



# Happy Chicken

A study of organic food discourses in a globalisation perspective

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# Abstract

Organic food sales in Denmark has more than doubled during the last eight years, and today it holds the highest market share of any other country in the world. Ethical consumption is regarded as one of the top five trends, and a general focus on and positive attitude towards ecology is observed on multiple levels of society. To that end, this thesis seeks an understanding of organic food consumption in Denmark through the perspective of globalisation. At least two areas of studies are explored explicitly and serve as theoretical framework, specifically *globalisation and the consequences of living in late modernity* and *identity and consumption*. The point of departure is that perceived changes in late modernity have impacts on our relation to and conceptions about nature.

The main theories applied to this thesis are Fairclough's (1995) theory of critical discourse analysis, Anthony Giddens (1990, 2000) and Ulrich Beck (1992, 2009) on globalisation and late modernity theory as well as Giddens' (1991) identity construction theory combined with other theories of consumption (Halkier 1999, 2010; Warde 1997, 2014).

An analytical approach of critical discourse analysis on selected blogs is applied for the overall objective of investigating what identities and overall conceptions of nature Danish consumers express via food and lifestyle blogs, and how these could be related to the processes of globalisation. Additional empirical data is brought in for the purpose of exploring the contextual discourses of which the blogs are a part. Following the three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis of Fairclough (1989, 1995), the analysis is divided into three separate stages focusing on text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice.

The most prominent findings of the thesis are the indications of organic food consumption being about much more than environmental concerns. Organic consumption practices are involved in various strategies for constructing identity as well as strategies of risk-handling and approximating certain conceptions of nature.

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# CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

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The first chapter approaches the overall problem that will be researched in the thesis. This is carried out first through an introductory discussion of some tendencies and changes taking place in Denmark right now and second, through a delimitation of the problem formulation and the appertaining research questions. The introduction is followed by an insight into the Danish organic food market. Lastly, the philosophical and methodological considerations of the thesis are examined, discussed and clarified.

# Introduction

According to Euromonitor's 2014 Consumer Lifestyle Analysis, ethical consumption is one of the five most prominent trends in Denmark today (Euromonitor 2014), and especially organic food is experiencing a boom (Rudbeck 2014). Organic food sales in Denmark has more than doubled during the last eight years, growing from 3.5% to 8% in 2013 (Økologisk Markedsnotat 2014) - the highest market share of any other country in the world (Willer & Lernoud 2014). Even during the financial crisis, when all other kinds of consumption decreased drastically, organic sales remained unaffected in Denmark and even saw a progress. It is nothing short of impressive. Even so, with all indication, 2014 will end up being the most successful year yet, with several Danish supermarkets experiencing double-digit growth in organic sales (Beck 2014; Krigslund 2014) and consumer attitude studies showing a very positive progress (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening 2014).

The interest in organic food appears to exist on all levels of Danish society, recently evident in the discussion of organic/non-organic food in public kitchens (Bloch 2014). According to a governmental action plan, a minimum of 60% percent of the food in public kitchens should be organic by 2020, and the organic acreage will be at least doubled (Handlingsplan 2020). These decisions are already showing across the country (Børn & Unge 2014). Especially the day care facilities are converting their kitchens – and specialists are claiming that the pressure is coming both from parents, pedagogues (Børn & Unge 2014) and not least municipalities wanting to brand themselves as 'green' (Tolderlund 2014). Recently the government included a green partial agreement in the Finance Bill for 2015, earmarking 120m Danish kroner for ecology during the next four years (Würtzenfeld 2014). If nothing else, this sort of political initiative sends a strong signal as to what kind of values are important in Danish society right now.

Organic food products are substantially more expensive than non-organic foodstuff (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening 2014b), partly because of costly production methods. At the same time, the products themselves are shown to have very little "actual" differences (Brandt 2012) in taste, quality or nutrition – though, this is of course debated. We know that price normally is one of the most important factors in the consumer decision-making process (Mazar & Zhong 2010), especially when it comes to fast-moving consumer goods. Taking into consideration the boom we are experiencing in Denmark and studies showing that many consumers are willing to pay more for organic products, this would indicate that *organic* food consumption is quite different from non-organic food consumption.

The point of departure of this thesis is that perhaps all these changes in consumption and tendencies in Danish society are a manifestation of larger and more general changes in Western society. Namely changes involved in globalisation, in modernity, and consequently in our relation to and conceptions about nature. Thus, this thesis will seek an understanding of organic food consumption in Denmark through the overall perspective of globalisation.

Globalisation is restructuring the ways in which we live; it has caused changes in family structures, in religion and in culture – and these structures have to do with the ways in which we make sense of the world (Giddens 1990; 2000). The dissolving of structures and tradition as well as the massive retreat from nature, which has been going on through a few hundred years in Western society (de Burgh-Woodman & King 2012), means that many things become much more unpredictable and thus, subject to change (Giddens 2000). The social order of late modernity is a consequence of and interrelated with globalisation (Thompson 1992). Among many other things, individuals living in late modernity are involved in identity construction, reflexivity and risk-handling. Exploring these concepts can help us understand how people make sense of themselves and their social world (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990; 1991). In conclusion, the theoretical areas outlined above will serve as a part of the theoretical and philosophical framework for this thesis, as they are all relevant for exploring the broad cultural currents in Western society.

This thesis suggests that there are answers to find in the way we talk about things, and that we can approach some of the presumed links in food consumption by exploring the discourses surrounding this consumption. Following poststructuralist thoughts (Delanty & Strydom 2003; Olsen & Pedersen 2008), my position is that society and reality is constructed through language and discourse, and consequently, society and reality can be investigated through the analysis of discourse. By analysing discourse, we can find signs of how people construct realities around organic food (Fairclough 1995; Jørgensen & Phillips 2002) as well as how they construct their own identities and how they relate to their social world (Giddens 2000). The objects of this analysis will be a few, chosen texts that will serve as examples of the discourses, values and social tendencies at stake in society. They will not need to be representative of Danish society nor all encompassing.

In accordance with the theory of *critical* discourse analysis (and in particular the theory of Norman Fairclough (1995; 2001)), in order to gain a deep understanding of discourse, it must be analysed on three distinct levels – textual, discursive and contextual. The contextual level is about engaging in the broader social practices of which the textual and discursive dimensions are part, and these practices involve both discursive and non-discursive processes (Fairclough 1995). In order to analyse these processes, it is necessary to bring in additional empirical data and to draw on additional theories (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Thus, a part of the analysis of this thesis will be about exploring a network of discourses to which the analysed discourse practice belongs, as well as exploring the discourse practice through theories of modernity, identity and consumption (as outlined above).

## Problem area

As discussed above, there is an indication of certain tendencies and changes in consumption taking place in Denmark right now, namely ones involving increased organic food sales and a general positive focus on ecology. In this thesis, I want to investigate the possible connection between these tendencies and overall changes in society, which have to do with globalisation and its various consequences. At least two areas of studies will be explored explicitly and serve as theoretical framework, specifically *globalisation and the consequences of living in late modernity* and *identity and consumption*.

In order to approximate some of the social constructions involved in organic food consumption, a few texts will be chosen for a discourse analysis – these are used as an example of the discourses and social changes in play. Specifically, Danish food and lifestyle blogs are chosen as the primary empirical objects of the analysis. The main arguments for this choice is that personal blogs are fundamentally expressive about their subject, and there should be insights into the everyday lives of the senders of these texts and thus, their social relations and consumption practices. Additional texts are brought into the third level of the analysis, and they will serve as a contextual dimension of the wider structures in place in society. In accordance with the positions and framework of the thesis, the discourses that are primarily being looked into and sought out are ones that ultimately have to do with the conception of organic food. Overall, I want to investigate how consumption of organic food may be about identity construction and about wanting to be (symbolically) closer to nature.

## Problem formulation

What identities and overall conceptions of nature do Danish consumers express via food and lifestyle blogs, and how can these be related to the processes of globalisation?

### **Research questions**

1. Which organic food discourses can be found in Danish food and lifestyle blogs?
2. In what ways is organic food consumption about identity construction and about being symbolically closer to nature?
3. How is globalisation influencing the way Danish consumers relate to food consumption?



## A few clarifications

In this thesis, I make no differentiation between 'organics' and 'ecology'. Both concepts are to be understood as corresponding to the Danish word 'økologi', and they are used synonymously and interchangeably.

It should be clarified that when talking about globalisation, modernity and organic food discourses throughout the thesis, the focus is on the Western part of the world. It is assumed that there is a common culture and a simultaneous historical development (partly caused by globalisation) that makes it appropriate to address some discourses as a Western phenomenon.

The objects of the discourse analysis are Danish texts, which means that for the purpose of executing the analysis in English, I was required to translate all quotes. It should be noted that all quotes throughout the discourse analysis are my own translations and therefore at risk of mis-translation or loss of linguistic nuances.

## Structure of the thesis

This simple overview of the paper is presented as a reader's guide, and its purpose is to give a basic understanding of the structure of the paper.

### **Chapter I: Introduction and methodology**

The first chapter approaches the overall problem area of the thesis. The chapter includes:

- Introduction
- Organic food consumption in Denmark
- Methodology

### **Chapter II: Theoretical framework**

The purpose of chapter II is to outline the main theories on which the thesis is based and to examine the central concepts used in the empirical analysis. The chapter includes:

- Globalisation
- Identity and consumption in the age of globalisation and late modernity
- Discourse analysis

### **Chapter III: Analysis**

The third chapter contains the empirical discourse analysis. Following a three-dimensional model of discourse analysis, the analysis is divided into three separate stages:

- Analysis level 1: Text
- Analysis level 2: Discourse practice
- Analysis level 3: Sociocultural practice

### **Chapter IV: Conclusion**

The final chapter has as its overall objective to sum up the results of the research and to present the author's conclusive thoughts and perspectives. It includes only two parts:

- Conclusion
- References

# Organic food consumption in Denmark

Organic foodstuff is a growing market in Denmark, and it has been for several years now (Rudbeck 2014). In 2013, organic food sales in Denmark had a market share of 8%, which is highest in the world (Willer & Lernoud 2014). The Danish retail chains report of a very positive development in the organic sales in 2014, with the most positive numbers revealing an increase in purchased organic products of 11%, and this progress is expected to continue (Krigslund 2014; Thirup Beck 2014).

In this initial section, I will take a closer look at Denmark and the Danish consumers as well as the organic food market, the certified organic label, *the Ø logo*, and a couple of consumption trends.

## Danish consumers

Danish consumers have been and are still characterised by spending a lot of time at home compared to other European nationalities. A big part of private life in Denmark takes place within the four walls of home or in the homes of friends and family. And a great deal of concern and time is generally put into preparing the evening meal (Euromonitor 2014).

As far as eating at home is concerned, 65% of Danes eat a warm, home cooked dinner at least six times a week, with 36% eating at home daily. Households with children and high income eat more frequently at home, while single households with low income eat fewer home-cooked meals (Euromonitor 2014: 23).

Denmark scored high in the OECD's Better Life Index 2013, especially on two parameters, namely work-life balance and life satisfaction. In terms of work-life balance, Denmark was placed higher than all other countries in the OECD index. An average Dane devotes 16.1 hours of his daily time to leisure and personal care compared to 14.3 hours by an average US citizen (Market Line 2014).

Household assets are high in Denmark, and Danish consumers spend a large part of their income on food (Ibid.). The demand for healthy food is increasing, which can be seen in the decline in fast food restaurants, more healthy and high quality restaurants offering take-out options, and even places such as McDonald's seeing increased sales in "healthy options" such as carrots and

low-fat burgers and salads. The consumption of wholegrain products is also gaining ground, with daily consumption per person increasing from 32 grams a day in 2004 to 55 grams in 2013 (Euromonitor 2014).

Health in general is a concern for most Danish consumers. Obesity has been slowly increasing, but not as much as in other industrial countries. One of the major explanations to this fact is said to be a high level of exercise. 85% of Danes exercise at least once a week - compared to a worldwide average of 25% this is quite significant.

## Emerging trends

A national study on consumer lifestyles in Denmark from 2014 listed *growth in ethical consumption* as one of the top five consumer trends. Health and sustainability go hand in hand as growing trends among Danish consumers (Ibid.). There is an interest in getting to know the source behind products, and this has changed consumption drastically during the past few years. Organic vegetables have found their way into the households, and generally the quality of food is winning over quick and cheap fast food options (Ibid.). More Danes are investing in solar energy, and there is greater focus on conserving energy use. Only air travel remains unaffected by environmental concerns - in fact, consumer spending on air travel has nearly doubled since 2000 (Ibid.). Danish consumers have one of the highest rates of food wastage in the world (98.8 kilo per person per year), but it now seems to be declining, thanks to governmental efforts and non-profit organisations. In 2012, half of all Danes claimed to have reduced food waste (Euromonitor 2014).

Along with food waste reduction and a growing concern for environmental impacts and sustainability, the number of flea markets in Denmark has virtually exploded. From 549 flea markets in 2009 to over 2000 in 2013, there has been an increase of 265% over just four years (Euromonitor 2014):

There is a great demand among consumers to buy as well as sell clothing items in these markets. The „Buy and throw“ mentality has been replaced by a „Buy and sell on“ attitude. According to the Guardian, online Danish marketplaces such as Trend Sales had 700,000 used and unused garments for sale in 2012, while Den Blå Avis had over a million trades in clothing (Euromonitor 2014: 30).

As it is suggested in this report, the development could be connected to a shift in mentality and a serious trend in Danish consumer society. Even though the economy is marginally better (Market Line 2014), the effect of the financial crisis on consumer mentality is impossible to ignore, and it has generated new market trends: It is not trendy to consume just to consume, or to buy a lot of

stuff just because you can (Ibid.). On the contrary, if you can take old things and make them modern, you are consuming with a clear conscience. And if you can knit your children's clothes yourself, you are a hip and caring mom. Marianne Levinsen (Consumer Lifestyles 2014) from the Centre of Future Studies had this to say about home activity trends at the beginning of 2013,

One of the trends we will and already have seen will be that Danes will be very engaged in home and nesting, knitting, recycling, home-grown vegetables, everything that has to do with your home and your family and friends (Consumer Lifestyles 2014: 41).

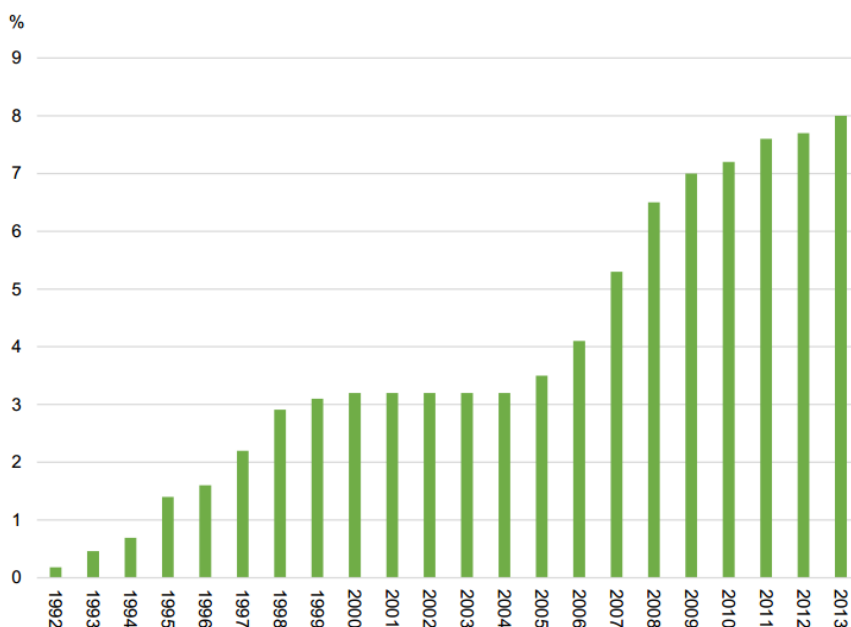
## The organic food market in Denmark

In Denmark, the state has played a major role in the development of organic consumption, especially in terms of supporting the production of organic foodstuff (Tveit & Sandøe 2011). The first organic holdings in Denmark were established during the 1970's as ideological projects trying to counterbalance conventional food production practices. As early as 1974, a definition of organic agriculture as an umbrella term for biodynamic farming and farming without inorganic fertiliser was formulated and published in the periodical *Bioinformation* (Hansen 2010). However, it was not until 1981 with the foundation of *The National Association of Organic Agriculture*<sup>1</sup> that a large part of the organic farmers became practically organised around common goals and values (Ibid.). In 1987, Denmark saw the first law on ecology, organic farming was institutionalised with state regulatory and control systems (Hansen 2010), and it slowly became financially lucrative to farm and sell organic groceries (Tveit & Sandøe 2011). Since then, the state has issued several action plans and reforms in support of organic food production, and thereby helped the growers in meeting the growing demands of the late 1990s and onwards (Tveit & Sandøe 2011).

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<sup>1</sup> Back then, the Danish name for this organisation was Landsforeningen for Økologisk Jordbrug. Later, they changed it to the current name, The Danish National Association for Organic Food and Farming – in Danish, Økologisk Landsforening.

The organic market share in Denmark 1992-2013 (Økologisk Landsforening 2014: 4)



It is evident from figure above that the organic market share increased from 3.5% in 2005 to 8% in 2013. Thus, in spite of financial crisis between 2008 and 2013 and a resulting general slowdown in consumption, the organic market has continued to evolve in a positive direction. This indicates that the consumption of organic foodstuff is about something other than price and economy entirely (Økologisk Landsforening 2014).

### **The organic consumers**

Studies show that those with the highest organic consumptions often are women in the major cities with high-income levels (Tveit & Sandøe 2011). Thus, the organic share of the average total grocery shopping of households in the metropolitan area was 13% in 2013 – 5% higher than the national average.

A study from 2014 showed that single households have the highest organic percentages (9.8%), followed by families with one child (8.6%), and in correlation with age, the age group 30-39 has the highest average organic percentage of 10.6 (Økologisk Landsforening 2014: 15). Most strikingly, consumers with higher education hold an organic percentage of 17.5 (ibid.), proving that educational level is the most decisive factor when it comes to the likelihood of consuming organic foodstuff (ibid.).

Another study (Tveit & Sandøe 2011) showed that certain attitudes are common with organic consumers:

The organic consumer considers organic products to be healthier, more tasteful and fresher than conventional products. Furthermore, the organic consumer typically attaches great importance to environmentally friendly production processes and animal welfare (Tveit & Sandøe 2011: 49-50).

Some of these attributes are a direct result of the legal organic production processes, while others are an indirect result and not guaranteed by the certified organic label (the Ø logo). In fact, not all consumers agree that organic products taste better than conventional products, or even that they should be better for your health.

### **The Ø logo**

In 2015, the state label for organic food in Denmark celebrates its 25th anniversary, which makes it the oldest existing state-certified organic label in the world. According to a study from 2013, it is also the label with the undisputed highest level of recognition and trust, reaching a staggering 98% in recognition and 84% in trust (Fødevareministeriet 2013). The Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries claims that the following points represent the main messages of the label:

- Protection of nature and groundwater
- Fewer artificial additives
- Increased animal welfare
- No pesticides

The same study showed that almost two out of three associated the label with at least two of these points, proving that consumers not only recognise the label but that they have a high degree of knowledge about what it represents (Fødevareministeriet 2013). On the website of the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration, who manage the label, it is stated that:

The Ø logo is an inspection label and shows that the latest preparation of the product has taken place in a Danish company inspected by the public authorities. Therefore, the logo can be seen on both foods that originate from Danish organic farms and on imported foods that are processed, packed or labelled in Denmark (Fødevarestyrelsen 2014).

Thus, the label represents a security for the consumer that the production methods involved in the product live up to Danish standards for organic food.

# Methodology

The following section addresses the philosophical and methodological considerations that are relevant for the research conducted in this thesis. First, my choices in relation to the constructivist paradigm and structuralist thinking are discussed and clarified. Next, the choices involved in the research design of the thesis are outlined and explained.

## Philosophical considerations

Analysing a given subject, it is possible to take any number of positions on ontology (view of reality), epistemology (view on knowledge) and to make certain theoretical and methodological choices when doing research, within the understanding of these positions. However, a certain position on ontology does have consequences for the choice of epistemology, a fact that justifies the tendency to claim adherence to a paradigm. I will therefore discuss the paradigm this thesis adheres to, but also specify further its relation to structuralism and truth, the epistemological and ontological choices that have been made, as well as the general consequences of these choices, all for the understanding of the thesis.

### **My world, my paradigm**

Guba (1990) describes the concept of the paradigm as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action (Guba 1990: 17)”, and this definition is consistent with my understanding of a paradigm, in the most generic sense. Closing a bit further in, as researchers we are of course mainly concerned with those paradigms that guide a specific kind of action, namely scientific research. Guba (1990:18) as well as Bryman (2008: 13) go on to argue that a paradigm is a ‘net’ that contains the researchers’ relation to the ontology, epistemology and the methodological premises. Though I do not directly disagree with this idea, I consider these relations between researcher and methodology to be about more than an overall paradigm and consequences thereof. I will argue that within one paradigm, there are still methodological and philosophical freedom and therefore additional choices to be made. These choices are discussed after a short outline of the paradigm reflected in this thesis.



Guba & Lincoln (1994) have demonstrated the existence of four important paradigms in the world of social sciences: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism – with the later addition (Guba & Lincoln 2003) of the participatory paradigm. It should be noted, however, that the exact number of paradigms and the names associated with a particular paradigm vary from author to author (Willis, 2007). I position this thesis as primarily *constructivist* (or social constructionist), accepting the definition of constructivist social researcher Egon Guba (1990). He outlines the basis of the constructivist paradigm through four central points:

1. Reality exists only in the context of a mental framework for thinking about it, and researchers cannot discover universal facts or *the way things really are*, because empirical data is never independent of construct (Guba 1990: 25).
2. No theory can be fully tested or explained unequivocally, because there will always be a number of possible constructions and no way to choose among them with absolute certainty. “Reality can be seen only through a window of theory (Ibid.),” which means that research is still only a small view of certain constrained aspects of the world, and the researcher should be aware of its limitations.
3. Research is never value-free. “If reality can be seen only through a theory window, it can equally be seen only through a value window (Ibid.)” Both the researcher and the objects of the research are subjects to their own values.
4. The results of research are shaped by the interaction between researcher and the object of research, ultimately making all knowledge a human construction – not certifiably true but rather changing and problematic (Guba 1990: 26).

Overall, accepting that the thesis works within the constructivist paradigm means that the knowledge produced is ultimately a human construction and therefore subject to human error. I will now go on to stating my ontological and epistemological choices, which are highly influenced by the paradigm but, as I mentioned before, also involve choices based on the kind of research I am doing.

### **Ontology**

An important but perhaps obvious point of the constructivist paradigm is that of relativism (Guba 1990; Olsen & Pedersen 2008). By definition, the opposite of relative is absolute. And of course, nothing about a constructivist world view is absolute, therefore constructivists tend to claim that their ontological position is relativism. Guba (1990) argues that:

Relativism is the key to openness and the continuing search for ever more informed and sophisticated constructions. Realities are multiple, and they exist in people's minds (Guba 1990: 26).

Thus, an overall relativist position is taken in this thesis. It should however also be noted that society is not seen as a concept existing only in the individual's mind, but rather (in accordance with poststructuralism) as a network of structures influencing the individual. In this thesis, the analytical approach is discourse analysis. Agreeing with Jørgensen & Phillips (2002: 8) that discourse analytical approaches "take as their starting point the claim of structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy, that our access to reality is always through language", the analysis will have intrinsic consequences for the way in which the thesis positions itself ontologically. In fact, following poststructuralist thoughts, the most important ontological position of this thesis is the notion that society and reality is constructed through language and discourse (Delanty & Strydom 2003; Olsen & Pedersen 2008). Consequently, society and reality can be investigated through the analysis of discourse.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemologically, the constructivist will normally choose to take a subjectivist position, meaning that knowledge is ultimately subjective and is constructed in the interaction between researcher and the object of research. However, in this thesis I am less interested in subjectivism and more concerned with how discourses are constructed and deconstructed and with unravelling the truths behind language rules (Olsen & Pedersen 2008). The thesis then works in the realms of structuralism, perspectivism and constructivism, and it takes a critical position on the way discourse is constructed and the way it holds power. Olsen & Pedersen (2008) describe the structuralist perspective on theories in this way: "Theories are not seen as general laws or models, but interpretations that highlight every aspect of a case that normally remain hidden (Olsen & Pedersen 2008: 163)". Theory and models of analysis can thereby be applied to reality as a way of seeing other layers, depths and systems in (interpreting) reality and creating a deeper knowledge. However, one should not expect to find objectivity.

### **Structuralism**

According to Delanty & Strydom (2003), the basic idea of structuralism started with Emile Durkheim and expanded with linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's thoughts on the linguistic nature of society (Ibid.). The most important character in the history of structuralism, however, is arguably French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss who renounced human subjectivity and argued that civilisation is constructed by codes and structures, thus forming a new way of thinking (Ibid.).

Though it is not widely agreed that Foucault was ever really a structuralist (Ibid.), Olssen (2010) argues that there are several reasons why he tends to be seen in the same light (Olssen 2010). Firstly, as did other structuralist scholars, he advocated a philosophy of the system, of concepts and of structures while opposing a philosophy of the subject (Ibid.). Secondly, he applied a structural methodology allowing him to advance a holistic, non-linear analysis of social life, much like other structural writers of the 1960s (Ibid.). Foucault's methodological approach to structural linguistics, claims Olssen (2010), has many similarities with today's poststructuralism:

This kind of analysis is characterised, first, by anti-atomism, by the idea that we should not analyse single or individual elements in isolation but that one must look at the systematic relations among elements; second, it is characterised by the idea that the relations between elements are coherent and transformable, that is, that the elements form a structure (Olssen 2010: 192).

In other words, a social phenomenon cannot stand alone; it must be analysed within its context, and the context is constructed in a coherent, structural way. I agree with this view, and I find that when researching complex tendencies in a society, as this thesis is, it is relevant to keep this in mind throughout. At least one implication of this perspective is that a solely linguistic analysis will not reveal sufficient depths of knowledge. However, I research in accordance with the constructivist idea that reality ultimately is a social construction, which is why language and discourses are considered to be extremely important in the process of understanding this social phenomenon. What the poststructuralist perspective adds to this is that the discursive and social practices involved in said discourses are important as well.

The above outlined ideas all fall within what we know to represent structuralist thinking, and they contribute to the scientific perspective of this thesis. I will now briefly mention the last ideas important for the philosophical position of this thesis. The first is *poststructuralism*, the second is the question of truth, and the third is *deconstructivism*.

### **Poststructuralism, truth and deconstructivism**

Poststructuralism represented a break with some ideas of structuralism, taking language into an area that is more concerned with power and less concerned with e.g. linguistic code (Delanty & Strydom 2003). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) note that it furthermore "rejects structuralism's view of language as a stable, unchangeable and totalising structure (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 10)". This is a very important point in regards to changeability both within structures and from discourse to discourse. According to Delanty & Strydom (2003),

Poststructuralism is best seen as a method of deconstruction, the aim of which is to break up the established structures of thought - discourses, especially those of sciences - that sustain power relations (Delanty & Strydom 2003: 323).

Olsen (2010) adds that in this sense, post-structuralism tends to be more applicable or at least relevant for social sciences, and especially for this thesis, having little interest in linguistics but still wanting to deconstruct language and discourse. The purpose of the post-structuralists were often related to the complex question of (or problem with) truth. The 1960s presented various critiques of positivism and general critiques of the idea that science (social or natural) should move towards *the truth* (Olsen & Pedersen 2008). Social science theorists altogether showed that truth depends on perspective.

Overall, this thesis agrees with the poststructuralist perspective of Foucault and Derrida, explained by Olsen & Pedersen (2008) as follows:

According to them [Foucault and Derrida], society and scientific truths are discursive-linguistic constructs resulting from historical accidents, strategies and power relations (Olsen & Pedersen 2008: 162).

Derrida (Olsen & Pedersen 2008) argues that the construction of truths can be unravelled with what he calls *deconstructions*. This basically means looking at texts closely and thereby identifying underlying structures and dualisms. For instance, if a text is found to reveal a certain claim or worldview on nature, it simultaneously says something about how the text views society. Other dualisms include men/women, science/ideology and civilisation/barbarism (Olsen & Pedersen 2008). Another point is that these elements will usually be in opposition, and that one of them will be dominant. Thus in this perspective, the apparently objective world is problematic, and science is not privileged nor can it be considered a neutral or objective producer of knowledge. Delanty & Strydom (2003) argue the following regarding Derrida:

Derrida's deconstructivism had a wider relevance for the social sciences in that it hastened the cultural turn, central to which was the recognition of the role of language in social relations. Derrida's approach aimed to reveal the multiple levels of meaning contained within language, which is never neutral but pervaded by relations of power (Delanty & Strydom 2003: 323).

Thus, keeping in mind the different ideas outlined in this chapter and in the one before, as well as the epistemological and ontological considerations of the previous chapters, these philosophical considerations all form the basis of how the thesis should be understood. Further than that, my

research is guided by all these reflections, with the overall purpose to gain thorough, albeit subjective, knowledge.

## Research design

The research design is basically the plan that structures the data collection and analysis of a given research. According to the definition by Denzin & Lincoln (2008) it “describes a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials (Denzin & Lincoln 2008: 33).” Following this logic, the main steps in solving the posed problem will now be described and explained.

### **Theoretical considerations**

The main theories applied to this thesis are Fairclough’s (1995) theory of critical discourse analysis, Anthony Giddens (1990, 2000) and Ulrich Beck (1992, 2009) on globalisation and late modernity theory as well as Giddens’s (1991) identity construction theory combined with other theories of consumption (Halkier 2001, 2010; Warde 1997, 2014).

Discourse analysis as an area of studies assumes that social structures can be understood through language. Since the point of departure of this thesis was the idea that the way people talk about food could be revealing underlying structural changes and deeper social and cultural meanings, critical discourse analysis was an obvious choice as the central theoretical field. In accordance with poststructuralist thinking, critical discourse analysis advocates that you not only analyse language but compliment the textual analysis with discourse practice and social practices to gain deeper understanding. Furthermore, in agreement with Jørgensen & Phillips, my view is that Fairclough has constructed “the most sophisticated framework for analysis of the relationship between language use and societal practices in general (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 89).” Therefore, his approach to discourse analysis was deemed appropriate for this thesis. In the section of ‘analytical considerations’, critical discourse analysis is discussed more thoroughly.

The other primary theorist is the sociologist Anthony Giddens, whose thoughts on both modernity and identity construction imbue the entire thesis. He deals with many of the things I find interesting in modern society. These are the social structures and the changes in society, which affect the way people relate to and talk about food, about the environment, the way they deal with consumption and social relations. I consider these thoughts to represent an approach to social research that correlate with the research problem of this thesis, as well as the overall philosophical viewpoints that the thesis works within. Furthermore, Giddens (along with Beck) introduces useful concepts for understanding the contextual circumstances of Western, organic consumption.

## **Empirical data**

The primary empirical data chosen for this thesis are three Danish blogs, more specifically, personal food and lifestyle blogs. This genre is defined in chapter III: Analysis. Blogs are considered a relevant place to explore the discursive patterns involved in organic food consumption, partly because of the accessibility of blog data and partly due to the blog-medium's specific characteristics, such as self-representation, immediacy and identity creation (Bronstein 2013). It should be noted that the blogs are meant to serve as examples of the discourses that are being explored and the social tendencies at stake in society. They are not chosen for the purpose of being representative of Danish society nor all-encompassing. The blog as a medium is also further explored in chapter III, where the particular criteria for choosing these four blogs are outlined as well.

Critical discourse analysis involves not only a textual and discursive level of analysis, but also an analytical level that explores the context of the discourse (Fairclough 1995). Therefore, additional empirical data is brought in for contextual richness, in the form of a governmental action plan, municipal websites and official documents. These texts represent other organic food discourses than the ones analysed on a textual level, thus taking part in a network of discourses to which the discursive practices of the blog texts belong.

## **Analytical considerations**

Considering the object of the thesis, critical discourse analysis has been chosen as a suitable approach to researching the problem area. The central theory is that of Fairclough, and his central analytical tool is applied as a means of analysing the chosen empirical texts.

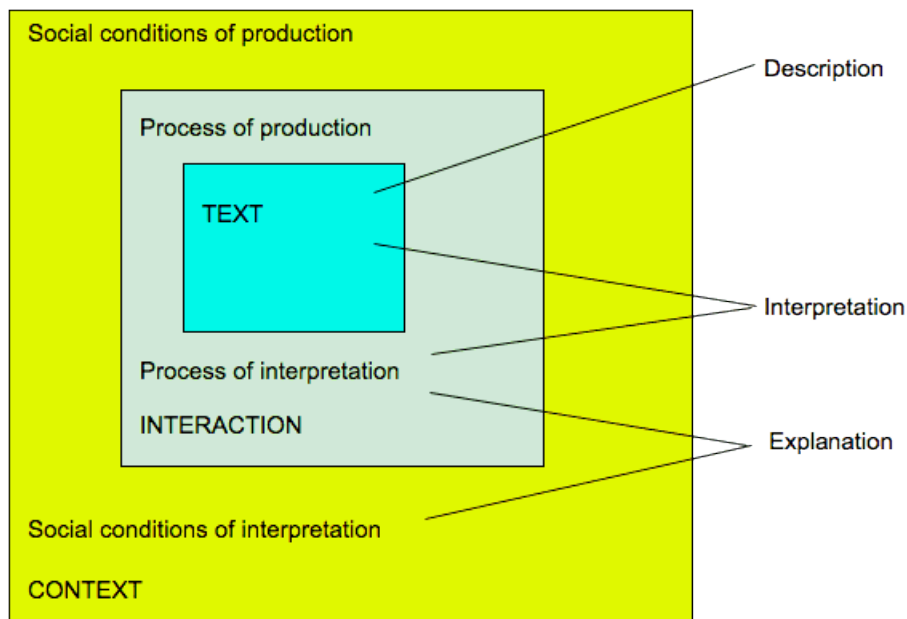
When approaching discourse analysis (hereinafter DA), one needs to distinguish between DA as a developed area of studies, a broadly employed *theory* about discourse in general and a research *tool* in particular. In this methodological section of the thesis, Fairclough's (1989, 1995, 2001) three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis (hereinafter CDA) is examined, thus focusing on the narrower (tool) meaning. DA and CDA as developed areas of study are considered and discussed in chapter II: Theoretical framework.

Fairclough's model for CDA includes three interrelated stages of analysis, covering three interconnected dimensions of discourse (Fairclough 1989):

- Text (verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts): text analysis. The object of the analysis (the text) is in the first stage of CDA analysed through the analysis dimension that Fairclough calls *description*.
- Discourse practice (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing): processing analysis. In the second stage of CDA, the process of sending and receiving the object of analysis is analysed contextually through *interpretation*.

- Socio-cultural practice is basically the socio-historical conditions in which the object of analysis exists, and these conditions determine the process of discourse – and vice versa. This dimension of discourse is analysed through *explanation*.

Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA-model (Fairclough 1989)



This approach is considered to be effective as it enables the researcher to focus on the way the text is constructed, look closer to the constituting elements and question their choice, try to understand these choices, recognize their historical determination, and see how they are connected to the conditions of the utterance. It provides at least three points of analytical entry.

Fairclough has been criticised for being overtly political, and CDA analysts have generally been accused of having predetermined agendas and choosing their texts strategically (Poole 2010). One of the most critical voices is the one of Widdowson (2004) who argues that “interpretation will always be a function of the relationship between text, context, and the scholar’s pretext – here defined not as an ulterior motive, but as the reason for textual study (Widdowson 2004:166).” He claims that in the case of CDA the pretext is political though not necessarily conscious. This is certainly a serious pitfall, but my viewpoint is that it is one that can be said of all models for analysis. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model is widely respected and used (Poole 2010), and it is applicable to all kinds of texts. Furthermore, I agree with Fairclough (2003: 6) that CDA “can in fact draw upon a wide range of approaches to analysing text.” This aspect allows it to be flexible and to work as a framework for analysis; in this case meaning that I am not obliged to use semantic or linguistic analysis on my object of analysis, because CDA is compatible with any number of approaches to text analysis.

For the analysis of the thesis, I will adapt Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA and apply it to the chosen objects of analysis. I consider it to be a great tool for exploring and reaching in-depth understanding of discourse. In the analysis, I will be discussing the details of each analytic level more thoroughly.



# CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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This stage marks the end of chapter I, which had as primary focus to discuss and define the problem area as well as clarify the methodology of the thesis. The purpose of chapter II is to outline the main theories on which the thesis is based, and to examine the central concepts used in the empirical analysis. The specific areas of study that constitute the theoretical framework are 1) Globalisation and modernity, 2) Identity and consumption and 3) Discourse analysis.

# Globalisation

At the core of why we today spend time debating the processes of food production, why we assess the risks of one food product compared to the other, or why we even talk about organics in Denmark, is *globalisation*. Globalisation has not only changed food processes, transportation systems and consumption possibilities; it has in fact changed everything about the way most people live their lives and the way in which they consume goods (McGrew 1992). It is an essential part of modern society and a basic premise of modernity (Giddens 1990, 1991; McGrew 1992; Thompson 1992). We live in a world separated from nature, where traditional institutions have crumbled and mutated, and this fact has great implications for the ways in which we make sense of our own identity as well as everything around us (Giddens 2000) – also in the small country that is Denmark. Globalisation is the framework within which this thesis exists and should be understood in the light of. In this section, I will examine the basic ideas of globalisation and modernity, primarily through the work of sociologists Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991, 2000) and Ulrich Beck (1992, 2009).

## Runaway world

Is globalisation real? How is this world *really* different from that of earlier times? This has been and is still a subject of great debate. Critics claim that anxiety about the future is to a lesser degree a product of the times we live in and more so a basic part of being human. That it is in our nature to be anxious in times of change, and that all historical periods in one way or the other represent change (Giddens 2000). There might have been other times where the uncertainties were just as grave as today. However, things have been happening during the last fifty years or so, constituting exceptional organisational and social changes on a global scale. (McGrew 1992, Giddens 2000). Giddens (2000) states, “there are good, objective reasons to believe that we are living through a major period of historical transition (Giddens 2000: 19).” Following this thought, this next section will be exploring globalisation as the catalyst of the ongoing transitions in society.

## Defining globalisation

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people thought that science and technology was supposed to make life more predictable, safe and certain, and many sociologists indeed foresaw this stable and ordered world (Giddens 2000, Beck 2009). In the end, it did the opposite. Our world is not stable nor safe. It is filled with risks that we face every day; risks that previously were not there (Beck 2009). Global warming, claims Giddens (2000), is just one of them. Another is the dissolving of structures and traditions causing all kinds of social and psychological anxieties (Beck 1992). Furthermore, these risks affect everybody, as they are bound up with globalisation: “Globalisation is restructuring the ways in which we live, and in a very profound way (Giddens 2000: 22).”

Still, globalisation is sometimes wrongly accused or misunderstood, and it often has a profoundly negative undertone when mentioned in public debate or media. When people for example talk about poverty caused by globalisation, what often is meant is *economic globalisation*, which is not entirely fair (Giddens 2000). Economic globalisation and, with it, free trade, is not beneficial to all and it does have an influence on poverty. It holds a great deal of the responsibility for the massive inequalities of the world (Bauman 1997). However, and this is important, globalisation is more than the economic kind. Initially the concept referred to either economics or culture; today it refers to all aspects of lived life becoming increasingly worldwide (McGrew 1992). Giddens (2000) approximates a definition, stating that:

Globalisation [...] is a complex set of processes, not a single one. And these operate in a contradictory or oppositional fashion [...] The American sociologist Daniel Bell expresses this very well when he says that the nation becomes too small to solve the big problems, but also too large to solve the small ones (Giddens 2000: 31).

Thus, Giddens understands globalisation as a descriptive concept for a variety of social processes, and simultaneously claims that the processes do not all work together in a planned or even homogenous way. In such way, globalisation concerns both the global and the local.

Giddens (2000) starts his “globalisation timeline” in the 1960’s with the development of new communication systems. Globalisation is political, technological and cultural, as well as economic (McGrew 1992). It has been influenced above all by developments in systems of communication, dating back only to the late 1960’s (Beck 1992; Thompson 1992). The rise of instant electronic communication is not just a new and quicker way of sending and receiving information. It has changed and still is changing the way in which we live (Giddens 2000). Not just in the grand scale of things, but also in terms of changing intimate and personal aspects of people’s lives (Ibid.). Consider what it means to know in detail the face of Barack Obama (not to mention personal details about his life) better than we know our next-door neighbour. That is the reality of this world for

most people, at least in industrial countries, and that is a profound change in the very texture of our lives (Ibid.).

To sum up, the part of globalisation that this thesis addresses is what has to do with the social consequences of globalisation. I am concerned with globalisation's influences on human activity and social processes and, more specifically, on consumption.

### **The end of nature and tradition**

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, traditional ways of living are challenged by globalisation (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990, 1991, 2000). The globalisation processes has caused changes in family structures, in religion and in culture – and this can be extremely stressful because it has to do with the ways in which we make sense of the world (Giddens 2000). The dissolving of structures and tradition as well as the massive retreat from nature, which has been going on through a few hundred years in Western society (de Burgh-Woodman & King 2012), means that many things become much more unpredictable:

A society living on the other side of nature and tradition – as nearly all Western countries now do – is one that calls for decision making, in everyday life as elsewhere (Giddens 2000: 64).

Living on the other side of nature means that most of our surrounding material have in some way been constructed by people or effected by human intervention, claims Giddens (2000): “Most of what used to be natural is not completely natural anymore (Giddens 2000: 45).” Of course, this influences our practical relation to nature and environment, but it also affects how humans in the Western world relate to the symbolic idea of nature (Giddens 2000; de Burgh-Woodman & King 2012). Sociologists de Burgh-Woodman & King (2012) argue that man's fascination and complex relation with the construct of nature can be traced all the way back to Greek mythology. In the history of the human/nature relationship, they claim, the longing to be closer to nature, to return to less complicated modes of existence is a natural reaction to modernity (de Burgh-Woodman & King 2012). *Nature* as this distant though highly romanticised term allegorises angst towards an increasingly technologized, structured existence – and the relationship becomes one of aesthetic-metaphoric character, charged with emotions of retreat and virginity (Ibid.). Contributing to this discussion of nature and culture, sociologists Meppem & Bourke (1999) claims the existence of a continual narrative within environmental discourse based on underlying truth claims; they call it *the 'our world' narrative* (Meppem & Bourke 1999). This narrative seeks closeness to eras of the past – before the Enlightenment and the industrialization – when the human relation with nature supposedly was more *natural* or equal (Ibid.). Discursively it entails fantasy-like conceptions about

returning to nature, and nature is in this regard pure and unspoiled, but also completely separated from a modern context. The tension between nature and culture, grounded in Giddens' (2000) idea about the dissolving of structures and retreat from nature, is explored and discussed in the analysis across the different analytical stages.

Next section deals with the social order of modern society, which also has been influenced a great deal by globalisation.

## Modernity!

Modernity has been going on simultaneously with the globalising of the world, and I will argue (along with Giddens) that the two concepts are deeply intertwined. Modernity is a social order of society, and its development has been greatly affected by globalisation (Giddens 1990, 1991; Thompson 1992). The qualities of today's modernity are in this way a condition of globalisation, and it is therefore reasonable to outline some of these qualities.

Modernity refers to modes of social life or organisation, originally emerging in Western Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and onward (Giddens 1990), marked by questioning or rejection of tradition (Beck 1992). In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a need for new words for the era in which we are living and the modes of social process we are experiencing, emerged (Giddens 1990). The current era has seen a further development of the trends of modernity, and is also influenced by globalisation and characterised by mobility, information transactions, digitalisation, and diminution of scientific truths and an evaporating of *the grand narrative* (Ibid.). This era has been called many names – post-modernity, information society, post-industrial society and so on –, but following the thought-process of Giddens (1990), I will use the term *late modernity* (Giddens 1990: 3) for the social order of society today. Beck (1992) refers to this as *another modernity* (Beck 1992: 10) or *reflexive modernization of industrial society* (Beck 1992: 153). As Giddens (1991) states, “rather than entering a period of post-modernity, we are moving into one in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalised and universalised than before (Giddens 1991: 3).” Late modernity differs from all preceding forms of social order because of its dynamism, its deep undermining of tradition, and its global impacts (Giddens 1991, Beck 1992). Because of this, it also radically alters the very nature of daily life and the most personal aspects of human activity (Giddens 1991).

The following sections will outline a few important aspects of late modernity.

## **Reflexivity**

According to Giddens (1991), tradition and structure has more or less dissolved in the time of modernity. These structures (constructed by family, religion, etc.) meant that most choices were already made, life-narratives were fixed and the possibilities of choosing or acting against the fixed boundaries were very few (Ibid.). Thus, reflexivity was not equally required in former society, whereas modernity has forced us to reflect upon the choices we make - reflexivity is integrated in society and required of the modern citizen (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992).

The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character (Giddens 1990: 38).

Due to the fact that our knowledge and therefore also our prerequisite for making personal choices continually is changing, we are forced to reconsider choices and actions through life (Ibid.). Giddens (1991) claims that reflexivity is characteristic of all human action, and one consequence of this fact is that the future of an individual does not only consist of one's expectations of future events. It is in fact organized reflectively in the present and thus affecting one's self-identity and a great part of one's personal narrative (Ibid.). As we reflect on the basis of knowledge obtained in all environments in which we enrol ourselves, a critical point is the complexity of society and knowledge today (Beck 2009).

In pre-modern society, social practices were examined in the light of tradition (Giddens 1991), which, as I have mentioned, was in many ways less complicated or less difficult to navigate in. Modernity is constituted through reflexively applied knowledge, but still we can never be sure that any given element of that knowledge will not be revised. Thus, we cannot really be certain of anything (Ibid.). Giddens (1990) explains it like this:

In science, nothing is certain, and nothing can be proved, even if scientific endeavour provides us with the most dependable information about the world to which we can aspire. [...] No knowledge under the conditions of modernity is knowledge in the 'old' sense, where 'to know' is to be certain (Giddens (1990: 40).

We do however rely a great deal on experts and scientists to provide us with the knowledge, on the basis of which we make decisions and manage risks. When it comes to environmental actions, we can begin to understand why this is so complicated. What is the truth, and in whom can we trust? How can we make decisions, when everything is uncertain and self-contradictory? With complexity come multiple possibilities, and the increased possibilities and decisions are followed by increased reflexivity (Giddens 1990; Beck 1992). Self-identity, as I will illustrate later in this

chapter, is one of the essential challenges of modernity. And when it comes to dealing with food, climate, health and organics, these notions of self-identity could be playing a significant role.

### **Dealing with the new risks**

Giddens (2000) claims that one way of making sense of all these new, threatening issues is *by saying that they are all bound up with risk* (Giddens 2000: 39). The new risks, created by the impact of humans upon the world, created by globalisation, Giddens refers to as manufactured risks. With manufactured risk, we do not know what the level of risk is (Giddens 2000). Take for example the risk of global warming: How big is it? How severe will the threat be? Is it even real? How much should be done to prevent it? We cannot be sure. And in the case of doing too little, we will not know until it is too late. Therefore it becomes a push and pull of what is too little and what is too much.

Beck (1992) defines risk as a “systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself (Beck 1992: 21),” which correlates with Giddens’ (2000) understanding of manufactured risks. Beck (1992) further states that most of these risks “induce systematic and often irreversible harm, generally remain invisible, are based on causal interpretations, and thus initially only exist in terms of the (scientific or anti-scientific) knowledge about them (Beck 1991: 22-23).” These are the big risks, such as radioactivity and toxins in the air, in the water and in our food, which we cannot see the direct consequences of, but we still know that at least some of them have short- and long term effects both on us and on nature. This invisibility makes these risks particularly open to social definition and construction (Beck 1991), and the knowledge on which people base their risk handling is never stable nor certain. Because of these factors, mass media combined with scientific and political representatives take on a very powerful position in regards to the way we consider and handle risks (Beck 1991).

Multiple risks need to be dealt with on governmental and personal level, and the manufactured risks are only getting more frequent and more complex (Giddens 2000). As individuals and as consumers, the new risks become a part of life and a factor that cannot be ignored or postponed until scientific evidence is in place. Will I eat genetically modified products, even though we cannot be sure of the long-time effects? Should I try to avoid products grown with the help of pesticides? Can I trust the medicine prescribed by my doctor?

### **In trust we trust**

The term *risk* first emerged in the modern period, as did the term *trust*, claims Giddens (1990). He argues that trust should be understood in relation to risk, and that it is fundamental to the institutions of modernity (Ibid.). The idea of trust therefore is essential when understanding the risks

connected with consumption today. According to Giddens (1990), the disembedding mechanisms<sup>2</sup> of our social systems always depend on trust – for example, when we use monetary tokens, we do so in the presumption (trust) that people will honour their value, and that our monetary system works (Ibid.). We have faith (trust) in the architects designing our buildings or the car-manufacturer that build our cars, and we trust systems of governing, of administration and of economy. For the lay person, trust ensures that we do not need mastery into expert systems – for instance, owning a car does not mean that we have to understand the mechanisms of the engine. We just need to trust it.

Giddens (1990) conceptualises trust as a series of ten points and in that way he approximates a definition of the term. The fundamental basis of these points is the fact that trust only makes sense in the context of modernity and thereby through the disembedding mechanisms of our social systems (Ibid.). In pre-modern times - before the invention of mechanical clocks and standardised calendars - time and space was not separated, and any exchange of values would intrinsically take place immediately and in the same time and space. “There would be no need to trust anyone whose activities were continually visible and whose thought processes were transparent, or to trust any system whose workings were wholly known and understood (Giddens 1990: 33).” Modernity has created the need for trust. Another important point (Giddens 1990) is that trust is not about hoping or believing in the good intentions of others; rather trust rests upon *faith in the correctness of principles* (Op. cit.: 34) even though one is ignorant of these principles. It is basically faith in systems.

For the purpose of this thesis, trust becomes relevant in terms of the many systems involved in food production, transportation and so forth. The fact is that most people actually know very few details about food production systems, about farming or keeping of animals, about CO2 emission or climate change. In order to make choices and relate to the risks, trust in systems and in experts is crucial.

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<sup>2</sup> The disembedding of social systems: “The lifting out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space.” (Giddens 1990: 21)



# Identity and consumption in the age of globalisation and late modernity

One important consequence of modernity is the so-called “crisis of identity” (Hall 1992). In continuation of the theories of globalisation and modernity outlined in the previous section, the basic argument for the central identity theories concerned with late modernity is the following: “The old identities, which stabilised the social world for so long, are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject (Hall 1992: 274)”.

In agreement with Hall (1992) and Giddens (1991), the positions taken in the identity debate is that modern identities are being de-centred or fragmented, that this fragmentation has consequences for the ways in which individuals cope with their social world, and that the fragmented identity is a phenomenon of globalisation and modernity. Consumption theories have relatively recently taken up the conception that consumption is one of the ways in which individuals deal with the cultural changes, the instability and insecurities of modernity (Belk 1988). In this way, consumption theory is interrelated with theories concerning the construction of identity.

The study of consumption as we know it today dates back to the mid-1980s (Gronow & Warde 2001). Before this time, the focus had almost exclusively been on the negative aspects of consumption – e.g. the manipulative techniques of mass-marketing, the social consequences of poverty in market societies, negative effects of social comparison and a general representation of the consumer as a victim of capitalist producers (Ibid.). In other words, during the 1980’s, “the understanding of consumption as a means of displaying social status was challenged from several angles” (Gronow & Warde 2001: 2). Within the field of sociology, consumption developed as a sub-discipline with likes of Bauman (1992), Giddens (1990; 1991) and Belk (1988), arguing that the practice of consuming is a way of constructing self-identity and navigating in late modernity (Ibid.).

## Constructing identity through consumption

Two of the frontrunners in the field of identity construction (or the reflexive making of the self in the postmodern world) are the sociologists Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992). As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the basic claim is that individuals living in late modernity are in a crisis of identity (Hall 1992). We also learned earlier on that Giddens makes an argument for modernity as constructed by a distinct, collective (or institutional) reflexivity that undermines tradition and structure (Giddens 1991). Consequently, the modern citizen constantly constructs and reconstructs his own identity through coherent narratives (Ibid.). The narratives consist of relations, lifestyle and consumption (Holliday et al. 2010). Thus, individuals are in a struggle with themselves in terms of constructing a coherent, personal narrative providing a sense of who they are. Giddens (1991) further argues that being human in reality means being aware of or in some way being able to describe what you do and why you are doing it (Giddens 1991). In other words, one of the essential aspects of being an individual in late modernity is that our choices and actions affect our self-identity – we reflect upon and construct our identity upon already made choices and actions (Ibid.).

An important perspective on identity is the argument that most consumption choices really are made in negotiation with others (Hall 1992). This makes it reasonable not only to discuss an individual's own reflections, considerations and personal narratives, but also to bring forth a concept that considers the interrelations between an individual and its surroundings. Bourdieu (1984; 1986) argues that despite certain restrictions in one's social world that make the cultural supermarket of globalization more or less limited, the effort to bring *cultural capital* into one's social world often is present. Cultural capital can be observed when individuals seek to obtain maximum credit and credibility through consumption within the existing cultural system, but also by bringing in new information and identities (Ibid.). Thus, consumption can also be viewed or explored as a way of claiming status and distinction (Carfagna et al. 2014). Consumers employ different strategies for obtaining cultural capital – and the strategies depend on how they identify socially, which objects and practices will bring them cultural capital within their specific social world (Ibid.).

## The complexities of everyday living

One other perspective of consumption that can deepen our understanding of the issues proposed in this thesis is the perspective of practice theory. Since the specific area of consumption in question is food, I find it relevant to highlight some scholars who have worked theoretically with what we will call *ordinary consumption* (Gronow & Warde 2001), under which category food consumption will most often belong.

Alan Warde (1997, 2014) and Bente Halkier (1999, 2001, 2010) are some of the scholars who have applied practice theory to the theoretical field of consumption. Warde, not entirely rejecting the perspective of Giddens (1991), and the idea of individuals adopting consumption strategies as a means of self-representation, argues that the extent of such practices has been exaggerated. Leaving out other consumption practices in the process, he claims, these have been given too much attention (Gronow & Warde 2001; Warde 1997).

Basically, he claims that ordinary consumption such as use of water and electricity, listening to the radio and everyday food consumption has been left out for years, while social scientific investigations have focused on fashion clothes shopping, private purchases of houses, cars and furniture and consumption of high culture (Ibid.). Consumption in a practice theoretical perspective entails studying contextual and collective constraint rather than individual choice; routine, conventional and repetitive conduct rather than conscious, rational decision-making; practical contexts of acquisition and use rather than the decision to purchase; and considerations of collective identification rather than personal identity (Halkier 2001, 2010). These perspectives on consumption are of course related to the field of ordinary consumption items in a higher degree than the consumption perspective represented by Giddens and outline above, but not exclusively.

Halkier (1999) explains it as follows: "I understand consumption as a particular field of everyday practices which combines the covering of needs with expressions of identification (Halkier 1999: 28) She argues that consumption is a practice that is negotiated socially, it is interdependent of various social relations, and consumers are both socially and practically conditioned agents (Halkier 2010). In this understanding, the practice of consumption is at the same time practical, symbolic and social. Consumption forms a great part of the everyday, social space of an individual. Choices are negotiated directly or indirectly with social relations, e.g. the family (social practice). Consumption takes part in creating and reproducing meaning in the daily life of an individual, it takes part in the sense-making of experiences and roles in life (symbolic practice). Consumption *is* an everyday practice, embedded in everyday routines and practical conditions, and therefore it is subject to habits, convenience and limitations (practical practice) (Ibid.).

# Discourse analysis

In this chapter, the choice of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as one of the central theoretical foundations in this thesis will be clarified, and an overview of discourse analysis (DA) as a field of studies will be given. Taking into account the broadness of these theories and a multitude of points of view on discourse and areas of its implication, I will specify my own understanding of the theory, underlining that the term *discourse* is not only a linguistic matter.

## What discourse analysis has to do with it

DA is a popular and developing area of studies, which encompasses a number of approaches and is characterized by shifts in terminology. First, the relation between *text*, *discourse* and *language* needs clarification. These terms are broadly used by researchers in a variety of contexts, and even though the term discourse originates from linguistics (Alba-Juez 2009), it has evolved and crossed over into several other academic fields (van Dijk 2004). In this thesis I take a discursive (and Faircloughian) view on language, meaning that I regard language to be a form of social practice. This relatively broad definition is preferable because of the sociological (non-linguistic) nature of the thesis, and further on, I will get a bit deeper into a discussion about defining *discourse* as well as the conception of language as social practice. The term *text* is in this thesis treated as a constituted part of discourse and is by no means restricted to written communication. Following one of the broader definitions (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002), every act of communication, be it a public speech, a movie or a newspaper article can be treated as a text (and thereby an element of discourse) which can be profoundly analysed in many other ways than strictly linguistically. Van Dijk (2004) notes:

(...) discourse analysis for me is essentially multidisciplinary. It involves linguistics, poetics, semiotics, pragmatics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, and communication research (van Dijk 2004: 38).

The current aim of DA is to describe language in the context of human interaction (Alba-Juez 2009). For the purpose of this thesis, the significant definition is that of discourse. Fairclough (1989) indicates that discourse is:

[...] the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. This process includes in addition to the text the process of interpretation, for which the text is a resource (Fairclough 1989: 24).

In other occasions, the definition is briefer and somewhat narrower: “[Discourse is] language use conceived as social practice (Fairclough 1995:135),” or “[...] the conception of language we need is that of *discourse*, language as a form of social practice (Fairclough 2001: 16).”

He also states that discourse has two senses: “[...] as an abstract noun, meaning language and other types of semiosis as elements of social life (Fairclough 2003: 26).” and “[...] as a count noun, meaning particular ways of representing part of the world (Ibid.).” While some scholars have accused Fairclough of being too fuzzy in his definition of the central term of his theory (Pool 2010; Widdowson 2004), i.e. discourse, I do believe that his definitions are valid – as long as the researcher is conscious about the twofoldedness of the term discourse and can understand and observe the distinction. O’Halloran (2003) is one scholar who has tried to distinguish the two meanings by calling them Discourse (1) and Discourse (2):

Discourse (1) refers to the coherent understanding the reader makes from a text. [...] Discourse (2) refers instead to the way in which knowledge is organised, talked about and acted upon in different institutions O’Halloran (2003: 12).

While Discourse (1) corresponds to the sense of discourse that Fairclough refers to as *an abstract noun* and that he simultaneously calls *language use conceived as social practice* (Ibid.), Discourse (2) is in the Faircloughian sense discourse used as *a count noun*, as a term for naming “particular ways of representing the world (Ibid.)”. Roughly speaking, the definition of discourse by O’Halloran (2003) is not far from that of Fairclough; only Fairclough has never succeeded in really distinguishing his two ways of using discourse clearly. My point of view in this terminological discussion is that *discourse* covers two distinct – though interrelated – meanings, and that both can be used simultaneously. The researcher’s job is to be aware of both meanings and to make it linguistically clear in what way the term is used. As Fairclough (1995, 2003), I deem discourse to be language as a form of social practice, and text I claim to be the part of discourse that we can study in order to understand the discourse and thus understand the social world in which the discourse exists.

I also consider the second sense in which discourse can be understood (Discourse (2)) to be important, and I support both the definition of O’Halloran (2003) and Fairclough (1995, 2001, 2003), as I believe they complement each other well. Discourses are in this understanding about

how language represents different worldviews or presuppositions. The grand difference between my approach and Fairclough's is that while he stresses the linguistic aspect of discourse, I am less interested in the linguistic details of the text and more reliant of cultural and social theory to help me find patterns and signs of certain social practices in the text.

## Discourse as social practice

Fairclough (2001) states three important implications of language being a form of social practice: "Firstly, that language is a part of society, and not somehow external to it. Secondly, that language is a social process. And thirdly, that language is a socially conditioned process, conditioned that is by other (non-linguistic) parts of society (Fairclough 2001: 18-19)." Let us take a closer look at the three implications:

1. Whenever people speak, listen, write or read they are subjects to social convention – the ways in which they communicate is both determined socially and have social effects. Social processes and practices are not just reflected in language; rather language is a part of these processes. It matters what words we use; it has social consequences. Fairclough claims (2001) that one can simply not be observed or even exist without the other – the relationship is internal and dialectical: "Language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena *are* social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena *are* (in part) linguistic phenomena (Fairclough 2001: 19)."
2. That language is a social process basically means that one needs to look not only at textual elements to understand discourse, because text is only a part of the whole process of social interaction, and social interaction *is* discourse. The process, claims Fairclough (1995, 2001), includes three dimensions: the product (i.e. the text), the process of text production and the process of interpretation. Therefore analysing discourse requires three corresponding levels of analysis. For this purpose, Fairclough developed the three-dimensional model of analysis.
3. Language is a socially conditioned process in the sense that the pre-knowledge that people draw upon to produce and interpret texts has social origins – it is socially generated and the nature of it is dependent on social relations. Fairclough refers to pre-knowledge as 'members' resources' (MR) and claims that: "People internalise what is socially produced and made available to them, and use this internalised MR to engage in their social practice, including discourse ( Fairclough 2001: 20)."

Consequently, text analysis alone is not enough for discourse analysis, as it does not explore the links between texts and societal and cultural processes and structures (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Textual and social analysis needs to be combined (Fairclough 1995). From these views on social

practice, the kinship between discourse analysis and poststructuralist linguistic theory once again becomes visible. They share the same starting point, which is that our access to reality always is through language (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

## Putting the *critical* in discourse analysis

As has been noted before, DA is a broad field of studies and it is possible to say that “there are as many approaches to discourse as there are researchers devoted to the field” (Alba-Juez 2009: 15) and each of them proposes a new form of analysis or new concepts which transform or broaden previous models of analysis. CDA is one of these developing approaches, though it is also in itself a broad, analytical movement consisting of several separate approaches with both differences and similarities (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). What we can say is that CDA overall is concerned with empirical studies of “the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains (op. cit.: 60).”

Norman Fairclough’s approach to CDA is one of the most developed theories within the field, and it pays considerable attention to the questions of ideological influence in discourse (power and ideology) (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). He states that CDA seeks to link language and its models of use to the significance of power and social difference in society (Fairclough 2001).

Fairclough (1995) defines CDA as follows:

[Critical discourse analysis is] an analytical framework – a theory and method – for studying language in its relation to power and ideology. This framework is seen here and throughout as a resource for people who are struggling against domination and oppression in its linguistic forms (Fairclough 1995: 1).

The general viewpoint of Fairclough’s work is that “texts encode political/social/cultural positions of which the writer may be unaware and that these positions will somehow be inscribed in the language (Poole 2010: 142).” However, the writer (or the sender of the text) may also be very much aware of the positions being put forward and use language to manipulate the reader. In both circumstances, the role of the critical discourse analyst is to “expose the ways in which language and meaning are being used to deceive and oppress the dominated (Poole 2010: 143).”

It is said that, “The aim of critical discourse analysis is to shed light on the linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena and processes of change in late modernity (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 61),” which is exactly what it will be applied to in the next chapter of the thesis.

# CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS

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Having defined the problem area of the thesis and outlined the theoretical framework, the focus now shifts to the empirical analysis. Following the three-dimensional discourse analysis model of Fairclough (1995), this analysis is divided into three separate stages:

The first stage represents a text analysis of three Danish blogs, focusing on organic food discourse and patterns related to the conceptions of ecology, nature and food practices. This is the textual level of the analysis.

The second stage represents an analysis of the discursive practices of the chosen blog texts. In the theory of Fairclough (1989, 1995), texts shape and are shaped by social practices through discursive practices (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). The main purpose of the discursive practice level of the analysis is therefore to analyse the circumstances of production and consumption of the blog texts, and thus enable the subsequent context analysis. This is the discursive level of the analysis.

The third stage represents an analysis of the socio-cultural practice of which the textual and discursive dimensions of the blogs are part. These socio-cultural practices include both non-discursive and discursive processes – and this stage of the analysis is accordingly divided into two parts. This is the contextual level of the analysis. Its overall purpose is to apply the key theoretical concepts to the discourse found in the blog texts and to explore patterns in organic food discourse on other levels of Danish society.



# Analysis level 1: Text

The first level of analysis focuses on the textual elements of four Danish blogs. A text analysis is carried out on each blog separately, concentrating on the formal features of the text, such as vocabulary and coherence and also considering choices in content and visual elements. Initially, however, I will give a short introduction to blogs, an attempt to define the blog as well as some insights into the process behind selecting these blogs.

## Danish food and lifestyle blogs

### **What is a blog?**

Weblogs (later called blogs) emerged in the late 1990's and since then the number of blogs and the usage of blogs has grown and evolved explosively (Garden 2011). The massive growth as well as technical and conceptual development of blogs has made it hard to reach an academic definition or even agreement as to whether a blog constitutes a medium or a genre. In fact, the concept of blogging only seems to become ever more complicated and less clear (Garden 2011). From the early blogs until today, blogs have evolved in both usage and technology, and they have multiplied, mutated and reached a state where there are so many different types that an overview is almost impossible to reach. Even though blogs are difficult to define, and some even say not necessary (Garden 2011), I find that when using the term and working within the genre/media in an academic manner, it is important to decide on an understanding. Therefore, I will approximate a definition for the purpose of this thesis, based on structure rather than content, and consider some defining characteristics of blogs.

### **A (very) short history of the blog**

The word *weblog* was first used in 1995 to describe a web-based system very similar to what would soon become the common understanding of weblogs. In 1998, a total of 23 weblogs were counted, and the shorter *blog* first appeared in 1999 and rather quickly caught on as the common name for this phenomenon. The early blogs had three main features: They were chronologically

organised, contained lists of links to interesting sites on the web and had some commentary regarding these links (Garden 2011). Since then, the content of blogs has become more similar to diaries, and the format has changed due to evolving technological features - such as RSS and, most importantly, the comment-feature. In 2002, the possibility of commenting transformed blogs into an online space rather than one-way mass communication (ibid.).

In order to understand blogging and personal blogs of today, a few notions should be made. Blogs are often characterised by a high level of self-disclosure (ibid.). Especially for personal blogs, the aspect of communicating personal thoughts, information and feelings to other people is significant. They are also uniquely suited for self-representation, identity creation and creative communication (Bronstein 2013). These qualities are partially the result of the specific attributes of the blog-medium, partly trademarks of the genre (Garden 2011).

### **Defining the blog**

Whether a blog is a medium or a genre, remains debated between scholars. However, because of the sheer multiplicity and variety of blogs today, I find the notion of calling it a single genre outdated. In the beginning, when all blogs served more or less the same purpose, there might have been consistency in cultural patterns (e.g. validation of self) and rhetorical conventions, but with the emergence of blogs with widely different purposes (e.g. news blogs or commercial blogs), defining blogs as a genre does not seem valid anymore. And, while defining the blog as a medium is also complicated, it does appear more adequate. As a result, I support the argument that:

Blogs are a medium, with a variety of different activities and interactions occurring in and through that medium [and] rather than regarding the internet as a single medium, it is useful to consider different software as providing different media (Garden 2011: 491).

I agree that the internet can no longer be seen as a single medium; it is simply too complex and differentiated. With the definition of a blog as a medium, it appears useful to consider the most common features of a blog, such as links, a blog roll or the possibility to comment (Dalsgaard 2011). Often a blog will contain dated entries in reverse chronological sequence. Frequent updates are also considered important, giving the blog a sense of immediacy and dynamic – especially compared to the more static and formal website (Garden 2011). In continuation, a personal and informal expression is often said to be characteristic of the blog (Dalsgaard 2011). Within the medium of a blog, we can then begin to identify and to a certain degree characterise different genres and sub-genres.

## Selecting the blogs

Based on the abovementioned characteristics (self-representation, immediacy and identity creation), blogs are considered a relevant place to explore the discursive patterns involved in organic food consumption.

In this thesis, my interest lies within a genre that has been widely defined as *personal blogs* (Garden 2011, Haider 2013, Whalen et al. 2013), and – going a little further – I find that the subgenre lies somewhere between the *personal food blog* (Salvio 2012), the *lifestyle blog* (Bronstein 2013) and the *personal green living blog* (Haider 2013). By staying within the field of personal blogs, my analytical interest remains that of organic food, as it is constituted through everyday life and topics, thus maintaining the consumer perspective. Haider (2013) claims that “personal blogs often centre on everyday life and self-representation in the form of personal and family affair (Haider 2013: 249)”, and argues that many of them could also be described as lifestyle blogs (Ibid.). In order to keep focus, methodological consensus and analytical comparability, I will define my subgenre of blogs as *personal food and lifestyle blog*, with a criterion of supplemental *green living* aspects, offering “everyday life perspectives on what it means to live in an environmentally friendly manner” (Haider 2013). Thus, the chosen blogs have an overall or part focus on food, and the authors all have taken a position on environmental living in relation to food. Evidently, I am especially interested in how this position is constituted through the blog.

The three blogs have been sought out on the basis of these parameters. Additionally, I have required the blogs to have a certain level of activity and a considerable quantity of monthly readers. And since I was only selecting very few blogs (and ended on three), it was important that they to some extent represented diverse lifestyles.

For practical and analytical purposes, each blogger will be referred to as “the sender” in the text analysis. On analysis level three, where the analysis is not strictly parted between each blog, they are referred to as Object A, Object B and Object C.

## Louise Hartmann – A blog about life as an eco-mom (Object A)

The sender of this blog is a female 25-year-old, who lives with her family on a farm, though they do not appear to be farmers. She started the blog around the time she had her first child in 2011, and since then she has spent most of the time on maternity leave, having her third child in 2014. Her blog could be classified as a “mommy blog” (Lopez 2009), but the focus on parenting is in this case an organic and sustainable one, in relation to all kinds of products in their lives (Hartmann 2011). The relation to food is that it should preferably be organic, natural and homemade. The choice to buy organic food is one of concern for her children.

Our refrigerator is filled with organic groceries, the wardrobe is filled with organic textiles, and the attitude towards toys is ‘few of high quality’. Overall, I try to have an every-day life with as much organics and as little chemistry as possible (Hartmann 2011).

The blog has a diary-like form, and the blogger writes about things she is concerned about or just stories that are connected to her own every-day life and especially that of her family. The one thing that is almost always a part of her post, are the children. She also appears to be writing to other parents, as she gives advice on different products or websites, e.g. “Have you seen that Pi-errot la Lune has made three sets of pyjamas in collaboration with Chri Chri? As with all of their other clothes, they are so pretty (Hartmann 2014a).”

The blog is visual. When entries concern private matters, cooking or time with children, it always features a series of high-quality photos. The process of the particular activity is featured, and the result is arranged, minding every detail. She portrays elegant porcelain next to fresh fruit or products with visible organic labels on, and generally in a *romantic* or idyllic style.



## Super mom!

In the fall of 2014, Louise cooks homemade mashed apples and writes about it on the blog. There are many photographs of the apples to accompany the text, “We really have a lot of apples in the garden lately [...] we pick the apples ourselves, which is an event we share with the children (Hartmann 2014c).” The entry also features four separate photographs of their breakfast table, complete with organic yogurt (see one of the pictures below). She establishes herself as a responsible and involved mom, and positions her children as sharing food preferences with her and participating in the “right” decisions about the food: “We chose to just cook the apples with a little bit of vanilla and nothing else – this means we can use it in many different ways [...]. When they were done, Luna, Albert and I each had a portion with yogurt, figs and a variety of nuts (Ibid.).”



Every time the sender recommends pre-made food or take-away, she starts by pointing out that this kind of food behaviour is not common practice in her house, whereby she is also saying that it is “better” practice to make it yourself, but that convenience can win sometimes – but only if it is still proper and responsible food. In September 2011, the entry is about a product called Lovemade, which is a brand of organic baby food. Photographs of her daughter being fed while laughing and looking happy accompany the recommendation: “Luna LOVES it! [...] Normally, I cook Luna’s food myself, but I really think this is a great concept (Hartmann 2011b).”

In another entry, her boyfriend brought home food from a restaurant called Skafferiet, and the sender notes that their food is “only” partly organic, but that they on the occasion of *The Organic Week* have made their menu 100% organic (Hartmann 2014d). She admits that the family “regularly” buys take-away from this place: “Those days when none of us have much energy, it is nice that we do not have to use what little energy we have on cooking dinner, but instead (with a clear conscience) can have take-away for dinner (Hartmann 2014d).” Buying take-away is considered less good parenting than making a home cooked meal for the family. However, the action is

justified by 1) prioritising energy use, thus having more time for the family, and 2) choosing organic takeaway. This gives the sender a “clear conscience”.

### Arranged nature

On the visual side, the blog features an abundance of photographs of cute children in idyllic, natural settings and woollen, sustainable clothes – and inside the house, nature’s vegetables and fruits are laid out on the table, whenever it is remotely relevant<sup>3</sup>.



These visual representations indicate that being in nature, close to nature or in any way connected to what is regarded as natural, is of great importance to the sender. It is a part of family life, and the “naturalness” of food is part of appropriate food practice.

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<sup>3</sup> Photographs from [louisehartmann.dk](http://louisehartmann.dk) (Hartmann 2013c; Hartmann 2013d; Hartmann 2014f; Hartmann 2014g)



## **Us and them**

During “organic week” in 2014, she writes about a blogger’s event with the Danish National Association for Organic Food and Farming, where they cooked a meal with potatoes from an organic farm: “It was really a nice evening in good company. It is always nice to be with others who share my interest for organics (Hartmann 2014e). She understands herself as one who is interested in organics, and moreover as one of a certain group of people who have this food focus.

Concerning a new TV-program called Madmagasinet (the food magazine) Bitz & Frisk, the sender writes an entry on the blog, asking if anyone else is planning to see it, and ads: “Well, I am going to watch it! Wonderful to get a focus on what our food really contains – especially for those who do not buy organic.” (Hartmann 2013b).” She links to an article about the programme, but does not say anything herself about what it is about. Still, she implies that she is concerned about what her food contains, and she distances herself from “the others” who do not buy organic.

The sender also expresses frustration that others are not in the same way food conscious in the right (organic) way, and that this might end up hurting her children. In an entry from 2013, she writes about moving their daughter to a new day-care: “It is hard when you, like us, are 100% dedicated to organics, that you have to hand over your child somewhere that doesn’t share the same focus.” (Hartmann 2013a)

## Valdemarsro (Object B)

The sender of this blog is female and she has had the blog since 2007. She is a mother of two from Aarhus and she calls herself a “full-time blogger” (Brandt). She claims to be a “passionate food lover”, and she regards organic food as higher quality than non-organic food – thus, consuming organic products fits into her ideas about using quality ingredients. However, the sender values quality, beauty and taste the highest, and is not exclusively organic. “I prefer that the food I eat is beautiful, made from quality ingredients, prepared with love and, preferably, organic (Brandt)”.

The blog is visual with high quality photographs, primarily of food or of the sender’s own creative projects. Sometimes her children are in the photographs, but more often the photos represent her breakfast or a cup of tea, perhaps joined by a snack, lined up beside a book or a magazine (see representations below<sup>4</sup>). The sender rarely writes directly about organics or sustainability, but she tends to portray food as “pure” or “natural”, thus involving the food in a kind of eco-discourse normally related to organic food.



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<sup>4</sup> The photographs are from valdemarsro.dk (Brandt)



## Happy chicken

One of the things the sender seems to relate the most to about organic food, is that it supposedly involves the wellbeing of the animals from which the products came. Organic is equalled “free” or “happy” and “a good life”. At the same time, she reacts towards local products:

For a long time, I have wanted to find a sweet little farm shop, from where I could buy my organic eggs. A place where I could see with my own eyes, that the chickens who have done all this hard work of producing quality eggs for me and my family, are also thriving and living a wonderful chicken life (Brandt 2013a)<sup>5</sup>.

In the same entry, she tells a story about finding the perfect eggs in the supermarket counter and seeking out the people behind it (see picture below<sup>5</sup>) – leading her to visit this little chicken farm outside of the city and talking to the farmer about the production.



She is concerned about animal welfare in relation to the products she buys, and she dissociates herself from mass production and farming as an industry. The visual impact of the products and packaging is of big importance. This is evident in the way she describes the first time she saw the before mentioned eggs:

In the refrigerated counter, I fell for the prettiest tray of organic eggs that I have ever seen [...] gave me the feeling that I had biked down the country trail to get eggs from a neighbouring farm shop (Brandt 2013a).

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<sup>5</sup> The photographs are from Valdemarsro.dk (Brandt 2013a; Brandt 2014e)

Overall, the sender relates to the ingredients of her food by taste as well as quality and the origin of the ingredient. When giving a recipe for homemade truffles, the cream that she uses is described as not just organic, but coming from organic cows: “The chocolate truffles are made from quality chocolate with added cream from organic cows... (Brandt 2014d).” The choice of wording here is important because it reduces the distance to nature and the origin of the product. In other recipes, the reader is recommended to use “5 large eggs from happy chickens (Brandt 2014f)” in the same matter of fact kind of way, as she is recommended to use “1 tablespoon of butter (Ibid.).”

The attitude towards food in general and organic food specifically is emotional:

We do not eat pork that often, but when we do, we prefer to find a happy piglet, who has lived a wonderful life outdoors. And even though you can easily buy eco-pork in the supermarket, I think it is extra special, when we have been at the farm ourselves and seen the pigs gambol around in the mud and play tag on the grass (Brandt 2014b). I really think I can taste the difference, and that the eco-pork is much juicier, tender and filled with nice flavour (Ibid).

This vision of “happy” farm life represents a romantic view on farming, which the sender can hold on to by visiting smaller, organic farms, who share (or at least represent) her ideals about giving animals freedom and happiness<sup>6</sup>.

### **Quality time, quality food**

On the visual side, the sender often shares photographs of a cup of organic tea in a nice mug, neatly placed next to a stack of books or a magazine. Or, a picture of her food arranged on a wooden table (see picture below<sup>7</sup>), when she decides to “have breakfast for lunch, just because”: “I needed some pampering [...] and it is really a luxury that I can take an hour in the middle of the day for cosiness, book-reading, relaxation and a nice meal.” (Brandt 2015a).



<sup>6</sup> E.g. Trolsgaarden, from where she got the pork in question (<http://www.trolsgaarden.dk/>)

<sup>7</sup> The photographs are from valdemarsro.dk (Brandt 2014g; Brandt 2015a; Brandt 2015b; Brandt 2015c)

## Home Whole Meal – an organic food blog (Object C)

The sender of this blog is male and about 30 years old, living with his girlfriend and daughter in Aarhus. He is convinced that organic consumption is about making a choice, and he claims to be very conscious about his choice, every day and with every meal: “Being organic is a big part of my life, because I have chosen that it should be (Hansen (b)).” The basis of his choice to buy organic food is about animal welfare and environmental protection.

He writes about the choice:

It is simply self-evident, when you think about it, that the earth obviously shouldn't be doused in poison. Animals should be comfortable, when WE choose to keep them locked up. And there is a day tomorrow, where I would like to have pure water in the tap, and where I or my family will not be filled with pesticides (Hansen (b)).

This indicates a view on food that is black and white: organic is good and the only reasonable choice, while non-organic is bad and incomprehensible.

The blog is primarily about sharing recipes and to a lesser degree about his life or lifestyle. Except that it is actually a testimony to an organic lifestyle, and thus he shares everyday stories or thoughts when there is a lesson to be learned concerning organics or living organically. The stylistic focus is also mainly on food at home or out, and not, e.g., his family or home-life<sup>8</sup>.



<sup>8</sup> Photographs from homewholemeal.dk (Hansen (j); Hansen (k); Hansen (l))

## Naturally organic

The sender comments repeatedly on his organic lifestyle choices, even in “normal” recipe entries. It is a big part of the blog and seemingly a big part of his life and identity. “Organics is something that is in my everyday life, as a part I don’t really think about, it is just there, naturally (Hansen (a)).” In the name of the blog, the sender calls his blog organic. He also points out in his presentation (Hansen f) that he lives organically and that everything he cooks and eats is organic. Still, many of his entry titles contain a linguistic addition, explaining what we should already know: that the dish is organic. Examples include, *Organic toast – quick and easy*; *Organic pastries*, *Recipe for organic small sweet rusk*; *Organic leg of lamb with fried potatoes*; *Homemade organic chocolate covered marshmallow*. This indicates that the organic food practice is not only important and natural to him – it is also important to emphasise that the food and cooking is organic. It also indicates a belief that food is better when it is organic, and that the recipes will appeal more to the readers when they are distinctly organic. He expresses a concern only for his own consumption, and claims not to be trying to deliberately influencing people:



“I am not really that focused on what other people are doing, when it comes to organics – not anymore anyway. I can only take responsibility for myself. That gives me something to fight for in my everyday life; people, environment and animals (Hansen (m)).”

However, this quote will also (again) indicate that there is no doubt about who is in the right in this matter. He is the one consuming responsibly – and fighting to do so.

Like Louise Hartmann, the sender of this blog has trouble finding a day care facility for his daughter that meets his standards of food. With the above statement, it seems that he is realising that not everybody thinks the same way, however, that is not easy to accept when it now will influence his daughter’s life. He finally finds a place where “[Organics is] a way to be pedagogic – it is both food, nature, environment and a way to be together (Hansen (a)).”

In another entry, the sender discusses which lunchbox to choose for his daughter’s afternoon snack in kindergarten. He writes about the various concerns and materials to choose between,



says that they eventually settled on a particularly eco-friendly lunchbox made of steel (Eco Lunchbox<sup>9</sup>), and describes the most important feature in this way: “It doesn’t contain any scary things that can emit who-knows-what to my daughter’s food [...]. My daughter loves having a healthy lunch box and we love to send the food out in it (Hansen (n)).” This would indicate that there are scary things in the world, and it takes a lot of consideration and effort to avoid it – but it can be done. Furthermore, the sender projects his own convictions to his daughter, claiming that she does not only love her new lunch box – she loves having a healthy lunch box.

### Eco-centric

The sender is both reflected and factual about organic food, but his choice of words sometimes lean towards the more romantic way of talking about organics. Most evident in the use of the eco-prefix, e.g.: “Would you like to be self-sufficient in eco-chicken and eco-eggs? (Hansen (b))”



“The summer is right around the corner, and I look forward to new potatoes, fluffy parsley and eco-barbecue-sausages.” (Hansen (c))

“I myself have had luck to find to cheap eco-brew on discount, so look around and keep your eyes open – there are many eco-products on discount out there.” (Hansen (c))

### Good versus evil

The sender describes a special offer in a supermarket catalogue (Netto) on one whole chicken for 20 Danish kroner, which he finds appalling. The title of the entry is “conventional let-down – organic success!” – the organic success being a notice about the meal of the day from the cook at his daughter’s day care. The conflict is clear and a judgement has been made: organic consumption is good, while non-organic consumption is bad. He describes the special offer in this way: “... A special offer for all those who don’t like animal welfare but love the cheapest thing... (Hansen (h)).” In a related entry, Netto is again at fault of selling “tortured” chicken (Hansen (i)), and the sender expresses concerns for even shopping in this supermarket again when they behave like this. He ends the entry by stating (Ibid.): “Hold the eco-flag high :-),” which is a phrase normally associated with politics.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.naturebaby.dk/shop/ecolunchbox-151c1.html>

## Analysis level 2: Discourse practice

In the second stage of the analysis, my focus shifts from text to the discursive practice. That is, the process of sending and receiving the analysed texts (Fairclough 1995; 2001). Firstly, this analysis entails considerations about the processes and conditions involved in the production of the blog texts in question, as well as the circumstances involved in consuming and interpreting the texts (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002). Secondly, it requires a focus on how the authors and readers draw on already existing discourses and genres in creating and interpreting the text (interdiscursivity) (Ibid.).

### Production and consumption of the texts

The production of blog texts is fairly straightforward, meaning that it is not far between thought and action, giving the text possibility of being spontaneous and “flawed”. There is not much publishing or proofreading involved, and literally everyone can set up a blog. However, the texts of this analysis have been chosen partly because of their number of monthly readers – readers they have gained from being serious about the medium and posting relatively thought-out entries. None of the senders are journalists, wherefore they are not obliged to fulfil any journalistic criteria, but the thought process behind each entry starts at least when photographing the main object of the particular entry. And, the texts all suggest that they have their readers in mind both in terms of content and language use, thereby at least considering one journalistic criteria: relevance.

The consumption of the texts takes place digitally – on computers, tablets or smartphones – and in an online sphere. The loyal readers will often feel a connection or sense of familiarity with the sender, and regularly “check in” for news about their lives or the subject they share an interest in. There will also be sporadic readers who come to the blog following a hyperlink from other websites or search engines, who as a rule only have interest in the specific entry. In all cases, the practice of reading the text might be habitual, it might be about sharing interests and it might be about relating to the sender and the cultural identities expressed in the texts, and it might also be about being social and communicating. The texts will be interpreted differently dependent on the reason for reading, but I will estimate that a majority of the readers share values and interests

with the sender of the text, and therefore will interpret positively and without much communicative noise.

## Interdiscursivity

It can be of value to know what level of interdiscursivity the analysed texts uphold, i.e. what established discourses are they drawing on? According to Fairclough (in Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 82-83), a high level of interdiscursivity suggests that a text is manifesting a wider, societal change, while a low level signals the reproduction of the established order. The blog is a relatively new medium; therefore, an established discursive order is less prominent than in older and “older” media, like newspapers, where genres and discourses are bound in tradition.

The blog medium, as indicated in the introduction to analysis level 1, does have some discursive traditions. As we would assume, the analysed blogs frequently include conversational discourse (“Have you seen that Pierrot la Lune has made three sets of pyjamas in collaboration with Chri Chri? (Hartmann 2014a)”) and a narrative genre (“This morning, Julie and I was baking a good, old-fashioned beercake... (Brandt 2014a)”), which is typical for this medium. But they also contain promotional discourses, warning discourse and environmental discourse. The highlighted discourses are thematically related to the theoretical and analytical issues of this thesis:

- Parental discourse: The analysis revealed discourse concerning what it means to be a good parent, about the insecurities of food in relation children, and discourse that positions the children of the senders as participants in “the right” food decisions and practices.
- Family and tradition: These discourses involved underlying truth claims about the “good family life”, and indicated that it is better to eat and serve homemade food (and even better if you grow some of it yourself), but when that is not possible, pre-made organic food can be an almost as good an alternative.
- Nature discourse: The discourses found to involve nature in one way or another indicated a conception of organic farming as problem-free and exclusively positive, and a conviction that choosing organic food in your consumption practices can supply an overall good conscience.
- “Us and them”-discourse: For the senders of the blogs, choosing to buy organic food is regarded as a lifestyle. Others who engage in organic food practices are considered to be sharing the same interests, dedication and values. There are several discursive indications of a sense of community as well as a sense of “the others” who do not care about food being organic or not.
- Recreational discourse: Organic food practice can be an element of pampering oneself and taking time out in a busy day to read a book and enjoy a cup of organic tea.

- The good life: There were discursive elements equating organic living with sentiments of what *the good life* consists of in relation to food and quality products. Ecology in this discourse is about appreciating food and being invested in what you eat.

The range of discourses related to organic food practices as well as the fact that these discourses revealed themselves across all three blogs, might indicate that some of the discourse practices represent tendencies or at least play into overall changes in society. In the third stage of the analysis, these discourse practices are taken to a contextual level.



## Analysis level 3: Sociocultural practice

Having analysed the text as text and as discursive practice, my focus turns to the broader social practice of which the text- and discourse dimensions are part. According to Fairclough (1995), the social practices include both discursive and non-discursive processes, and these cannot be analysed through discourse analysis alone – it is necessary to draw in other theories (Fairclough 1995; Jørgensen & Phillips 2002).

### Non-discursive context

The wider context of the discourse practice – the non-discursive, social and cultural relations and structures (Fairclough 1995) – will now be explored through the theories outlined earlier in this thesis, particularly theories of late modernity and identity construction theories. In other words, some of the social and cultural relations and structures of which the analysed texts are a part of, are analysed by applying the above-mentioned theories to the blog-texts. Thus, exploring the discourse through new perspectives.

### **Globalisation and late modernity**

An important context of the analysed texts is that of globalisation, and with it, late modernity. As mentioned in the theoretical framework of the thesis, we live in a world separated from nature, where traditional institutions have crumbled and mutated, and this fact has great implications for the ways in which we make sense of our own identity as well as everything around us (Giddens 2000). Therefore, it is relevant to analyse the discourses found in the blogs through some of the central concepts of globalisation and modernity, outlined in an earlier chapter.

#### *The end of nature and tradition*

One of the implications of modernity is that we have evolved into a society that essentially lives on the other side of nature and tradition (Giddens 2000). The distance between modern consumers and nature causes a natural longing to be closer to nature (or the concept of nature) and to seek closeness to less complicated modes of existence (de Burg-Woodman & King 2012). The analysed texts revealed multiple examples indicating this longing.

Especially on the visual side, romanticism about nature is present in all of the texts, and organic is often conceptualised as being more natural and pure than non-organic food would be. Being considerate of nature, of animals and of ingredients in the food is valued as good food practice – especially when it comes to feeding children. Local and small is generally regarded as better than big and global, and the senders all disassociate themselves from mass production and to some degree all modern food production and distribution. They prefer to find local ingredients where the production circumstances are visible. Discursively, the senders tend to approximate nature through their food practices, e.g. “made from chocolate with added cream from organic cows... (Brandt 2014d),” which would indicate a way to deal with the distance from nature in modern society. There are also signs that the senders essentially find it worrying or unnatural the way we keep animals locked up and use them in big production systems, and a strategy for relieving this uneasiness is to only buy organic meat, e.g., “Animals should be comfortable when WE choose to keep them locked up (Hansen (b)).”

### *Risk*

The handling of manufactured risks is also a condition of modernity (Beck 1992, 2009; Giddens 2000). Because of their invisibility and long-term consequences, they are particularly open to social definition and construction (Beck 1992), meaning the perception and handling of them is based on uncertain and interchanging knowledge. Risk handling is an important part of food consumption, and it becomes particularly evident in organic food consumption.

In the analysed texts, there are various signs of the perceived risks from the perspective of the senders and their handling of them. The majority has to do with what our food really contain and how to avoid these unknown, dangerous and unnatural things. The same risk is present when the senders have to trust their children with other people, e.g. day-care, and risk that they do not share their dedication to organics, which might end up hurting the children. The risk here is about their children getting sick or suffering from consequences of a bad diet in the future. This again leads to other risks of the future, e.g. “there is a day tomorrow, where I would like to have pure water in the tap, and where I or my family will not be filled with pesticides (Hansen (b)),” namely the risk of long-term damages to the environment and drinking water. There is also the risk that animals have suffered during the production of the meat that the senders eat; that the conditions of animal welfare are not always transparent. The senders tend to handle the risks by either buying organic food and trust it to come from happy animals, or to actually go to the source and see the circumstances on the farm themselves.

### *Trust*

Trust as a concept of modernity and the disembedding of social systems is about faith in systems (Giddens 1990). There are many systems involved in food production, and the way an individual navigates his own consumption practices and make decisions involving food depends on who and what he trusts. Moreover, of course, what he does not trust.

The senders all put a great deal of trust in ecology. When the food is organic, it is often considered to be good and considerate to both animals and environment. Even greater trust is found in local products, especially when the conditions of production appear to be non-modern and transparent. Trust is sometimes debated in the texts, because the sender struggles to decide or find the right product or a solution to a practical problem, e.g. “which lunch box should I choose? Plastic, steal or a plastic bag (last-mentioned was never an option) (Hansen (n)).”

### **Identity construction**

In agreement with Hall (1992) and Giddens (1991), the position of this thesis is that individuals living in late modernity experience a crisis of identity, and that they adopt consumption strategies for coping with this crisis. In other words, the modern citizen constructs and re-constructs its own identity. In the theoretical framework, two aspects were highlighted with the purpose of understanding the ways that identities can be constructed, namely *coherent narratives* (Giddens 1991) and *cultural capital* (Bourdieu 1984; 1986). The discourses that have been analysed on the levels of text and discourse practice will now be explored in the light of these two concepts, and subsequently analysed through the lens of *ordinary consumption* (Halkier 2010; Warde 2005; 2014).

#### *Coherent narratives*

Giddens (1991) claims that the individual constructs its own identity through coherent narratives consisting of relations, lifestyle and consumption. As mentioned before, reflexivity is an inherent part of modernity, and for the personal narratives of an individual, this means reflecting upon already made choices and actions and using this to make sense of who he is (Ibid.). This analysis, then, is about exploring how the senders in question reflect on their choices concerning food, and how they are fitting this in to their identity and their life stories.

Object A identifies herself as a mom and as one who is involved with living organic. These two narratives can be seen already in the title of her blog, “a blog about life as an eco-mom” (Hartmann 2011). Both the products she purchases, talks about and recommends as well as the activities she writes about, fit into these narratives and confirm her identities. The text analysis indicated that she often writes to other parents and sees herself as part of a group that has the same values as she does, while distancing herself from people who e.g. does not buy organic. The narrative about being a parent – the right kind of parent – is constantly confirmed.

Object B identifies herself as a food lover, a blogger and writer – and as a person who enjoys the little things in life. Many of her entries are titled “small glimpses” or “small glimpses of everyday happiness,”<sup>10</sup> which serves to construct her narrative about finding the beauty in a busy world, taking your time and relaxing with small, quality things, enjoying local food from small farms where the animals are happy. Overall, I would say that this narrative is about preferring quality over quantity and being happy and content with life. To her, organic food fit into her life story, because she considers it to be of higher quality, and it often has the “local feel” to it that she identifies with. Her recipes and photographs of food show her readers that she has food knowledge, and placing it beautifully afterwards along with books or magazines shows that she takes her time to eat it, thus establishing her identity as a person who loves food.

Object C primarily identifies himself as being dedicated to living organic and taking responsibility for his consumption and impact on the world. His narrative is also about being a father and a family man and about being a person who is interested in cooking and eating good food. The organic narrative is so strong that he would probably never act against it, and he gets personally offended when confronted with what he regards as irresponsible behaviour e.g. from companies like Netto. His narrative is that he knows what he is doing, he has found the key to living organic – and even though not everybody are able to make that choice, he knows he is in the right.

### *Cultural capital*

As argued in the theoretical framework, it is reasonable to not only discuss an individual’s own reflections, considerations and personal narratives, but also to present a concept that considers the interrelations between an individual and its surroundings. The theory of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; 1986) claims that modern citizens are concerned with bringing cultural capital into their social world, and that one way of doing this is through consumption (Ibid.). In this view, consumption can be explored as a way of claiming status and distinction (Ibid.).

The three senders have different ways of bringing in cultural capital, and the things that can be regarded as such also differ a lot, because they depend on their personal narrative and the specific groups they identify with. Object A tends to bring in social capital by buying and talking about the right brands of clothes for her children – and proving that she has knowledge about what is truly sustainable and free of unnatural additives. When it comes to food, her cultural capital is about going to food markets and participating in e.g. *the organic week*, as well as sharing knowledge about TV-programs or articles concerning organic food or “the truth” about food processes. It is also about showing that her food is nutritious, organic and homemade or even home-grown. Especially on the visual side of the blog, object A derives cultural capital from photographs

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<sup>10</sup> Directly translated from “små glimt” and “små hverdagslykkeglimt” (Brandt 2007)

of her children (and sometimes boyfriend) playing, eating or being in nature, establishing them as a happy family with lots of social time.

Object B brings in cultural capital through the consumption of organic food. Especially when going to an organic farm and getting the food herself - the more authentic and close to the actual animal or raw material, the better. Her cultural capital also comes from on the one hand being busy and working on her computer or going out to conferences, food fairs etc., and on the other hand taking time to sit down in a comfortable chair and enjoy a magazine and a cup of tea.

The way Object C brings in cultural capital is primarily by consuming organic food, sharing recipes for organic food and by sharing lessons about organic food, and about how to live an organic life. It is also about going to farmers market, food festival, organic week etc., sharing the experiences through photographs and recommending the products found. Through his daughter, he gets cultural capital by showing that he is an engaged and responsible father – and by involving her in his convictions, convinced that she shares them and also is dedicated to organic living.

## Discursive context

The discursive processes can be explored by asking: To what kind of network of discourses does the discursive practice belong (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002)? For this thesis, I have taken an explorative approach to the discourses involving organic food and farming on different levels of Danish society. If we accept that the analysed blog texts represent some of the organic food discourses taking place on a personal, consumer level, then the texts being explored in the following section represent other organic food discourses taking place on a governmental level and on a municipal level. More explicitly, the central issues of this thesis have been found in governmental strategies, in the branding of Denmark, in municipal websites and official documents – and these are all analysed exploratively below, as they form part of the discursive context of the analysed blog texts.

### **Eco – a magical word**

The Danish government published an action plan in 2012, which describes a new strategic goal of doubling the organic acreage by 2020 and converting 60% of public kitchens into organic operations (Fødevareministeriet 2012). In this plan, the funds allocated for these mentioned goals are clarified, and the steps involved in reaching them are outlined on a general level. The “why” however, tends to be less obvious or at least, less technical. The first words in the introduction, signed off by then-Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, are as follows:

The interest in organics has never been greater than now. This year a record number – nearly 150.000 – adults and children spend a Sunday watching the bursts of joy from the eco-cows, when they were let out on fresh grass after a long winter in the stable. At the same time, the sales from organic foodstuff have never been higher (Fødevareministeriet 2012: 3).

This can be seen as the basic argument (at least to the public) for launching this plan. The action plan is supported by a growing interest in organic food as well as growing organic sales. That is the premise of this action plan and the way it is presented. It is not a lie, and it is not unimportant, but it is an uncommonly nonchalant way of arguing for a governmental initiative, which is given hundreds of millions Danish kroner and which will affect public and private businesses across the country. In addition, the eco-prefix which was also found on a personal consumer level through the blog texts is playing into a popular way of framing ecology. It sounds cute and positive, and it is used so often and in so many different contexts, that the reader tend not to think about the actual meaning of the word. It just brings with it positive connotations. Later in the introduction, organics is attributed a vast range of qualities:

We wish to protect our nature and our drinking water. We want animals to be treated properly. And we want to know what we put in our mouths while at the same time prioritising Danish ingredients and the food culture being cultivated in the new Nordic kitchen. Organics can do all this (Fødevareministeriet 2012: 3).

### **Green is a colour**

Yes, green is a colour, but it has also become a synonym for everything that has to do with environmental considerations. Therefore it works discursively as a positive element that can be pulled into a text and give it the right eco-friendly feel without really promising anything, because the word in itself is undefined and vague. However, it is highly value-laden, mostly in the positive sense. It brings the thoughts to a healthy nature – in some ways it represents the opposite of civilisation and human impact on the Earth. It is not hard to understand why this word has become such a strong representation. Furthermore, it works in the same way that the magical word “eco” does, because it brings in such strong values.

As we will see, the concept of green can be found in discourses on many levels of society. In this contextual analysis, it was especially prominent in the municipal discourses, but in the before mentioned action plan it also had an important place. Namely, as a way of framing the whole idea of engaging in ecology and launching this action plan. It is mentioned two times in the introduction, both times phrased as an overall message of the introduction: (1) “The government sees ecology as a cornerstone in a green conversion of Danish agriculture (Fødevareministeriet 2012:

3).” (2) “Ecology encompasses clear elements in the green conversion of Denmark that the government desires (Ibid.).” Thus, this whole project is now called a green conversion of Danish agriculture or of Denmark as a whole.

### *Green municipalities*

The municipality of Furesø has developed an action plan called “Green Plan 2013-24” (Furesø Kommune 2013). This plan focuses on strengthening nature and landscapes and on stopping the loss of biodiversity. In the introduction it is noted that “nature does not take care of itself (Furesø Kommune 2013: 2),” and the general message here is that nature needs to be taken care of, nurtured and controlled in different ways in order to gain the most from it. This is done through a certain “nature management cooperation (Ibid.)”, which is “of benefit to nature and humans (Ibid.).” The municipality claims that the overall vision is to “strengthen Furesø as a desirable green municipality for settlement (Ibid.).”

For about three years, Lejre has claimed to be “The Organic Municipality” (Lejre Kommune (a)). On their website, the overall concept is sold through discourse such as this: “Imagine that the salami on your bread was made from cows cropping grass right outside your door (Ibid.),” – which of course is similar to some of the nature discourse found in the blog texts. Object A, B and C actually *would* like it if their food came from cows living right outside their door. It plays into the romantic notion of nature and farming, and also answers to some of the risks of modernity by offering visibility in food production processes and reduction of the distance between the consumer and the raw material, aka nature.

In the municipality of Albertslund, the take on “green” is different from both Furesø and Lejre:

A city in green growth. In Albertslund, we cooperate with companies and research institutions in creating green growth of benefit to the city and its citizens – and not least our business community (Albertslund Kommune).

Green growth is an interesting phrase, because the term growth is heavily used when we are talking economy and finances, while green essentially is undefined and therefore not suitable for financial measuring. Contrary to the discourse seen by the municipality of Furesø, this conception of green is not actually of benefit to nature but rather to the city and its citizens. *Sat på spidsen*, being green is about people, about attracting people and about money.

Also, Albertslund has developed a so-called green report. It is supposed to “bring forth the raw and honest facts about our consumption and environmental impact (Albertslund Kommune 2013b: 3)”. It is a rational, systematic and scientific way of approaching nature – and in contrast to this rationality is the wording of “green”. Besides from in the title, “green” also appears various

places in the report, including the section about transportation (op. cit.: 12): “half the energy, twice the green train station,” and this station is further described as having a “green roof” - meaning that it should be covered with solar power cells. It is stated that Albertslund will be getting “a more desirable station with an energy consumption cut in half. In other words, the station has become twice as green (Ibid.).”

### **Is organic food more social than non-organic?**

In the introduction to the before mentioned national action plan, it is stated that “the government supports ecology (Fødevareministeriet 2012: 4)”. It then goes on to argue the ways in which ecology is good for the country and the many things it can lead to. Among these are better food in public kitchens, job satisfaction among people working with food, growth in exports, positive branding of Denmark, advancements in Danish agriculture and raising quality food awareness. In other words, ecology becomes about a lot more than changing the products used in public kitchens into organics. The conception is that the process of converting to organics brings with it a multitude of other social benefits. Quoting the same governmental introduction:

The care home ‘Bryggergården’ [...] this year received the organic gold label. That means that at least 90% of the ingredients are organic. But it also means homemade bread and soup. The craftsmanship is back, along with greater job satisfaction among the kitchen staff and better and healthier meals for the nursing home residents [...]. And now they talk to each other – the residents and the staff (Ibid.).

This discourse indicates that organic food is healthy, homemade, that it makes people happier in their jobs and even promotes internal communication. Though these statements work within an understanding that the allocated funds involves staff training in food management, they still put a lot on the shoulders of an action plan about ecology. A headline later in the action plan reads, “organic food generates job satisfaction (Fødevareministeriet 2012: 12),” which is even more so a grandiloquent statement because of the very concrete phrasing of *organic food* instead of ecology. Throughout this discourse, it appears that organic food has a tremendous power. The discourse indicates that organics or ecology is a culture; a new way of relating to and getting involved in food production and preparation – and not just about using products that are more considerate to the environment. It is not only indicated, but it is in fact stated, on governmental level, that organic food has social capacities.

On a lower societal level, Denmark is experiencing a boom in organic public kitchens, most visibly within the day care centre arena (Lærke 2014). This development is driven by the new governmental action plan (Fødevareministeriet 2012) and the appertaining funds allocated to this



area. It is also driven by the individual municipalities as well as the parents. As we have seen previously in this chapter, organics and tightening of environmental policies is definitely *in*.

In a recommendation for the city council of Aarhus in 2012 (Bundsgaard & Højberg 2012), the benefits and circumstances of converting the public kitchens to ecology is presented. The background is the governmental action plan as well as a direct request from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries to define the political objectives for organic food in the municipal kitchens. It is generally argued that conversion will bring forth a number of other positive aspects (as also stated in the action plan), with the two most prominent benefits being better food knowledge and greater job satisfaction. As we see these points or arguments being put forward in the different text, it is striking how it is mentioned nowhere that there currently should be a problem with lack of food knowledge or lousy work environments and low job satisfaction in the public kitchens. The repeated argument for organic conversion is that we need to learn where the food is coming from, which would indicate that we need to be closer to the fresh ingredients and to nature. Which begs the question: has processed food distanced people from nature?

### **Conclusive thoughts**

This section has showed how organic food discourses – non-discursive as well as discursive – can be found on several levels of Danish society. The terms “green” and “eco” are largely used, not only to tell the story of a natural and healthy municipal area, but also as a background for taking specific, political measures, e.g. the decision to support the allocation of funds towards organic agriculture.

# CHAPTER IV: Conclusion

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This is the final chapter of the thesis, and its overall objective is to sum up the findings of my research and to present my conclusive thoughts and perspectives.

# Conclusion

Organic food sales in Denmark has more than doubled during the last eight years, and today it holds the highest market share of any country in the world. Ethical consumption is regarded as one of the top five trends, and a general focus on and positive attitude towards ecology is observed on multiple levels of society. On the basis of these factors, the objective of this thesis was to seek an understanding of organic food consumption in Denmark through the perspective of globalisation. It was then suggested that the presumed tendencies in food consumption could be approximated by exploring the discourses involved in and surrounding organic food consumption. The analytical approach of discourse analysis on selected blogs was deemed appropriate for investigating *what identities and overall conceptions of nature Danish consumers express via food and lifestyle blogs, and how these could be related to the processes of globalisation.*

Analysing the chosen blogs, I found a range of interesting discourses related to organic food. The most important discourses in relation to this thesis were summed up as the following: Parental discourse, family and tradition, nature discourse, “us and them”-discourse, recreational discourse and “the good life.” A conclusive point in this matter is the fact that the discourses revealed themselves across all three blogs, demonstrating that there are phenomenon in play that apply to at least more than one person, which could be an indication of a discursive tendency. Another point is that several of these discourses correlate with the overall thesis of the paper and applies to the theoretical framework.

My thesis was that all these changes in consumption and tendencies in Danish society might be a manifestation of larger and more general changes in Western society. Namely changes involved in globalisation, in modernity, and consequently in our relation to and conceptions about nature. The discourse analysis indicated that this might have some truth to it. The following results from the analysis will clarify this statement.

The analysis revealed similar discursive patterns involved in ecology across texts and societal levels. On all levels, it seemed that ecology is not just about making choices concerning the environment or about prioritising quality products, although these issues were found to be present. The senders of the blog texts were shown to be engaged in various kinds of identity construction revolving around the consumption of organic food. They reflect on and create coherent narratives around being a good parent, a food lover with a passion for quality and beauty or an activist for organic food – and organic consumption plays an important part in all these narratives and in the

obtaining of cultural capital. The analysis also indicated that concerns about the future, about health and about their children were prominent in the discursive patterns and thus, in the social constructions involved in food practices. In accordance with Ulrich Beck's theories of risk in modernity, a range of risk handling and issues of trust were found as central factors in the analysis.

On a governmental level, some of the same discourses were revealed, among these the eco-prefix and green discourse as unequivocally positive additions to all kinds of phenomenon. Other discourses included a distancing from nature and the idea of ecology promoting joy and positive social behaviour.

The structural and social changes in society were overall found to be interconnected with the discursive patterns found in personal food and lifestyle blogs. I understand all these results as indications of how globalisation and the consequences of globalisation has been and is influencing the way in which Danish consumers relate to food consumption. In the following I would like to discuss the overall conceptions of nature expressed in the analysed texts in relation to the processes of globalisation.

The tension between nature and culture has been a recurring theme throughout the thesis. Giddens claims this society to be one living on the other side of nature and tradition, a world separated from nature, and this fact has implications for the ways in which we make sense of everything around us. More specifically, it has implications for the individuals' relationship to and conceptions about nature. My initial assumption was that consumption of organic food had something to do with a desire to be symbolically closer to nature, understood as a reaction to modern society. The analysis revealed some interesting uses of discourse that supports this assumption.

Using certain terms, phrases (or discourse practices if you will) the senders of the analysed blog texts revealed a conception of nature as a utopia, a romantic idea separated from modern society. Applying e.g. "happy chicken" or "cream from organic cows" to the everyday food consumption discourses, they expressed a discursive wish to be closer to nature. But the conception of nature is one that does not necessarily have anything to do with the reality of nature. It could be interpreted as a romanticised version of nature, expressed by individuals born and raised in late modernity. In the words of Ulrich Beck:

Nature itself is not nature: it is a concept, a norm, a recollection, a utopia, an alternative plan [...] Nature is being rediscovered, pampered, at a time when it is no longer there [...] In the ecological debate, attempts to use nature as a standard against its own destruction rest upon a naturalistic misunderstanding (Beck in Dolan 2002: 174).

In my analysis I mostly found indications that this idea of nature and about seeking closeness to nature in a world where individuals are generally really separated from it, is influencing organic food discourses. I will also suggest that at least a part of the appeal of and focus on organic food consumption is bound in this longing.

Another example of what might be a reaction to the separation from tradition and nature in late modernity is where Object B expresses that she prefers to buy her organic meat or eggs directly from the farm (and see nature with her own eyes, so to speak). This could indicate an idea that the food is better or more natural when she has experienced the animals from which the products come. I will suggest that this can be a strategy of approximating the wildness and authenticity of nature in an otherwise cultural, civilised and controlled life. It can also be an indication of a distrust in packaged food, food production systems and supermarkets, stemming from the issues with risk, trust and concerns in late modernity. All these issues are, as we have seen, deeply rooted in the processes of globalisation.

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