little on the other forms of interactions and the context of the interaction, aspects can be important in order to conceptualize the Alternative Food Network. The direct interaction we still see as an important aspect of Alternative Food Networks, but we think, that it is also important to be aware of other forms of interactions. Similarly the notion of regard does not capture the structural dimensions that the Alternative Food Network is embedded in and which is creating important conditions for how the members act.

We argue that the concept of trust as discussed earlier offers a better understanding of the social relations because, the expectations of the actors and the multiple ways by which the expectations are formed. It is a necessary to understand, that trust is both a precondition for the social interaction because it reduces the complexity and at the same time it is the outcome of the social interaction. It is also important to note, that the trust has both a systemic and a personal component, it seems that there has been a strong focus on personal aspect trust in Alternative Food Network analysis rather than the systemic aspects. Since these two different trust mechanisms are able to institute different forms of expectations and interaction, it is necessary to incorporate both forms in the analysis. Similarly food is dealt with in an ambivalent manner and the different forms of trust occur simultaneously in relation to the multiple functions that the food network is performing and thus constitute a complicated network practice. The relations of trust in food networks are not stable and fixed, but are constantly evolving and a certain constitution of trust, or distrust will always underpin the food network. It is therefore worth studying what function trust has and how it is formed in order to understand how producers and consumers are interacting in Alternative Food Networks.

4. Method

According to Luhmann trust should be understood only from point of view of its function and this function cannot be reduced or replaced by the phenomena. This has been our starting point, to look at the function of trust in the network. Empirically we have conducted 10 semi-structured interviews in the spring of 2012 with organizing members of the food communities and the vegetable growers (Aarhus 3 members 1 grower and Copenhagen 4 members and 2 growers). Interviewees have been selected with the intention to cover the key functions and persons of the network and the main suppliers. To allow for an open debate, the interviewees have been anonymized. The focus of the interviews has been to understand (1) what obliga-

tions, expectations and duties the actors in the network have towards each other (2) what concrete actions are carried out by the actors in the network and (3) how are values and knowledge applied as rationales by the actors in their decision making process regarding these actions. After completion, the interviews have been transcribed and meaning condensed using Transana software, and selected quotes have been translated by the authors. Apart from the interviews we will have included observations carried out in the food outlet, minutes from members meetings in the food communities, newspaper articles, as well as strategy documents in the analysis.

5. The Food Communities of Aarhus and Copenhagen

For the past 30 years there has been an annual increase in the consumption of organic food, so today Denmark is one of the countries with the highest per, capita consumption of organic food in the world and in 2010 organic food accounted for a total marketshare of more than 7% (DST, 2012). Several factors have contributed to this development. Denmark had its first law regulating organic production in 1987 as the first country in the world. An outcome of the law was a government control scheme developed in cooperation with the organic community (Brandt, 2008). The control scheme paved the way for public support of organic agriculture development and today consumer trust in the control scheme is high, though knowledge about it's the organic production practice is low (Forthcomming). Since its introduction organic food has been retailed through some of the major supermarket chains, since 2005 the organic quality has also been introduced to some of the discount supermarkets and these now have the highest share of the market for organics (Hindborg, 2008). Environmental concern and the perceived risks associated with conventional food in Denmark is high and organic food consumption is seen as a strategy for managing these concerns (Jensen et al., 2008).

Since the establishment of the first cooperative dairy in 1882 this organizational form has been central in the development of agriculture in Denmark and has enabled farmers to have a high degree of influence on the conditions of their production (Ingemann, 2006). During the past 20-30 years new cooperatives specialized in organic production and extension service have emerged, and the major conventional cooperatives have introduced organics, as a niche production, so the cooperative organizational form remain important for the Danish agricultural industry.

History

The Food Communities of Copenhagen were established in 2008 by a group of consumers interested in purchasing vegetables directly from the organic producers in the outskirts of Copenhagen. The community has created a setup, where members one week in advance pays 100 DKK and on a specific day the forthcoming week can pick up a bag of locally produced organic vegetables in season. Initially the community had access to one room, for packing and picking up the vegetables in the central part of Copenhagen, but due to a rapid increase in the number of members (today 3500) this has now expanded to include 9 smaller local community sections each with their own outlet in the area of the city where its members reside. To become a member each person must pay a onetime membership fee of 100 DDK and commit oneself to working at least 3 hours each month for the community, so being a member requires active participation in the community. Between 10-15 different farms delivers to the community, but the majority of the vegetables comes from 3 farms. No long term delivery contracts orders are all from one week to the next. The vegetables are delivered to a central facility by the producers, and all work related to,

ordering, logistics and distribution is carried out by members of the community. apart from food provision the food communities also offers members the opportunity to engage in different social and learning activities with the community like communal dining, farm visits, presentations, debates and such like.

Apart from the community in Copenhagen the setup has spread to several other major and minor Danish cities like, Aarhus, Odense, Lejre and the Island of Bornholm. In Aarhus the community started in 2011 and is inspired and assisted by the Community in Copenhagen. The food community in Aarhus is therefore based on the same organization and principles as the Copenhagen community.

The function of trust in the food communities of Aarhus and Copenhagen

The interviews indicate that trust in the network of the food communities has two major functions it functions as an element creating coherency and internal organization within the network, but also as an element that is necessary for the external relations between the community and the farmers to function. In the following discussion these two different functions will be discussed separately.

Internal organization

Several of the organizing members interviewed during the project emphasise that the form of flat organization that is applied in the food communities is a relatively new form of organization in a Danish context and therefore it require a new form of engagement on behalf of the members. As one of the members puts it: *"It is not many places in Denmark where a flat structure like ours is applied and which demands that people take initiative and responsibility and does something"*. Another member argues in relation to managing the working groups, that: *"It is different what members read into the community, it has to be driven by the people, themselves. It is important to have it broadened out and to make people take responsibility otherwise the working groups will disintegrate"*. When there is no leader to command and control, it is urgent that the members take responsibility on their own on behalf of the network in order for it to function and perform the tasks that it is supposed to. Similarly it is urgent, that the members trust other members to perform their tasks otherwise the whole community will fall apart. A good example of this is the management work plan, where members need to sign up when it is their turn to take a shift, nobody is monitoring whether the members have fulfilled their commitment.

For many members this is a new role they get in relation to the food system and the society and many find it difficult to fit into this new role. In that sense the food communities also becomes a kind of school in civic action *"For me the food communities is very much a school, where people learn to become engaged. For those of us who have been a part of the Food Communities for a long time taking a 3 hour shift is nothing, but for those attending the first time it is a huge leap"*. At the same time this is a challenge for the members who initially started the community, because they need to accept that they are principally not more in charge than the members who just walked in the door.

External cooperation

One of the major functions of trust in relation to the external cooperation between the producers and the consumers is that the need for knowledge is reduced and in that sense trust functions as a reduction of complexity. In our inquiry we found that the food communities did not need to build up a large amount of knowledge on the complexities of organic food production in order for them to be able to cooperate with the farmers. At the same time the flat network organization of the food communities enable the members to draw on other members inter and extra organizational experiences when this is needed. One of the

growers also note when she is elaborating on the openness of the Food Communities in relation to including the growers view on matters related to production and the cooperation: *"They are just ordinary consumers and they do not have the insights that the growers have, actually I do not think that they know what it means to be a vegetable grower."* The consumers trust that the farmers produce *"poison free"*, *"organic food"* in a *"sustainable manner"*, debates about how the production in practice is organized and the dilemmas of organic production is not taken. This again supports the thesis that in Denmark the organic food quality is a well established quality that consumers in general place a high degree of trust with.

Another important function of trust for the external cooperation has to do with the formation of price on the products that the consumers pay for the products they are purchasing. The food communities are a protest against how the market mechanisms are putting economic pressure on the farmers and thus making it difficult to produce organic locally and still remain in business. Prices are therefore not established by market mechanisms or negotiated, but are decided in a dialogue and in general the consumers are paying the price that the producers are proposing and they are not comparing prices between different producers. A pricelist developed by an organic retailer *"Solhjulet"* is used as a *"backup"*, but sometimes the vegetables are not listed and the other times producers have had problems with a *"difficult crop"* and therefore have to decide on a fair price. The community thus needs to trust that the producers give them a fair price and that their trust is not exploited. As one of the members note: *"... in reality we accept the price they (producers) give us, we take it for good and it is also in their interest, if they constantly gave us an unfair price we might find other people to play with."* and another member elaborates: *"it is to a high degree born by trust, in the sense that you have to be able to look each other in the eyes and say I would like to vouch for this"*.

Similarly the consumers cannot know the quality of the products when they place their orders since this is not face-to-face therefore they have to trust that the producers deliver products in an acceptable quality. The producers in the other end are aware that the trust is fragile and they will no longer be a part of the network if the prices they are proposing or the quality of the products are seen as unfair, therefore they are careful to give a *"fair price"* and take *"good care"* of the customers with good products and a good selection. At the same time the trust based pricing system enables the producers to take risks they would not normally have taken, as one express: *"for the producers it is much more fun to be paid a little, so everything is viable, I would never begin to produce "Christmas salad" for a supermarket, I would not be able to, that's why nobody is doing it, you can't live of those prices."*

Producers at the same time need to trust that the agreements they make with the food communities or members hereof are kept and that the crops they plant in the spring can be sold later in the year. It is a challenge to manage this temporality, since the consumers are ordering on a week-to-week basis and it is therefore an important uncertainty for the farmers. In Copenhagen the food communities have managed the uncertainty through a meeting in autumn, where the producers can report which vegetables they can produce in each week, and then at least have an indication that their products are needed. It is not possible to know in advance how much of a crop is needed since orders are placed from week to week and therefore they have no binding contracts and need to trust that they can sell the produce when it is ready. An important aspect in this regard is that the producers we interviewed see the food communities as a minor market and do not completely rely on them to purchase their produce, but all have access to

different markets and what they cannot deliver to the food communities can be sold through other channels.

Mechanisms constructing trust in food communities

Overall trust can therefore be seen as a necessity for the food communities to function at all and there is a mutual need both on part of the consumers and the producers to trust one another. In the following we will look into some of the mechanisms that are constructing the systemic and personal relations of trust in the food communities.

Systemic relations of trust

An important aspect for the members trust in the system is the weekly practice associated with the provision of food, member's experience that the system functions each week, when they see, that the money they paid last week turns into a bag of vegetables. As one of the members expresses: *"If it became more airy and difficult to relate to people would drop out, but there is a concrete product, which is holding it together"*. Upholding the community through the weekly practices is therefore of great importance for systemic trust.

An important aspect in relation to the construction of systemic trust in the network is managing the expectations of the members and the producers in relation to the network. The expectations are particularly important in the food communities because they come to replace written contracts. The food communities are applying different approaches to manage the expectations of the system in relation to the members and the farmers. In relation to the farmers the food communities of Copenhagen for instance have organized an annual producer meeting in November, where all the producers are invited and meet with members of community to plan next year's production. Here the producers openly can discuss the challenges in relation to the cooperation; the community indicates which crops they would like in a particular week for the forthcoming season and production is coordinated this way. Since the exact volume of the purchase is uncertain it is not specified and growers have to plan around this and the exact content of the bags is not specified to allow for crops ripening either early or late. We also think that it is an important aspect of the food communities self-presentation that all members of the food communities works for the community, since this indirectly obligates them to buy the produce from the community (why invest the work if not for the vegetables).

The communication and use of modern communication platforms are an important aspect of the food communities both as a practical tool for organizing the community and an important mediator for managing expectations and responding to critique. Modern communication platforms like Facebook, Wiki, blogs and e-mails are media, that enable an easy mobilization of many people simultaneously and easy sharing of knowledge. One of the organizers of the food communities in Aarhus talks about the time, when they decided to found the community: *"we posted the idea on Facebook, and it received many "I like's" and so we decided to go ahead"*. One of the members in the Copenhagen note, when he talks about his father who was part of a purchasing association in the 70'ties: *"There are many things that are so much easier to organize because we do not need to manage people in the same way"*. Other members agree: *"it is much faster and a more dynamic form of communication"*. Fast and dynamic communication also allows for the system to rapidly deal with critique, one of the members tells about a lot of complaints that were received due to poor quality of the cabbage in the late winter and that how she was able to indicate that it was the

conditions of local products in this season, how to deal with the cabbage and that seasons would soon change to the better. In that way critique is used to mark a difference to other food networks, and the fact that the system is able to rapidly respond to critique sustains the trust in the system. The producers also acknowledge the information management as an important benefit, as one notes: *"It is good to be able to get response to the produce and of course I will make sure that the produce is good and quality is high, and it is I have not received a single complaint, but if I did it would be good to have it directly, and it is of course wonderful to get credit as well"*. Another producer tells that attaching a little information to the products is important and that it several times has enabled him to sell products which he would usually be forced to waste, though at discounted price, he comments: *"in that way I make everybody happy, I am happy because I have not wasted a product and they are happy because they receive a product that is actually okay at a bargain price"*.

The interviews have also indicated that the transparency and inclusion of the decision-making process for many is also important for the members to trust the system to function. As one of the members indicate: *"we have some very strong democratic ideals that all should have a say, but there is a difference to... it is not everybody who feels that they have a need to make use of it, but I would still give them the option"*. It is important for the members, that they have the option of participation, people know the decisions that are taken and can engage in the decision making process and if they feel, that anything need to be changed. Also in relation to the cooperation with the farmers this potentiality seems to be important since there is little direct contact between producers and members of the food communities. One of the members indicates jokingly that he knows where the farmers live, if quality is not satisfactory. At the same time the transparency and inclusions secures that decisions are also implemented because they are seen as legitimate. Inclusion is also an important in relation to managing the cooperation with the farmers and several of the farmers indicate, that they are glad to be able to have a say in relation to the decisions that have an influence on their conditions.

Both in relation to the internal organization and the external cooperation the personal relations and bonds of trust are important for members of the food communities. Despite the flat organizational structure of the food communities, some of the functions of the network, like certain workgroups depend on keystone members, who have specific experience performing specific functions. The systemic trust in the food communities therefore essentially also hinges on personal bonds of trust.

Personal relations of trust

In Copenhagen one of the practices that have been established to commit people more to the community is a team structure. Earlier members had to sign up for duty work whenever it was appropriate for them, but instead a system of teams have been implemented in some of the communities, as a response to the community expansion and the induced loss of community feeling. One of the members indicate that: *"it gives a different degree of obligation, not alone towards the shift, but also towards the team you are a part of because you come to know the people that you let down if you do not show"*. This is of course less flexible, but implies that members meet the same people each time they work for the community and enables them to build a personal bond of trust with other members, that is also obligating. Members are therefore not only responsible for that the system functions, but if they choose not to show they let down other members they know and have a personal relation to it is therefore a way of creating systemic trust out of personal relation of trust. Another member elaborates on this: *"you are no longer a small piece in a large*

puzzle, but suddenly an important piece in the week you have a shift (...) so in reality you break the community into smaller units, so people easier can find their place in a community of a manageable size”.

Communication between the producers and the food communities are also mediated through the personal narratives of the farmers. One of the members in the food communities in Aarhus is compiling information for description of the producers for their homepage and she notes: *“the personal is a good focus to have, because it is in good line with this from “field to fork”, personifying the farmer so that he is not just a supplier, but that he is a human being, who has his own opinions... we have talked about that in the communication group, that we would like to interview and collect the more personal stories, so these producer pages are supposed to both contain some fact about how long have you been an organic farmer, which products do you have, but also more the farmers own story, what are their own motivation for growing organic”.* One of the producers also sees this as the most important factor in his communication to tell his personal story: *“When they know why you grow organic and they know that, we should make our ends meet, but there is more to it than just making money”.* Both these statements indicate that self-presentation of the farmers and the sharing of values is important both for the members of the food communities and the farmers. The self-presentations nourishes the bonds of trust to be formed between the consumers and producers and in a sense these are personal relations though not necessarily formed in then direct interaction.

6. Concluding remarks

In general the exchange of knowledge between producers and consumers is low and the network thus relies on a high degree of trust and it is important that the relations of trust in all aspects of the food communities are sustained. Both systemic and personal relations of trust are important in order to understand the relations within the food communities and between the community and the producers, for several reasons (1) there is mix of many different forms of interaction where the producers and the members have different opportunities for making self-presentations (face-to-face, mediated contact through mail or by phone, general internet presentation and mentioning in the stories that circulate among both producers and within the food communities). (2) Personal and systemic relations of trust occur in a mix where different, the food communities could not function for instance without the systemic trust in the government control scheme or without the personal trust between members of the community and farmers. (3) The members are all different and place different emphasis on the different forms of trust. For some the personal interaction with the farmers is the most important, for others it is enough to know that other members has a personal contact and for others again it is most important to know the food is “organic” or “biodynamic”. One of the strengths of the food communities may be that it is able to cater for the many different preferences in relation to multiple forms of interactions and formation of trust.

Trust serves several functions in the food communities; first of all it is able to substitute more formal forms of engagement like contracts in the food communities. The analysis also points towards, that the network is constituted of different forms of trust that serves different functions in the network. **Personal trust relations** are important in relation to motivating people to engage members in the work of the community, seen for instance in relation to the team structure. **Systemic trust relations** on the other hand are important in relation to management of the knowledge asymmetry between the farmers and the consumers, with the trust in the government certification scheme as an illustrative example. This point

towards that there are factors outside of the community which are also important to understand the community and the analysis of trust in relation to Alternative Food Networks is by no means simple. Both members of the food communities and the producers are actively seeking to be trusted through transparency and inclusion via different forms of self-presentations.

7. References

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