

# When Local Food enters Retail

– the enactment of local food in Coop



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## Abstract

In recent years, an increasing demand for local food is seen both in Denmark and internationally and with the increasing demand, local food has also entered retail. Local food is a complex constructed concept, which is difficult to define and the perceptions of the different attributes connected to local are diverse. With local foods' entry into retail, the complexity is increasing, as many perceive local food and the big, streamlined, ultra-professional food retailers as opposites. What happens when local food and retail meets?

Retailer perspectives are underexposed in the literature about local food, possibly because of a perceived binary between the *bad* global food system to which the retail sector is connected and the *good* alternative food system, which local food is seen as a part of. However, retail is a powerful player in the food system and as such has the potential to shape the food system. Therefore, retailer perspectives are important, as changes in retail for example around local food, potentially can have a proportionally huge impact, given the proportion of food sold through food retailers. This thesis sets out to investigate what happens to local when it enters retail. With the intention to grasp complexity around local food in retail, this research is conducted in Coop, Denmark's largest retailer, who is in an interesting process of developing the concept of local food in the organization.

The research consists of eight semi-structured interviews conducted with employees from different departments and with different positions in Coop, who all in different ways are in touch with local food. This includes interviewees from respectively a Superbrugsen in Copenhagen and a Superbrugsen in the small island Møn. Additionally, interviews are conducted with interviewees from the marketing department of Superbrugsen, the CSR department, the department for quality and food safety and a purchasing department. Finally, both a project leader and a manager in the innovation department working with the concept development of local food in Coop are represented.

Enactment theory, a part of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), inspired by Annemarie Mol, is applied to understand how local food is *enacted* in different departments and from different positions in Coop and what the *effects* are of local food entering Coop. Furthermore, it should be mentioned, that Barbara Czarniawska, who spices ANT with a pinch of new institutionalism, in addition inspires the theoretical frame for how to understand an organization and organizational change.

The study concludes that local food is enacted very differently in the different departments and from the different positions in Coop. Even in the two different Superbrugsen stores, local food is enacted as differently

as being a natural part of the local community in Møn and a foreign product in Copenhagen. Local food is enacted as a simple matter of supply and demand in one department and as an indirect way to educate and integrate CSR perspectives in the business in another. Furthermore, local food is enacted as a tool for differentiating from competitors, as being in need of a helping hand, as something that is in a development process, as an element in finding Coop's DNA, as a potential risk and as a tool for focusing more on quality, just to mention some.

Furthermore, the research concludes that when local food enters Coop that does not just mean that local food expands. When local food enters Coop, they both change. They mutually adjust. Complexities are discussed and compromises and paradoxes arise. When local food enters Coop, local food *changes*. In short, there is a pressure on local to become regional or maybe even nationwide and a tendency to go from talking about (and acting on) *local* to talking about (and acting) a *local flavour* or a *local link*, as the local products for example become centrally distributed or need to be transported to a huge slaughterhouse. There is a pressure on local food to become more efficient and more professional.

However, when local food enters Coop, Coop changes too. Local food challenges some of the logics, which are usually applied in the business development. Local food brings Coop to reconsider their practices with regard to local food; from helping and educating the producers, to recognizing a mutual dependency; the profit must be equally distributed. When local food enters Coop, it adds a new dimension to the saying in Coop about *the right products at the right price at the right time*. Business with local producers must be on the *right terms*. However, this change or effect is only to a certain limit. It is stressed that the concept of local food is something else than how Coop usually works and it does not seem that these new realisations and methods is transferred to Coop's usual business methods. Local food works as a bilateral agreement functioning on different terms.

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## 1.0 Introduction

In recent years, local food has become increasingly popular and with the growing demand for local food, local food has also entered retail. The reasons for consumers to appreciate and demand local food are diverse, but can overall be seen as a quality turn towards other qualities than cheap prices. Local food constitutes for many an alternative to the placeless products produced in the globalized anonymous food system with its connected negative impact on environment, lack of fairness and standardization in both production and consumption. The retail sector is a powerful player in the modern food system and thus holds power to make changes for example in a direction with more focus on factors as food quality, fairness and sustainability. In addition, consumers increasingly expect that market offerings and new products involves immaterial symbolic values and that large companies contribute in solving societal problems.

As a reinforcement of Coop's tradition for working with responsibility and as an attempt to combine CSR with a business strategy and raise a saturated market, Coop has developed a new strategy with focus on promoting quality of food. They have developed a food manifest, where they among other things aim at increasing the level of local and organic groceries.

However, what happens when local food enters Coop? Does that just mean an expansion of a sympathetic initiative or does something else happens as an effect of that meeting? Is local food in retail just connected with potentials or does it include challenges, paradoxes, dilemmas and dilution of the values, which local food represents for many?

### 1.1 Why is local food in retail interesting?

Local food has an odd character; firstly, it is difficult just to define what local food is, although it for many symbolizes something sympathetic and is associated with different positive attributes and values. Furthermore, it is difficult to handle in retail because in many ways it is seen in opposition to the existing big, streamlined, effective, ultra-professional retail business. When small scale, more unreliable and diverse local food enters retail that means that it can't directly be absorbed into Coops usual systems and usual ways of doing business but requires a rethinking on several issues. In that way the focus on local food represents a change in retail; a change in thinking and a change in some practices.

*“During periods of stability, people take their realities for granted, and are therefore unable to reveal their construction to themselves or to others. In times of change, old practices are destroyed and new are*

*constructed, which invites the questioning and de-construction of the previous social order*". (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996)

With the comprehension that the focus on local food in Coop represents a change, which invites for questioning and de-construction of the previous social order, *When local food enters coop* seems to be an interesting case for understanding and grasping the complexity of change and innovation in this tiny corner of the food system. It is this process of making change in the food system with a focus on values and social responsibility, which has my interest and it is the intention to get insight into such a process in this thesis. Furthermore, local food in retail is interesting as retail is seen as a powerful actor in the food system, which includes power to make changes. However, a binary exists between the perception of the *bad* globalized food system, which retail are seen as a part of and the *good* alternative food system, which local food for many represents (Hinrichs 2003). Therefore, retail perspectives are only sparsely represented in the evolving research in local food, although changes in their ways of doing business could potentially have a huge impact given the large proportion of food that is bought through food retailers. Food retailers are often criticized in the societal debate for not showing enough accountability for various issues of social responsibility from organics to food waste and local food production. Arguably, a thorough understanding of retail, retail perspectives and retail processes will include the possibility for a more nuanced and incisive debate and critique of retail, which may raise the possibility of leading to a positive process of change. Change making starts with an attempt to understand, and in this respect, I hope that this thesis will contribute to the understanding of and complexity involved when local food enters retail.

## 1.2 Research question

With an intention to grasp the complexity of a change process within the food system from a food retailer perspective and understand the translations of local food taking place in Coop and the effects of local food entering Coop I will link up with Actor-Network Theory (ANT) inspired by the anthropologist Annemarie Mol. With this theoretical basis, I will make use of the term enactment in order to study what happens to local food, when it enters Coop. My research questions is:

*How is local food enacted in different departments and from different positions in Coop?*

*What are the effects of local food entering Coop?*



*Enactment* can be understood as an active translation coupling perception with action. *Enactment* and *effects* are important terms in the theoretical framework of this thesis, which will be presented in chapter 5.

In order to be able to answer this question and as a frame for the interviews, I have worked with the working question:

*Which potentials, barriers and dilemmas are present when working with local food in Coop?*

### 1.2.1 Delimitations

As the motivation for this thesis is an interest in getting insights into what happens when local food enters Coop and the translations taking place in the organization, the focus is on Coop and the retailer perspectives. However, I am aware that among others both the local producers and the consumers are very important actors in relation to the effects of this meeting. I have chosen to focus on retail as this provides the possibility to include several retailer perspectives and thus illustrate the differences and complexities in relation to local food in retail. Subsequently, this means that producer and consumer perspectives are only indirectly represented as part of my understanding of the interrelations in the food system and as interviewees mention them in the conducted interviews.

### 1.3 Structure of the report

The report is structured as followed: It starts out accounting for the research field with regard to local food and retail in the chapter State of the art (chapter 2). This presents local food in the context of a quality turn in response to a critique of the modern, industrialized and globalized food system and additionally presents research on local food in a retail context. Furthermore, it will touch upon CSR in organizations as a point of organizational change and account for research done in Coop narrowing down to the reflections of the study at hand. Then will follow a presentation of Coop – the case of this study (chapter 3). Subsequently, the applied methodology of interview based research including methodological considerations of the individual methodological steps, the research process and the role of the researcher will be presented (chapter 4). Afterwards follows a chapter accounting for the theoretical framework of Actor-Network Theory and Enactment theory inspired by Annemarie Mol (chapter 5). This chapter will also include theoretical considerations of how to understanding an organization and organizational change, which in addition to Mol will be inspired by Barbara Czarniawska, who spices ANT with a pinch of new institutionalism. Finally, the analysis of the multiple enactments of local food in Coop and the effects of local food entering Coop will be presented (chapter 6) completed with a conclusion answering the problem statement (chapter 7) and with reflections on future perspectives (chapter 8).

## 2.0 State of the art

The following chapter will present some of the relevant literature in relation to the topic at hand. It will touch upon a wide range of articles and books regarding especially local food and local food in retail. As the review will show, the definition of local food and the implications of local food is a complex and disputed topic, and I will briefly present some of these different perceptions and arguments. In addition, my focus will be on local food in relation to retail, including the consumers' perceptions of local and reasons for demanding local. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the scientific field of especially local food, but also briefly to organizational change and CSR. Furthermore, the intention is to place my research in the frame of existing national and international research. The literature review does not claim to be exhaustive but it is covering the areas relevant for this research.

The literature search was conducted in two steps, mainly in the beginning of the project and then supplemented with an additional search in the writing phase. The literature has been retrieved from relevant scientific portals including searches for specific literature cited in selected, relevant articles. The intention is to provide an overview of the research related perspectives on local food in retail. However, before addressing local food and retail, the exposition will start by briefly introducing to some of the problems associated with the modern food system and the notion *the quality turn*, denoting that consumers have a change in demand focusing on other quality parameters than cheap prices. This is by many scholars seen as a reaction to some of the negative characteristics of the modern food system. This will lead to sections of local food, as local food is often described in the literature in correlation with *the quality turn*. After these sections focusing on research related to local food and local food in retail, I will touch upon the notion of CSR and finally tune in on research in Coop including research, which has inspired the theoretical and methodological approach in this thesis.

### 2.1 Critique of the modern food system

The industrialization and globalization, which have characterized the societal development in general, have also entailed radical changes in how our food is produced, distributed and consumed. The industrialized and globalized agriculture and production have become characterized by the use of sophisticated innovations in chemical, transportation, agricultural and processing technologies (Lang, Heasman 2004) and by a food system, which has been increasingly concentrated and dominated by large-scale, transnational food companies (Higgins, Dibden et al. 2008). This has resulted not only in standardization of production but also in consumption (Murdoch, Miele 1999). The concentration is also seen in the growing power of retailing (Flynn, Harrison 2000). This food system which by Lang and Heasman is referred to as the productionist

paradigm, has the overarching goal of increasing output and efficiencies of labor and capital for an increasing urbanized population (Lang, Heasman 2004). Four quality parameters have been dominating with the rise of the modern food system: Efficiency, (including price) calculability, predictability and control.

This development of the food system has also meant that farm businesses are now located in a highly complex sets of institutional, market and regulatory relationships. This means for example that most farmers have been subject to a technologically driven cost-price squeeze that have made them chasing reduced costs in the standard agricultural sector. The supply chains corporate retailers have added significant regulatory burdens among others on market entry, which is a barrier for small-scale farmers and producers, who are vulnerable to cost increases (Marsden, Banks et al. 2002).

The development has subsequently lead to a loss of local food traditions and the gap between producers and consumers (Ritzer 2008) as the modern, globalized food system has meant that producer and consumer have become spatially distant from each other. People have lost the connection to where their food comes from and what it contains and the former craftsmanship has lost importance to the routines of industrialized production (Pilcher 2008). This development has meant that the link between food and place to a huge extent is replaced with the anonymity of manufactured products, resulting in a more placeless food scape (Marsden, Murdoch 2008, Ilbery, Kneafsey 2000).

Furthermore, the industrialized and globalized food system is associated with negative externalities such as deforestation, land use change, loss of biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions, food scares, food related obesity and diabetes, loss of cultural identity and traditional knowledge (Zsolnai 2011, Lang, Heasman 2004). In addition, farmers are faced with declining farm prices and a technological driven cost-prize squeeze. Advocates for local food systems generally view local food as a solution to some of these externalities. (Blake, Mellor et al. 2010, Kremer, DeLiberty 2011, Schönhart, Penker et al. 2009)

## 2.2. The quality turn and local food

However, a great deal of evidence suggests that this increasingly globalized society does not completely sweep away differentiation and variety at the expense of standardization (Murdoch, Miele 1999, Marsden, Arce 1995) Key trends now sweeping over the food sector demanding more traditional aspects of food production suggests otherwise (Marsden, Arce 1995). Two main 'zones' of production is detected: a standardized, industrialized and globalized production food network on the one hand and an alternative production characterized by localized and specialized production processes on the other. (Murdoch, Miele

1999) These food chains are typically described as alternative, which might stem from alternative social or physical geographies of such food chains (Kjeldsen, Deleuran et al. 2013).

This alternative demand is seen lead by discerning consumers in the advanced capitalist countries who have come to demand variety and diversity in their food commodities, which is preferred over standardized, industrialized produce. Furthermore, concerns of food safety amplified by a series of food scares as the BSE crisis, which has been global in scope has led to an increasing awareness of modern food production practices. This awareness means that the interest in specific food does not only derive from questions of taste, but also from questions of for example environment, health and safety (Murdoch, Miele 1999). With this skepticism towards the complex modern food system, transparency has become essential in order to guarantee food quality and provenance (Trienekens, Wognum et al. 2012) and locality of production has become important as a way to secure transparency. In this context, food with a clear local provenance is seen correlated with higher quality than 'global food'. (Nygård, Storstad 1998) With turning back to local food, there is a hope that this embodies quality parameters as ecological worth, traditional values and animal-friendly practices and a hope to avoid problems associated with the drive for efficiency and low prices represented by the modern food system (Murdoch, Miele 1999).

### 2.3 Defining local food

Although local food has become a key trend both as a demand in the food system and as an evolving local food research, there is no consensus of a definition of *local* food. (Eriksen 2013, Martinez, Hand et al. 2010, Blake, Mellor et al. 2010) Local food is a social construction (Sundbo 2013) where different parameters are emphasized by different actors and in different contexts resulting in a diverse landscape of meaning (Eriksen 2013, Mount 2012). The lack of clarity of the meaning of local can cause confusion both in scientific discussions and between different actors in the sector (Pearson, Henryks et al. 2011, Madkulturen 2014). Is local about geographical distance, and if it is, does that refer to where the raw material is grown, where the products are produced or should it be sold and consumed close to where it is produced? Or is local not only referring to the physical space but also to the social space, where there is a closer relationship between producer and consumer? Or is it other parameters and values attributed to the production, which make a product qualify as local? The definitions of local are diverse and emphasizes different parameters.

Eriksen suggests a new taxonomy of local food based on three domains of proximity: geographical proximity, relational proximity and values of proximity – not as a universal definition of local but as a conceptual framework for understanding the nuances in the meaning of local food enhanced by different actors. (Eriksen

2013) In this relation, geographical proximity refers to the explicit spatial/geographical locality, distance or radius within which food is produced, retailed, consumed and/or distributed, while relational proximity refers to the direct relations between local actors, who are reconnected through alternative production and distribution practices. Finally, the values of proximity refers to the different values that different actors attribute to local food, this being place of origin, traceability, authenticity, freshness, quality etc. (Eriksen 2013).

## 2.4 The implications of local food

Beside the dispute about the definition of local, the implications of producing local is discussed. To some scholars local food symbolizes a paradigm shift away from the globalized and industrialized food system (Mcmichael 2009, Wilhelmina, Joost et al. 2010) where local food systems are seen to solve some of the externalities associated with the globalized, industrialized food system. Some scholars emphasize the re-connecting perspective, that local food re-establishes the disconnected relationship between producer and consumer in the globalized food system (Mount 2012, Papadopoulos 2010). Some argue that local food can be a tool to facilitate the rise of a new paradigm of a rural development (Van, Renting et al. 2000) capable of resisting the cost-prize squeeze on modern agriculture (Renting, Marsden et al. 2003). Others question that the focus on local will challenge the dominance of the global food system (Winter 2003) and others again argue that it is a mistake to make this division between “alternative” and “conventional” food systems as two separated spheres, where local means good and global means bad (Coley, Howard et al. 2009, Schönhart, Penker et al. 2009). When local food enters retail, it also challenges this clear-cut division between the two spheres.

The assumption that local is inherently good is referred to as “*the local trap*” (Born, Purcell 2006). Born and Purcell argue that food systems are contextual and depends on the actors and agendas involved. It is the content of that agenda empowered by the social relations in a given food system, this being local or global, that produces outcomes such as sustainability or justice, not the scales themselves. Burn and Purcell stress local should not be seen as an end in itself but as a mean to accomplish something, for example sustainably (Born, Purcell 2006).

What can be accomplished with local food is also disputed. The research agenda on food relocalizations<sup>1</sup> has developed from an early enthusiasm for the potential of sustainable development in relation to environmental and socio-economic objectives to a growing awareness of the fragility of these initiatives (Sonnino 2013). As such, local food has been introduced as a mean to support farm livelihood and rural sustainability (Marsden, Smith 2005) and is conceived to imply improved food security and decreasing the ecological footprint of the food system (Brunori 2007). However, it has been argued that for example environmental outcomes may not always fit neatly to the spatial content of *local* (Hinrichs 2003, DuPuis, Goodman 2005). Local food has by some scholars been seen as a mean to reduce food miles (Smith, MacKinnon 2007), but this focus of food miles as an indicator for environmental sustainability has been challenged, because the effective transportation in the globalized food system is only responsible for a minor part of the environmental impact of the total food production (Hinrichs 2003). A review of local food systems in the UK has reported that the main social benefit was the development of greater trust and connectedness between consumers and producers (Pretty 2001) contributing to the re-connection of consumers and producers, which can reduce the propensity for some consumers to feel alienated from the source of their food (Pearson, Henryks et al. 2011).

## 2.5 Local food entering retail

With local food becoming a mega trend, local food has also entered retail, a product of the modern food system. Retail usually favors large-scale production and facilitates long distance movements of products (King, Gomez et al. 2010) in opposition to what local food represents. However the integration of local food in retail includes potentials for the expansion of local food purchasing given the frequency and portion of consumers' food purchases that are made in supermarkets (Dunne, Chambers et al. 2011), but is also connected with significant challenges and dilemmas, although the research on these issues are still sparse. Here again the diffuse definition of local food complicates things. The parameters, which food retailers use to define local food, differ from those of producers and consumers (Eriksen 2013, Blake, Mellor et al. 2010).

A study of the understanding of local food from the retail perspective shows that also within retail, the definitions vary widely and often the definitions used are neither strict nor tightly regulated but are based on a more general idea of what constitutes local. However, the focus in these definitions is often on geographical distance (Dunne, Chambers et al. 2011). However, as explained above, the consumer's reasons

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<sup>1</sup> Relocalization refers to a strategy to build societies based on local production and the local development of currency, governance and culture with the aim of strengthen local economies, improve environmental conditions and social equity.

for demanding local food are not only linked to the place of production but also to other perceptions of attributes of local food. This includes specific production methods, farm size, local ownership of the farms and perception of increased quality, freshness and a sense of safety. Furthermore, procurement of local food includes a wish to support local economy and a sense of a direct linkage to the producer (TÆNK 2014, King, Gomez et al. 2010). Some of these attributes such as the direct link to the production place is challenged when local food is bought through retail (King, Gomez et al. 2010). This again shows that local food in retail is not only related to potentials, but also includes challenges and dilemmas.

Nevertheless, only few studies of local food and local food systems include retailer perspectives, including these potentials, challenges and dilemmas. This could be because of the conception of what Hinrichs describes as a binary of global versus local when framing food system localization. This binary excludes food retailers because of the lack of interactions between consumer and producer in retail, as well as the belief that their larger scales and global influences are intrinsically negative (Hinrichs 2000, Selfa, Qazi 2005).

However, retailer perspectives can be useful tools in describing the realities and complexities of the local food system (Dunne, Chambers et al. 2011). Given the importance of the retail sector in the context of contemporary struggles with the dominant food system and the sector's powerful role in the middle of the supply chain as the link between producers and consumers, retail has a great influence on the shaping of the food system. This includes the development of the concept of local food and as such, retailer perspectives and understanding of innovation in retail including the actual processes of food retailing are important areas for more research (Guptill, Wilkins 2002).

## 2.6 CSR perspectives

The inclusion of local food in retail is not just an example of innovation in the sector. Local food and relocalizations are very value laden and connected with change in the criticized modern food system. Therefore, when addressing an issue like local food in retail, this can also be seen in a CSR perspective. This issue will be addressed shortly in this section.

The expectations of the relationship between companies and society has changed in the recent decades. With themes such as trust, reputation and corporate social responsibility (CSR) questions of the legitimacy of companies has moved from being of marginal importance to be fundamental issues for companies' existence. Ideals and values about dialogue, transparency, responsibility, involvement in societal development and sustainability has come into focus (Holmstrøm, Kjærbeck 2013) and are important factors

in a lot of the current innovation in companies. These tendencies are also very visible in the changes going on in Coop in these years, for instance in the food manifest.

CSR is a complex and very changeable notion as the character and content changes concurrently with the development in society. In the following, some of the trends, which CSR has gone through, will be presented. Yet, these trends must be seen as existing simultaneously and not as replacing each other. The notion of CSR is normative in its origin and in the normative CSR research, the companies' social responsibility are seen as a goal in itself and it is emphasized that CSR is not just a mean to accomplish other especially economic goals (Rosenstock 2012). However, more economic based theories exist, which consider that the only social responsibility of companies, besides following the laws, is to increase profit (Milton 1970) or others who understand CSR as a pyramid. In this understanding of CSR, economic and legal responsibilities of the company form the foundation of the pyramid while more ethical and philanthropic responsibilities at the top of the pyramid are seen as nice to have. Ethics are desirable or expected but not required or mandatory as the economic and legal requirements. This challenges the ethical focus of CSR (Carroll 1999). Subsequently, this highlights that the *responsibility* in *Corporate Social Responsibility* is closely connected to economic considerations.

Another trend has focused on responsiveness, this being the companies' ability to react upon the social pressure of societal demands and expectations (Frederick 1994). This has resulted in a paradigm shift with more focus on responsiveness than responsibility and on how social responsibility can be used strategically in order to provide (economic) advantages for the companies and at the same time minimize risks (Rosenstock 2012). This understanding of CSR is criticized for focusing on staging the companies in order to satisfy external actors rather than originating from companies' moral values and on focusing on increasing economic value more than societal value (Vallentin, Murillo 2012). This understanding of CSR is furthermore criticized for equating companies' ability to *respond* to societal demands (and their ability to communicate this) with *responsibility* and thereby again dilute the ethical aspect of CSR (Rosenstock 2012).

Another trend in the research around CSR has tried to combine the ethical dimension with economic performance, and the scholars have tried to gain proof for a business case for CSR by trying to demonstrate a connection between responsibility and profit. The results of these efforts, although indicating some positive connection (Margolis, Walsh 2003) remain unclear.



The last development in the CSR research, which will be presented in this review, is CSR as an approach to gain *shared value*, where scholars advocate that companies who work strategically with CSR are able to attain both competitive advantages and societal advantages (Porter, Kramer 2002). With this approach to CSR, responsibility issues should be much more integrated in the companies' core business and strategies and there is a recognition of the mutual dependency between the companies and the society. Consequently, both business decisions and societal politics should follow the principle of shared value leading to hardcore cost-benefit analysis of the CSR activities they consider engaging in and only acting on moral and ethical dimensions if they pay off (Rosenstock 2012, Vallentin, Murillo 2012). As this section highlights, an understanding of CSR and values must be seen in an operational business context.

## 2.7 Research in Coop

In this section two Danish studies, which are occupied with CSR issues and values and using Coop as a case, will be addressed. Maja Rosenstock investigates the challenges and dilemmas of CSR in the organization and asks the question: CSR – how hard can it be? She ends up with concluding that it can be quite hard (Rosenstock 2012). Although CSR has often been enhanced as a business case, which can generate win-win for both the company and society, Maja Rosenstock shows in her research in Coop how CSR is filled with complexity, dilemmas and conflicting interests also internally. A combination of three cultural perspectives; an integration-, differentiation- and fragmentation perspective are used to give a nuanced picture of the anchoring of Coops' CSR strategy. The study shows how the value "responsibility" is both described as a uniform tale of harmony and consensus, but also how the work with CSR is characterized by inconsistency and continuous conflicts between different groups and finally how responsibility in Coop is characterized by ambiguity, dilemmas and a lack of clarity. In this way the research counterbalance the many flattering descriptions of CSR as a direct path to win-win and increased growth (Rosenstock 2012).

Finally, I will address another research, which includes Coop as part of the empirical data. Mette Weinreich investigates sensemaking and enactment perspectives in companies with organic processing. Her motivation is a wonder of the lack of value reflections in the organizations. In the processing of organic food, few explicit values are represented in the regulations, in opposition to the organic primary production. This leaves much of the management of values to the single companies resulting in a wide range of interpretations, which for some ends up in products, which she describes as conventional 'look-alikes' as for example freeze-dried soup powder (Hansen, Kristensen 2010). One key person is interviewed in five companies and different theoretical approaches are used to investigate the translations including the silent layers of the understanding of values in relation to organic processing, among other enactment theory. As part of the methodological

considerations, she questions whether interviewing one person in a company can be said to represent the understanding of organic processing in the company.

## 2.8 From existing literature to thesis of local food in retail

In this last section of this chapter, central points and questions from the existing literature, which has been inspirational for the thesis at hand, will be summarized.

Local food is a complex social construction and it is debated what defines local food and which attributes, geographical, relational and value-laden, constitute local food. The attributes emphasized depends on the specific actor. This lack of clarity of the meaning of local food is causing confusion in both academia and the food sector.

The integration of local food in retail includes potentials for the relocalizations of food given the frequency and portion of consumers' food purchases that are made in supermarkets (Dunne, Chambers et al. 2011). However, only few studies of local food and local food systems include retailer perspectives, including potentials, challenges and dilemmas of integrating local food with retail. This is possibly due to the conception of a binary of global versus local when framing food system localization, where large scale and global influences are seen as intrinsically negative. (Hinrichs 2000, Selfa, Qazi 2005), which excludes food retailers.

However, retailer perspectives can be useful tools in describing the realities and complexities of the local food system (Dunne, Chambers et al. 2011). Given the importance of the retail sector in the context of contemporary struggles with the dominant food system and their powerful role in the middle of the supply chain as the link between producers and consumers, retail has a great influence on the shaping of the food system.

Acknowledging the complexity of making changes that includes ethics and values in an organization like Coop, as shown in the research of CSR in Coop is a good entry point for understanding and grasping complexity in relation to the entering of local food in Coop as well. Applying enactment theory as a tool for unveiling the narratives of the interpretations and values and grasping complexity of a phenomenon are seen in the case of organic processing in different Danish companies including Coop. Furthermore, the methodological reflections in this study about whether interviewing *one* key actor in an organization can be said to reflect

the understanding and values representing the entire organization, will be considered in the development of the methodological approaches conducted in this thesis.

### 3.0 Presenting the case Coop

Coop is Denmark's biggest food retailer and owns the chain of shops SuperBrugsen, Dagli'Brugsen, LokalBrugsen and Kvickly plus the subsidiary companies Fakta and Irma. Coop also runs coop.dk, irma.dk and Coop Bank. This year the latest addition to the Coop family Madcooperativet opened at the central station in Copenhagen. In addition, Coop owns a few other businesses as the conference center Severin and the advertising agency Republic. In total Coop runs more than 1200 stores in Denmark. Organizationally, Coop A/S owns a number of the stores, while others are independent franchise stores. The head office is located in Albertslund.

Besides being an owner of different food retail chains Coop is also an association, a part of the co-operative movement. A few years ago, there were a more divided line between the business Coop and the association, which was running under the name FDB. Coop has a history, which goes 150 years back and it has experienced several different structural transformations, the latest being that the business Coop was consolidated with the association FDB and is now running under the name Coop (Coop 2013b). This was done in an attempt to make the structure of the organization more understandable for the consumers and connect business and association closer together.

Being a cooperative means that the association Coop is owned by its 1.5 million members and the association is the owner of the retail Coop who again owns the chain of stores and businesses. Every member has paid a contribution to the association and as such, they have become co-owners of Coop. As a member you are associated to a particular member store, has the right to vote in Coop and eligibility to the member democracy. The association Coop's purpose is to organize consumers to manage their common interests in agreement with the principles of among others *consideration to a sustainable development of society* (Coop 2014c). The association can be said to include three roles; being an owner of some companies, being an association for the members and finally to function as an idea- and concept developer in the area of CSR.

Coop has a tradition for branding themselves on responsibility issues, which is also reflected in the consumer's more positive perception of Coop measured by different parameters of responsibility when compared to their main competitor Dansk Supermarked (Nielsen Market Monitor 2011). This may be because of Coop's special ownership (Rosenstock 2012). The characteristics of the core customers also differentiate statistically significant, with the customers of Dansk Supermarked being more focused on cheap prices and Coop's customers having more focus on softer values as organic, environmental and ethical labelled products (Rosenstock 2012). When that being said Coop's customers are obviously a heterogeneous group, which is

illustrated in the chain of stores ranging from the discount chain Fakta to the high quality chain Irma, and price is a very important parameter for many.

Coop has a yearly turnover of more than 40 billion and the staff cover around 37.000 employees. Coop has had a few financially dissatisfying years. With the end of 2013 Coop could present a bad operating profit of only 85 million against their main competitor Dansk Supermarked who came out with a result of 2,4 billion (Pedersen 2014b, Coop 2013a). In 2014, Coops profit was raised to 329 million (Coop 2015).

In November 2013, Peter Høgsted entered as CEO of Coop. He began his new job by criticizing Danish retail for being unimaginative and boring, and claiming that it was time for getting out of the centrifuge of discount with the endless focus on *“sale, sale, sale, price, price, price”* at the expense of quality (Pedersen 2014a). A strategy process began, which in 2014 resulted in Coop launching a food manifest, which they communicate as an invitation to unite around better food. This includes a mission of upscaling their value-based work but is also seen as a way to raise a saturated market and can be interpreted as a way to strengthen the link between the business and the value-based work. With improvement of food quality as the focal point, Coop has formulated six key principles for fulfilling their vision of setting the good meal, good food and good food choices on the agenda. The principles focus on topics like the pleasures of the meal, taste, transparency, health, organic food and local produce (Coop 2014b) In the food manifest under the section of local food, they state:

*“We want to provide you with local ingredients. Denmark is an agricultural country with a diversity of fantastic food products and interesting seasons. In Coop we want to support Danish food production and offer you more local food”* (Coop 2014b).

They continue:

*“We give local food a main role. Therefore, we put more local food products on the shelves with respect for good quality of food. Danish products which taste good, which includes a good story and which differentiates from the existing products”* (Coop 2014a).

The different chains have different aims and ways of working with local food. SuperBrugsen’s ambition is concretely to obtain 500 new suppliers of local products of high quality (Coop 2013b).

## 4.0 Methodological approaches and considerations

This chapter accounts for the methodological choices including the methodological considerations and arguments for the chosen research design. The chapter starts with a short reflection on the character of the research process and then describes and reflects on the individual steps in the research design in order to show transparency of the research process.

### 4.1 Abductive research process

The research process has an element of deduction as the theory was chosen before collecting the empirical data, and the data was then analyzed in accordance with the chosen theoretical approach. However, the theory was also chosen on the basis of my prior knowledge and understanding of the chosen case. Furthermore, the theory is applied as an analytical perspective, a way of looking at and understanding organizational processes within Coop, not deductively to formulate and test a hypothesis. As such, I acknowledge the abductive research process. This includes elements of both inductive and deductive character and views a research process similar to the hermeneutical spiral; seeing interpretation of data, based to some extent on the researcher's pre-understanding, in a continuing, changing process (Alvesson, Sköldbberg 1994). This process is also reflected in the search of literature as the continuing and changing process ensures a continuous identification of relevant literature. This shows how the processes of searching and selecting are interwoven (Boell, Cecez-Kecmanovic 2010) and rejects research as a linear process.

### 4.2 The qualitative research(er)

This research is occupied with understanding the cultural translations and individual perceptions and performances of the context, which has an impact on what happens to local food when it enters Coop. Thereby the focus is on grasping the subjective and unique narratives and tracing their effects rather than intending to gather quantitative data, which can be interpreted with the use of statistics in order to find scientific laws. Thus, the conducted research and connected methodologies qualifies as qualitative by following defining characteristics with a focus on interpretation instead of quantification and an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity. As a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge the importance of the translator/researcher in the research process. With the questions, I ask I affect the subject of the study and the translations conducted is also affected by the researcher. As a researcher, I enact local food as well; thereby I must reject the idea of the objective researcher.

One of the advantages of the qualitative approach is the possibility to get more nuanced data as the methods encourage seeing people as complex creatures, which cannot be described and explored solely by simple

causal relations. Furthermore, the qualitative approach emphasizes the understanding that actors' perceptions and motives plays an important role in order to understand their actions.

#### 4.2.1 My role as a researcher

By choosing the social constructive basis, I reject the role as objective researcher and thereby it becomes important to declare my standpoint and my connection to both local food and Coop. In the section state of the art, I have chosen to focus on a critique of the current food system, and I described a quality turn where local food is seen as an example of that. This shows that I enact local food myself, and indicates some normativity where local food is seen as one the answers to the critique. Though I have tried to have an open approach in the interviews, stating that no answers are more right than others, I am aware that the interview situation works as a social interaction and that the responses are influenced by the given context (Alvesson 2003) and also the given interviewer. Thereby the research interview must be seen as the stage for a social interaction rather than a simple tool to gather "data" (Alvesson 2003).

### 4.3 Research design

In the following sections, I will describe the methodological steps and considerations in the design of the research.

#### 4.3.1. Case study

In this research, Coop is used as a case to investigate and translate a change process in an organization. Case studies are widely used in organizational studies and across the social sciences (Kohlbacher 2006). The use of a case study "*arises from a desire to understand complex social phenomena*" as the case study methods make it possible for the researcher "*to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events*" (Yin 2014) such as organizational processes (Kohlbacher 2006).

##### 4.3.1.1. Selection of the case

Retail was chosen as the field of interest based on a food system perspective where retail is seen as a powerful player in the food system and as such has the power to make changes. The retail corporation Coop was selected as the specific case for two reasons: Firstly, for convenient reasons as I have connection to Coop since I was an intern at FDB (now part of Coop) 4 years ago. Furthermore, as I am a board member of my local Superbrugsen store, which is a part of Coop. This gives me both preceding insight about Coop and provides an easier access to collect my data. Secondly, the case was chosen because Coop is in an interesting

change process with the introduction of the food manifest and their effort to bring these principles into action.

#### 4.3.1.2 Focusing on an organization

My starting point of interest in this thesis was a critique of the modern, industrialized, globalized food system where retail is seen holding much power in the food system and therefore also a power to make changes. This starting point has led my interest to understanding change processes in an organization. However, with an ANT approach where actors are seen as part of a network, it does not necessarily make sense to stay inside the structures of an organization. With an ANT approach I could have followed the actor *local food*, which would have revealed insights from both the farmer who produce for Coop (and the ones who do not want to be suppliers to Coop), the different collaborators as Økologisk Landsforening and the consumers buying (or choosing not to buy) the local products in Coop. Therefore, by insisting to study organizing inside an organization, I have excluded insights, which could be interesting for the study. On the other hand stretching the study to include actors outside the organization would have prevented me from grasping the multiplicity of enactments inside Coop. As such, the ANT approach can be seen as a kaleidoscope, which I at some point have to fixate. My chosen focus reveals an interesting picture, but at the same time hides others. The list of interesting actors and narratives are endless (Law, Mol 2008). Further research, following local food through Coop with a follow-the actor approach, could beneficially supplement this research.

#### 4.3.1.3 My connection to Coop

As described earlier I have a prior knowledge about Coop since I have been an intern at FDB (now part of Coop) 4 years ago and have been a member of the association board in my local Superbrugsen for 3 years. Furthermore, I have followed the organization in the media and in different events. This knowledge about Coop has helped me to gain access to Coop, to understand the organization and supposedly to ask better questions and get quickly to the essence in the interviews. In some cases, it might also have helped me building rapport in the interview situation, for example by asking questions using “we” as “us in Coop”, for example *“Does that mean that we (Coop) are better to this than this?”*

On the other hand I am also engaged as a board member in Superbrugsen with an agenda to contribute to influence Coop in a more sustainable, fair and diverse direction. As such, my connection to Coop is quite political and normative and I experience that I am both critical and protective towards Coop. In the research, I have tried to have a distance to that very normative role, trying to focus on how local food *is* enacted instead of how I would like to see this to *be*, knowing that that it will never be possible to accomplish this fully. In



summary, being close to the subject of study gives some advantages, but there are also some potential traps, which can influence the research. Thus, the closeness may be a resource as much as a liability (Alvesson 2003).

#### 4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Choosing semi-structured interviews as the research method is in line with the qualitative research strategy and the explorative approach. The semi-structured design gives the interviewee the freedom to influence the interview in accordance with his/her desires and in relevant directions, which may not be identified as relevant by the interviewer beforehand (Lichtman 2013).

This process of conducting semi-structured interviews include elements of both phenomenological, hermeneutical and social constructive elements. To ask open questions and listening to how local food is enacted in the different interviews is a phenomenological task. This is done by attempting to accept the narratives as they are told and reporting these narratives in the analysis trying to leave the researcher as much out of the narrative as possible and putting the interviewer and his/her enactment of local food in focus. Here it is the interviewees' perspectives and worldview, which is central (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009). This interview approach is then supplemented with additional questions trying to elaborate but also challenge these perspectives. In the second part of the analysis where enactments are put together revealing peculiarities, paradoxes etc. these narratives are approached hermeneutically, by going beyond the immediate experienced meanings. This is done with the purpose of discussing a pre-reflective level challenging the invisible common sense of the interviewed participants and making this visible in the analysis (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009) In addition, I acknowledge the influence of the researcher. I enact local food as well, and the interview will, to some extent, be a result of the social construction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Furthermore, the interviews' focus on what happens when local food meets Coop is a social construction between both local food and the individual interviewee but also influenced by others in the collective web of actors.

##### 4.3.2.1 Selection of the interviewees

The interviewees were chosen in collaboration with the CSR manager who became my primary access point into Coop (The contact was established through a former employee, whom I followed in Coop during the internship 4 years ago). Before trying to get access to Coop, I participated in a meeting in Roskilde where Coop tried to get in dialogue with local producers, which gave me some preliminary insight to local food and Coop. Subsequently, I met with the CSR-manager at the outset of my project and brought a list of the

departments, which I thought, could be of interest for the project. The list was discussed with the CSR manager, who also provided me with the names and emails for these possible interviewees. In addition, he facilitated the establishment of contact by sending the key persons an e-mail introducing my project and enclosed an introduction from me. Two of the chosen interviewees were substituted with other persons having the same criteria of interest. This happened because two of the key persons I contacted directed me to other persons, whom they thought would be more relevant. That is how I ended up with having two interviewees from the innovation department, though with different positions.

#### 4.3.2.2 Relevance of the chosen interviewees

The chosen interviewees has shown to be very relevant. However, as the interviews developed, I became aware of other actors that also could have been relevant to interview. Especially, logistics revealed to be very relevant in the meeting between local food and Coop, so the department of logistics could have been relevant to interview, but due to the limitations of this project, I sought to get insight about these issues through other interviewees. A manager, who had initiated or been involved in the process of conducting the food manifest, where the vision for local food is included, could also have been relevant. Furthermore, in two of the interviews, the interviewees on their own initiative, recommended me to contact other interviewees. The recommended actors were Thise, the Danish dairy who has had a close collaboration with Coop for many years and the chef Claus Holm, who is interested in local food, and who likewise has had a collaboration with Coop for years, and who just recently has become an employee in Coop. Furthermore, the collaboration with Økologisk Landsforening was mentioned. This list of additional relevant actors both highlights the complex web of actors in relation to local food and Coop and shows that with an actor-network approach the list of relevant actors is almost endless (Law, Mol 2008). It also shows the dynamics around Coop as an organization, and even though I have chosen to study change inside an organization then it is a bit artificial boundary. At least it must be taken into account that the boundary is dynamic as the structures of an organization is in a constant process of change. For example, the chef Claus Holm was probably as much of interest for the project before as after he got an office in Coop and a Coop mail. In summary, the chosen interviewees showed to be very relevant for the project, but as the interviews developed the complex web of actors was revealed, and other relevant interviews could have been included in the study to reveal further insight. However, further interviews would have stretched the limits of this thesis.

#### 4.3.2.3 Focusing on departments

My theoretical approach is based on the rejection of the myth that an organization is representing one identity, one truth or one perspective. Mette Weinreich is, in her Phd about organizations' sensemaking and

enactment perspectives on organic processing, interviewing one employee in five different organizations in order to grasp the organizations view and values on these issues. Her research makes her realize that what she is actually getting is not the organizations understanding or identity, but the understanding of that particular person or department (Hansen, Kristensen 2010). Reflecting on this experience, I have chosen to interview eight different persons in different departments in order to grasp the complexity and diversity of enactments existing simultaneously inside Coop.

However, by choosing to focus on how enactments differ in different departments and from different positions, the interviewees and their quotes come to represent this department. The two interviews made in the same department, though from different job titles or positions, reveal that even in the same department enactments can differ. This can both be due to their different position, but also be influenced by different personalities, educations and work and life experiences. Despite that, I am aware of this, I have still chosen to focus on the interviewees as representing a department. This is among others done because, in the interviews, I have not got insights to their personal life except a few quotes stating; *“I make dinner from scratch every day”* and *“Personally, local food enhances my shopping experience, when I go buying groceries with my son.”* Therefore, the interviews I have conducted is interviews, which I experienced as being made with interviewees in the role of their working title and their department. Yet, I am aware that a working identity and enactment are of course not totally disconnected from a personal life, and furthermore that departments are in a constant change. As such, what the interviews provide is a snapshot of how local food is enacted by this interviewee in this department at this given point in time.

#### 4.3.3 Interview guide

The form of the semi-structured interviews was planned in an interview guide, which was adjusted to fit the individual interviews. The interview guide intended to follow a certain progress: Each interview started out with an open question like: How does local food look like from your perspective? Or what is local food for you? These are very open questions and served as an opportunity to grasp the enactment of local food in this specific interview and they proved to be a good starting point to get the conversation going. Subsequently followed questions about the possibilities, challenges and dilemmas for local food in Coop. These three keywords (possibilities, challenges and dilemmas) were suitable to make the interviewees elaborate on their perceptions of local food in Coop. Next followed some questions connecting local food and the food manifest to change in Coop and finally the interview guide ended up with a few questions about the possible future for local food and Coop. Finally, I finished most interviews, asking: If you were to give me an expression about local food from your seat including the possibilities, challenges and dilemmas, are their

then something you like to add? This question gave many interesting answers, and served to make the interviewee tell what was on his/her mind, which I had not accomplished to ask about directly. The structure of the interviews were quite loose, but this progress in the interview guide supported a natural flow (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009)

#### 4.3.4 Anonymity

I have chosen not to mention the names on the interviewees, but to describe them according to their department and position. This works as a sort of artificial anonymity as some of the interviewees can easily be recognized. This is done for two reasons: Firstly, as mentioned above it is a methodological choice to focus on that the interviewees' voice represents a department or a position. As such, the department and/or position is the relevant thing to point out rather than the first name. Secondly, for ethical reasons as I said in several of the interviews, that they had the possibility to stay anonymous, on their request. In the process, I decided to do that for all the interviewees in order to be consistent.

#### 4.3.5 Conducting the interviews

All the interviews except one were conducted at their workplace, mainly at Coop's headquarter and one in the co-op manager's store. This was done for the convenience of the interviewees and in order for the interviewee to stay at a safe environment. This contributes to facilitate rapport building between the interviewee and the interviewer (Bryman, Becker et al. 2008, Lichtman 2013). The interview with the store manager at Møn was conducted as a telephone interview for convenient reasons.

The initial contact with the interviewees was established through mail, followed by phone call(s), where information was given about the purpose, theme and the expected duration of the interviews. It was highlighted, that there were no right or wrong answers, and that I was interested in both their perceptions and practices, but also their reflections on the process.

The interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, which the interviewees agreed upon at the beginning of the interview. Each interview began with an introduction about the project, the study and my relation to and interest in Coop. In addition, I underlined that their possible anonymity and extent of the publication of the report would be discussed with them before publication. Furthermore, their quotes and the context of these quotes would be sent for them to comment on before publication. This was done for ethical reasons, for rapport building as well as for enhancing the validity of this study (Lichtman 2013). When the analysis is commented and approved by the interviewees, it is confirmed that the analysis (especially the first part)

reflects the reality as it understood by the interviewees and that the processing of the data is not tendentious. Only few factual errors have been corrected based on the interviewees' proof reading and none of the interviewees has expressed a wish for limitations of the publication of the report. Additionally, it should be mentioned that one of the interviewee has read the full analysis, which has only lead to one minor correction for clarification.

During the interviews, I tried to get as spontaneous and elaborate answers as possible by open questions, pointing out that there were no wrong answers and by asking supplementary questions and encouraging the interviewee to continue. Several of the interviewees started telling about local food before I had even asked the first question. It is seen as a quality of the interview that the interviewer does not have to interfere too much, but can concentrate on pursuing and verify interesting issues in the responses. Creating a free interview situation, where the interviewer does not dominate and supports the interviewee in telling his/her narrative, improves the quality of the data (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009). This was done with more success in some interviews than others but in general I experienced to succeed in building rapport between me and the interviewees. Here I see it as an advantage that I have experience with the organization and understands some social codes and special terms. I experienced that this gave me an advantage in formulating questions, understanding themes, getting straight to the essence and building rapport in the interview situation.

#### 4.4 The analytical process

The recorded interviews were transcribed. Pauses and expressions as arrhh or mmm are not included in the transcriptions unless they are considered meaningful for the understanding of the quotation (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009). The transcriptions are kept in Danish and only quotations included in the analysis, are translated into English. The process of transcribing enabled me to get closer to the empirical data and allowed a re-experience of details and nuances that was not grasped during the actual interviews. The transcription also enabled me to set focus on specific wordings, which the participants have used (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009), which reveal nuances in the material that can be important for the analysis. This was for example experienced, when some of the interviewees began to talk about *local flavor* or a *local link*, instead of just *local*, indicating an important element in answering the problem statement of what happens when local food enters Coop. This nuance in the language was probably not noticed without transcribing the interviews.

Subsequently, the transcriptions were read in a two-step process in order to code the interviews. Firstly, the interviews were read with the first part of the analysis in mind. How does the particularly interview shows how local food is enacted from this point of view? Quotes indicating how local food is enacted in the interview

were marked. After writing this first part of the analysis, the interviews were read again, now with the second part of the analysis in mind. At this point in the process, important themes were already identified. Themes, which are, repeated in several interviews reveals important themes of interest and issues of complexity concerning local food meeting Coop. Further themes were identified in this second step of reading the transcriptions. The themes were color coded in order to distinguish the different themes and display the quotes of interest. The identified themes are; *defining and (bending) the definition, concept development(s), food safety, logistics and terms and conditions of sale*. The quotes were analyzed under these themes, with the focus on interpreting and answering the second part of the problem statement: What are the effects of local food entering Coop? Or put in another way; What happens when local food enters Coop? Besides analyzing the effects in general, the analyzing process in accordance with the enactment theory has looked at if and how the actors are mutually adjusting. Furthermore, the focus of the analysis was also to grasp and analyze complexity of this meeting between the actors; highlighting paradoxes, dilemmas, compromises, difficulties etc.

## 5.0 Theoretical and analytical framework

This chapter will account for the theoretical approach of linking up with Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and especially with Enactment Theory as a conceptual tool for understanding a phenomena/change/process in an organization – local food entering Coop. The use of Enactment Theory in this thesis is inspired by the Dutch professor in Anthropology Annemarie Mol.

However, the chapter will start by introducing the theoretical considerations of how to understand an organization and organizational change. For this matter, I am, in addition to Mol, inspired by the organizational scholar Barbara Czarniawska, who *“spices up ANT with a pinch of new institutionalism”*. The following analysis will not be an organizational analysis as understood in institutional terms but is mainly serving as a starting point for how to understand an organization and organizational change. These considerations will be elaborated in the following.

### 5.1 How to understand an organization and organizational change

This thesis sets out to grasp and get insight into the complexity of an organizational change - local food entering Coop. In this respect, ANT offers a reflexive approach to management and organizational knowledge in the theory's attempt to comprehend complex situations (Alcadipani, Hassard 2010). ANT is not a theory in the sense that it offers a coherent framework, but is more a theoretical tradition, which offers a list of terms and a set of sensitivities (Mol 2010). Its point is not to catch reality as one universal truth but instead an approach which *helps to tell cases, draw contrasts, articulate silent layers, turn questions upside down, focus on the unexpected, add to one's sensitivities, propose new terms, and shift stories from one context to another*. As such, it opens up the possibility of seeing, hearing, sensing and then analyzing the social life of things (Mol 2010).

#### 5.1.1 The social construction of organizing - skepticism towards rational choice

Both ANT and new institutionalism are critical towards the rational paradigms' theoretical foundation that is based on the understanding that actors, including organizations, are assigned to underlying structures, which can explain actions. Within this paradigm, changes are made based on rational choice and a causal correlation is seen between the structural conditions and actors' actions (Hansen, Kristensen 2010). However, causality tends to take a determinist form where causal explanations tend to remove focus from what is *“being caused”* (Mol 2010). The logic of consequentiality or rational choice can be used as a way to *“legitimize the actions undertaken, especially when questioned”* (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996).

Social constructivism rejects this determinism and has instead the underlying assumption that there is not “one truth”, which can be detected but that realities are socially constructed and are based among others on the cultural context. The reality is not seen as stable, given and universal, but is historically, culturally and materially located (Mol 1999). This implies that decisions (for example in the process of organizing) are based on actors’ classifications of the situation they are in and their own identity (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996).

The studies of science and technology has revealed that objects and facts are as much socially constructed as symbols and that all human knowledge is social. Thereby sense making (which e.g. leads to specific decision-making in an organization) is not objective and purely rational but is a dynamic concept that is constructed and re-constructed between actors. Local food is continuously constructed in Coop influenced by actors inside and outside Coop in the complex network around local food. Also new institutionalism highlights this social constructive perspective on organizing where the dynamic principle is characterized by inbred socialized experiences based on silent knowledge, which ends up representing common sense for the given actor. Actors’ perception of problems and the shaping of interests is an effect of ideas and conceptions, which again are influenced by interactions (Nielsen 2005).

With this ontological and epidemiological perspective, where reality is understood as continuously constructed by social actors, the focus turns towards the interactions and activities between actors in order to understand organizational change. It is the meeting that is interesting. What happens when...? This implies a skepticism of the idea of a strategist who acts and thereby changes e.g. an organization. *“It is against the implied fantasy of a masterful, separate actor”* (Mol 2010) Instead, it is the activities of all the associated actors involved, which are highlighted. *“A strategist may be inventive, but nobody acts alone”* (Mol 2010). An actor is brought into being by other actors. What each actor does also depends on the co-actors, whether they allow the acting and what kind of acting they allow and the rules and regulations. However, this does not mean that an actor’s actions are determined by its surroundings and actions have complex and often unpredictable effects. *“So much comes together in the collaborative webs of complex practices”* (Law, Mol 2008). Thereby it becomes interesting to explore and describe the dynamics in social processes, which are based on ambiguity and uncertainty as the conditions of action. Contingency is a condition (Nielsen 2005).

As accounted for, this understanding of organizing implies a skepticism of the perception of the rational leader making rational decisions, which then by diffusion are transferred down through the organization by diffusion. In this way, the focus shifts from diffusion to translation.



Translation can be described as a way of describing movements (development) of different forms – of knowledge and cultural practices, but also of technology and artifacts (Nielsen 2005) in this case translations of local food. Translation is the mechanism by which the world progressively takes form (Callon 1986) for example seen in the process of organizing.

### 5.1.2 The study of organizing inside an organization

With this approach to organizational change, there is not focus on the structures of an organization, which can be observed from the outside of the organization (Nielsen 2005). Instead, sense making, culture, perceptions and interactions become central elements in the understanding of an organization, as it is the cognitive perception created in a social context, which shapes, develops and maintains organizations. This changed approach to understanding organizations represents a shift in organizational theory that have occurred in the recent decades where the focus of the field has shifted from structures to processes and from organizations to organizing (Czarniawska 2009, Hernes, Maitlis 2010) Structures of organizations are thus seen not as constant and universal but as dynamic. With a constructive focus on organizations it is the actors acting (or organizing) that becomes essential, and this does not necessarily comply with the structural boundaries of an organization, as discussed in the methodology. However, gathering all my empirical data inside Coop provides me with the opportunity to grasp differences in understandings and translations of an organizational change between different departments. Furthermore, it gives an opportunity to understand different logics in Coop and thereby gives a snapshot of how these different translations (enactments) come together in the negotiations around the concept development of local food in Coop.

Therefore, my focus is to study organizing *inside* an organization, where organizations can be defined as “*systems of coordinated action among individuals and groups whose preferences, information, interests or knowledge differs*” (March, Simon 1993). But even if focusing on Coop I am still keeping in mind that the *effects* of this organizing is not happened solely inside Coop as an isolated unit but that Coop and their way of organizing local food are influenced by many actors. And though insisting to study organizing within the structural borders of an organization I am aware that Coop as an organization is not a fixed entity but is dynamic and in constant change both in relation to structure and in the way of organizing.

### 5.1.3 When potentially contradictory actors meet

Dilemmas, paradoxes and conflicts between institutional forms are important for the understanding of organizational change. An inter-institutional perspective takes into account that institutions are mutually

confronting each other, which in turn creates the possibility for the development of existing institutions (Nielsen 2005). Here Coop and local food may be seen as two institutional forms that confront each other.

*"These institutions are potentially contradictory and hence make multiple logics available to individuals and organizations. Individuals and organizations transform the institutional relations of society by exploiting these contradictions" (Friedland, Alford 1991).*

This emphasizes the importance of cognition and interaction and thereby of social construction. Institutional standards and realities are based on ideas (innovation, change) and these are not necessarily translated in the same way in different contexts e.g. in different departments in Coop. Translation is as such a key concept for understanding organizational change and it gives the opportunity to grasp complexity of organizational life and organizational change. *"When ideas travel, a local translation occurs and takes root in the given context"* (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996). How ideas e.g. local food is understood and applied is depending on how it is translated, interpreted and specified in the given context. Ideas can be misunderstood and distorted and the concrete interpretation can be characterized by timing and coincidence (Nielsen 2005). This translation implies that *ideas* as local food can evolve heterogeneously in different contexts even though they are based on the same idea.

#### 5.1.4 The narrative of local food in Coop

Ideas travel, actors meet, change occurs - one could speak of continuous change, as the social world undergoes constant construction, despite projecting a strong illusion of stability (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996). And times of change invites for questioning. Here the researcher can enter the field of organizing and try to understand these changes, by listening to the accounts provided by the actors and sharing their doubts and reflections. However, these accounts rarely amount to any coherent description or a unified explanation. Therefore, in accordance with the social constructive foundation, this thesis will not try to come up with theory, explaining organizational change one and for all (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996). *The present time are tainted with weariness and suspicion of "meta-narratives"* (Lyotard 1988).

*"Instead there is a growing preference for "little narratives," for partial interpretations which can be patched together in search of understanding, but equally well fragmented again to be put into another theoretical collage"* (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996).

Narrative knowledge mixes (rational) explanations with interpretations. Thereby it does not totally reject causality, but opens this causality to negotiation (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996). Things could always be different (Mol 2010). Thereby the understanding of these narratives become important, as it is not only the environment but to a high degree also the translations of the environment captured in the narratives, that forms the basis for organizing. As the narratives reveal translations, which form the basis for the organizational changes, these narratives can be important both internally and externally for the shaping of future organizing.

This thesis offers such a “little narrative” and a partial interpretation. It seeks to describe translations taking place in different departments of Coop around a case of organizing local food and intends to grasp the complexity around the concept development of local food, when all the translations in some way are attempting to come together although it must be realized that this will never fully happen.

#### 5.1.5 The relation between local food and Coop

ANT is a theoretical understanding which breaks with the idea that social only relates to the interaction between humans. With ANT non human actors are as important as human actors (Hansen, Kristensen 2010). By valorizing local food as an important actor it provides the opportunity to grasp what happens in the meeting between two actors, in my case between local food and Coop. What it exactly is that defines an actor in ANT is discussed by social scientists, but Annemarie Mol states that an actor *is something that acts*. It/ he/she does something, which makes a difference (Mol 2010). An example could be a carrot that grows on the field. How it grows (acts) depends on other actors (the farmer, the rain etc.) However, despite my awareness that local food acts, my focus in this thesis is how it is understood and acted upon by other actors (employees in Coop). This may be due to the fact, that my interest is to understand the translations going on around local food in Coop and thereby get insight into organizing, i.e. how changes occur in an organization and this means that my focus is on the social constructions in Coop. Yet I am aware that these depend on how local food acts (as well as the actions of many other relevant actors around local food).

#### 5.1.6 Effects and mutual adjustment

This thesis is occupied with what happens when local food enters Coop. What are the effects? In this relation, *effects* must be understood in an ANT perspective. ANT does not ask where the activities of actors (actions) come from, but rather where they go. What happens when...? It is the *effects* that are crucial. In this respect, effects must not be confused with neither *goals* nor *ends*. “*Not goals, not ends, but all kinds of effects surprising one included*” (Mol 2010) Not *goals*, as the effects are not something that hang together in a

determinist scheme. According to Mol, the *effects* being traced are mostly unexpected (Mol 2010). Nor is it *ends*, because the effects of local food entering Coop will continue to develop as the actors in the web, which constitutes the network, continue to act.

Instead of focusing on the central strategist who *co-ordinates* changes, ANT rejects this centralist focus and is instead tuning into actors in a network, thereby the notion *co-ordination* with advantage can be replaced with the more symmetrical notion of *mutual adjustment* when the effects are considered. This stresses that the actors involved process of organizing may mutually adjust themselves to one and another. (Mol 2010)

It is my intention to grasp this in this thesis. What happens when local food enters coop? What *effects* do the meeting have on the *actors*? How is the narrative about the *mutual adjustment*, which happens in the meeting between local food and Coop. As a theoretical method for doing this I will in the next section look into the ANT term called *enactment* as introduced by Annemarie Mol and John Law. In this thesis, enactment is used as a tool to grasp and translate some of the complexity around local food when it enters Coop.

#### 5.1.7 Enactment

Enactment is a notion, which can be understood as an *active translation*. The idea is that there are not just many ways of *knowing 'an object'* or of *understanding an actor* like for example local food, but there are also many ways of *practicing* it (Mol 2014). In this way local food couples *perception* with *action*, (in this relation not to act is also a form of action).

The anthropologist Annemarie Mol and sociologist John Law has studied the enactment of a Cumbrian Sheep during a period when foot and mouth disease had taken hold and was spreading like wildfire in Cumbria in the UK (Law, Mol 2008). The policy to stop the virus was changing every week. The study revealed how the sheep were enacted completely different in veterinary practice, within epidemiology, farming practices and from an economic perspective. In veterinary practices the diagnosis of the sheep and thereby the decision of whether the sheep should be slaughtered was based on clinical symptoms while in epidemiology the decision was based on calculations based probability of infection based on geography, and these different enactments lead to different conclusions on whether the sheep should live or die. In addition, within farming practices, the sheep was invaluable whereas in the economic perspective the sheep has a price on its head. So in order to find out what a sheep was in Cumbria in 2001 it was necessary for Mol and Law to "*unravel the practices*" in which a sheep figured. By doing this, they did not find 'the truth' of what a sheep is, they did not find a sheep, which was unified and coherent. They found a '*sheep multiple*' because a slightly different sheep was found in each practice as each of these practices *enacted 'sheep'* in a different way. However, on a day-to-

day basis all these practices somehow came together (Law, Mol 2008). The case shows that different ways of handling problems, framing concerns and enacting reality *co-exist* and that these different logics or modes of organizing come together and are coordinated in a set of practices (Mol 2010).

In the same way, each way of enacting local food represents a different version of local food. Thereby, the actor *local food* become more than one. Local food becomes *multiple* as each enactment of local food represents a different version of local food. This means that phenomena as local food are different things to people in different everyday routines and practices. Objects or phenomena as local food are enacted in practices, which produce different realities. However, that does not mean that local food is *plural*, because there are complex and intricate relations between the various versions of local food (Law, Mol 2008).

The study of the Cumbrian sheep shows a theoretical method for translating an actor and a network and grasping the complexity of a process of organizing. This method is transferred to the case of local food entering Coop in my approach to understanding the complexity and effects of this meeting. However, it does not give an exhaustive answer to what local food is when it enters Coop. My inquiries are necessarily partial. I could say much more about the practices in the different departments and I could investigate practices that have to do with deciding a strategy to work with local food, logistics, consumer preferences etc. The list is endless.

*“The reality of an entity is never exhausted. Imagine it as fractal: if you magnify a fragment, you discover an image that is as complex as the first one. And it is the same if you shift your attention to another fragment (Law, Mol 2008).*

However, I have fixated my magnifier, and in the following analysis, the narrative of local food in Coop, based on the empirical data, will be told.

## 6.0 Analysis

The analysis will be divided in two parts. The first part presents how differently local food is enacted in the different departments and from different positions in Coop. This part will consist of eight sections, one for each interview. In the second part of the analysis, five transversal themes will be presented, which touch on the effects of local food entering Coop, and which simultaneously reveals complexity of local food in Coop.

### 6.1 Enactment of local food in Coop

As mentioned, local food is enacted very differently in different departments and from different positions in Coop. These different enactments will be presented in the first part of the analysis.

#### 6.1.1 Superbrugsen Lendemark, Møn

At Superbrugsen in Møn, local food is enacted as a natural part of running a store on an island with a close relation between the store and the special island community. I interviewed the coop manager about the potentials, challenges and dilemmas in relation to the concept of local food in the store. The answers to the questions reflect an interweaving of local food in the store with narratives about local producers, the island and the special community.

Local food is the narrative about cheese from Hårbølle dairy. The dairy is a single man who travels to Andalucía every year in February where he makes cheese kneaded by hand. He returns to Møn in April where he begins making cheese for Superbrugsen, *“which is ready in the beginning of May, or maybe a little later. It is ready when it is ready”*, the co-op manager states. Local food is the local vegetable grower Poul Johansen, from whom you cannot order vegetables. He delivers what he has, and *“what he has is what we get,”* as the manager explains. Local food is the mustard from the small mustard mill on Nyord, a small island with a preserved village, which you cannot get to by car. You have to leave the car outside the village and continue by foot. Local food is the organic Angus cattle from Nyord, which they, at the time the interview was conducted, was working on introducing in the store, where they will only get one limited delivery consisting of one piece of cattle per month. Local food is the mustard, which the co-op manager has to bring when he visits his mother-in-law who lives in Southern Jutland and it is the red wine from Møn, which he brought to a new year’s celebration and which tasted fantastic. The narratives keep coming.

Subsequently, the narratives are interwoven with narratives about the island and the community. Møn is described as a burgeoning community inhabited by people who put initiatives in motion in small scale. In the 70s and 80s, the island attracted many creative people such as artists and organic growers and this has

affected the community significantly. The island also harbours a group of people called Mønsupporters, who come and help when there are activities on the island, free of charge.

*“There is this incredible willingness to help, and people are keen on taking matters into their own hands. They say if this island is to survive, we cannot wait for somebody outside to come to our rescue. The island is quite keen on saving itself. “*

Local initiatives thus are also enacted as a strategy for the survival of the island. When Superbrugsen sells local food, they are contributing to local jobs and life in the community. However, local food is more than jobs and distance. The local biscuit factory Bisca who mass-produce Karen Volf biscuits is appreciated as it contributes with 400 jobs to the community but according to the store manager, it is not regarded as a local food, which needs special attention. Hence, in order to fit the concept of local food in Superbrugsen it takes more than having a short distance to the production. Local food is about niche, high quality, a good story. As such, local food is enacted as a part of the local community, which is strong at a small island like Møn, and local food is treated as a natural part of the local identity.

*“That is the societal part. We care a little bit extra for each other out here. (...) In that sense Brugsen<sup>2</sup> has a special role.”*

Superbrugsen's special role is seen in several places. For example, the neighbour store *Møn's Bolsjer* does not have a toilet for customers so their customers are allowed to use the toilet in Superbrugsen. The local post office is closed down so the postal workers have no place to put their bicycles, reload the mail and eat their lunch, so this is done at Superbrugsen as well. Furthermore, groceries are delivered to the elderly every week.

*“We deliver every Thursday, and we take the goods all the way into their refrigerators. If they have no money, (...) then they can owe until next time. And then there are some who are demented, and then a grandchild comes by [the store] every 2 or 3 weeks and pays, and then we have been giving credit until that point. So well, it is another world”.*

To summarize local food at Superbrugsen Lendemark is closely interwoven with the special island community and local food is enacted as a natural part of a close-knit local community. Including these rationales local

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<sup>2</sup> Brugsen is a short name for Superbrugsen or Dagligbrugsen

food is measured with other parameters than the rest of the assortment. Using the example of the local cheese maker who delivers cheese in the beginning of May if the process goes well, or else later in May, the co-op manager argues:

*“...and it has some charm, you could say. Previously the mind-set was, and that I suppose I would have said before as well, that if they could not deliver on time, then they could not deliver to us (...) that is what means a lot to the customers. We try to turn this upside down and say that if we want to have local food, well then the consumers have to strike when it is there.”*

Moreover, he adds:

*“Well, if we have ordinary canned tomatoes at 3-4 kroner, then people don’t understand if they are missing. They have to be there. However, with local food they have a slightly different view.”*

As such, there is a willingness from both the store and the customers to treat local food with a somewhat different set of parameters than the other goods in the store.

*“Of course we are not supposed to lose money on it, [local food] but we are not supposed to get rich on it either. We are supposed to have it as a part of the responsibility we have as a part of a community. That is the one part. The other part is that we can offer something special for the customers that are of high quality.”*

In that way, local food in Superbrugsen Lendemark is capable of adding both a societal aspect and contributing to an interesting assortment attracting customers.

### 6.1.2 Superbrugsen, Østerbro

In a Superbrugsen in Østerbro, Copenhagen, local food is enacted quite differently. Here the so-called local producers are not situated in the neighbourhood and the vegetable grower is not passing the store on his way with new supplies and making sure his products are presented nicely. A Superbrugsen in Copenhagen does not have the close and natural connection with the community, which is seen in Møn. Paradoxically, local food in this store is articulated as *a foreign product*, as it does not go through Coop’s central channels like the rest of the goods.

*“When it is a foreign product, then we have to declare it manually in the system in box number two. If it is a product supplied from the central storage, a Coop good, then everything runs automatically and the prices are being maintained. But if it is a foreign product, then we have to maintain the prices ourselves.”*



In this context, it should be mentioned that a foreign product is a technical definition of products that are not centrally registered in the assortment from Coop's headquarter. So here, Coop's usual channels are considered the "natural" channels whereas local food is something that the co-op manager has to *get out there in the city*, outside the usual Coop forum, and thereby *local* in this context paradoxically becomes *foreign*.

Where local food in Møn is perceived as bringing both commercial and societal value, then it is something quite different that is perceived to bring value to the Copenhagen store:

*"(...) I don't think so much about local food because of where we are located. My main consideration is what can bring value to us. And that is organics. Østerbro. A metropolis. Organics. That means a hell of a lot. We have a high share, but that does not mean that it cannot be raised. (...) I just believe that if I can see the value, then I want to make an extra effort. We can see that organics bring value here, therefore, that is what we believe in, and we step on it [figuratively on the 'speeder']!"*

Superbrugsen in Østerbro experiences huge success with a growing sale of organic products and find that this is what gives the store its profile and what brings value in relation to sales and profit. On the other hand, local food is experienced as being difficult to handle, time consuming and in need of special attention in order to be sold. It needs an effort to find the local producers as there are almost no local producers in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it adds an administrative burden and it needs a good place to be displayed to be noticed and sold, preferably involving stagings such as tastings etc. *"Once the local products are put on the shelves, they die"*, the co-op manager states. One example is Bybi [City Bee] honey, a product that sold well in the beginning when it was put in an attractive place. Additionally, it is a dilemma when local products have to have the best places to be displayed in the store:

*"We have a store with X square meters to a rent of X kroner. To make sure that Coop gets the best purchase prices, then the industry is guaranteed good places to display their products, which we have to live up to. Therefore, it is a balance where we have to make sure to follow [the requirements]. And then we have to make space for local products as well."*

This represents an extra challenge and dilemma, which makes it difficult to perceive local products as attractive for the store. So calculating products in terms of input and output local food is not perceived as bringing much value to the store in opposition to organics. If a product does not sell, then it is not perceived

as bringing value, but the store keeps testing different local products. To get inspiration for local products to test and to get their mind-set in the direction of local, a meeting between Superbrugsen stores in the district and local suppliers was initiated and inspiration also has come from colleagues in other stores in Copenhagen. As such, there is a development that local comes to mean more than before. They have had success with inviting schoolchildren from a school in the neighbourhood to learn about how to avoid food waste and they experience a growing success with donating money to local associations and charitable initiatives. Additionally, they believe that the store will sell more local products in the future as well.

*“It is not something that generates the big sale, but how can we differentiate ourselves from discount. That is also, what we think about a lot. (...) Telling the good story.”*

So to summarize, local food in the Superbrugsen in Østerbro is enacted as a matter of commercial input and output and is not perceived as bringing much value in that sense in opposition to organics. *“Ideology and business has to go hand in hand,”* as the co-op manager explains. Nevertheless, they keep testing different local products because of the focus on local food centrally and the understanding of the need to differentiate themselves from discount. Additionally, the aspect of local is also enacted as reaching out to the local community in the form of donating money to local initiatives and inviting local school classes to teach them about food waste.

### 6.1.3 Marketing and category development, Superbrugsen

In the central department for marketing and category development in all Superbrugsen stores, local food is part of their new concept for Superbrugsen. This concept includes initiatives about assortment, operation and communication and the interviewee works with the communication and marketing part. This comprises the consumer experience; everything from the shop fittings to the pictures and decoration in the stores, to the look of the supermarket leaflet - everything that has to do with the look and feel you get regarding Superbrugsen. This concept development has begun with a process of finding the values of Superbrugsen, a process that has ended up with four guiding principles: *Responsibility, delicious and inspiring, simple and straightforward, and engaged.* The interviewee stressed the three last-mentioned.

*“Because we have said that it should be delicious and inspiring to shop at our stores. (...) how do we make ourselves more exciting, how do we differentiate ourselves? Local food is going to contribute to make it more inspiring to shop at our stores.”*

As part of renewing Superbrugsen with the new concept, local food fits well in the strategy of becoming more inspiring and as such being able to differentiate themselves from the competitors. It is hoped that local food can be *the “extra reason why”* you choose to buy your groceries in one of the Superbrugsen stores, the IP (Interview Person) explains.

*“So you can say that this is the journey we are making. We find out that it [local goods and local engagement] suits us [Superbrugsen] well. It is part of our DNA to be engaged in our local communities. And what we arrived at is that here is a huge unexploited potential.”*

In this context, local food is part of having and showing a local engagement, which fits the guiding principles of being inspiring and engaged. Local food is enacted as a marketing tool, which includes immaterial values that fit Superbrugsen well, and as such, marketing local food has business potential.

*“It is totally crazy what local food has given us of positive PR and goodwill and everything. We had not seen it coming. So it must have met a need with the Danes, an unfulfilled need.”*

As such, local food is not only a product. Additionally, local food is enacted as a PR tool, as providing goodwill, as a differentiator. It is something that has resulted in an increased stream of customers even without focusing on low price, which is what normally is experienced to affect the stream of customers. In this perspective, local food becomes attractive from a marketing standpoint. It is something that *“pushes some buttons. There are feelings in it,”* she states.

*“No matter where you go, whether you go to the USA or England, and no matter who is leading the way in this business, then it is this thing with closeness, which has gotten a revival. And in all the surveys we conduct we can see that it seems like there is a similar potential in Denmark.”*

Local food thus fits a global trend where local food is enacted as closeness, which appeals to many consumers at present. *“There is something in the principle of closeness that is really appealing.”* It is a point that the word *closeness* in Danish is not only connected to geographical distance but can also refer to a social relation, which may contribute to make local food seem appealing.

To the discussion of how local food is and can be communicated, she states *“It has actually also a lot to do with where the social debate is going.”* And from the marketing perspective, how local food is communicated

has much to do with, where the consumers are at a given point. And right now the discourse is about closeness.

In summary, in marketing and concept development, local food is enacted as a way to show engagement in the local community, as a way to differentiate from the competitors, as a way to brand Superbrugsen and Coop on something other than price and a way to do branding which fits in the societal discourse about closeness.

#### 6.1.4 CSR department

In the CSR department, local food is not seen as directly contributing positively to the classical key issues of the department: Health, ethical trade, environment and climate. Nevertheless, local food indirectly includes aspects of interest with regard to responsibility:

*“But where I think that local food rimes well with responsibility is within two areas: Firstly, it is about innovation. If you want to keep Denmark as a living food country, then it is necessary to support the growth layer and the new [producers] who may have other perspectives on how to produce food (...) and therefore it is important to work with these suppliers. (...) The other issue, which is worth mentioning with regard to responsibility, in the same way as with organic goods, (...) is that it [local food] makes consumers take a stand about what they eat. (...) That is extremely important for the agenda of responsibility. To make more consumers recognize that you can pay more money for some food, which has other qualities than just “it tastes good” and “it is cheap”. Therefore, I actually see that local food can work as a shortcut to create more understanding of the importance of what we eat; “the resources that are used, the value chain, and the work places, everything which responsibility is about. To think holistically”, the IP states.*

Thereby local food is enacted as an indirect way to work with responsibility and focus on ethics by putting other quality parameters than price and taste on the agenda; both by supporting the growth layer in producing other types of products and by making the consumers more conscious of what they buy and eat.

*“What are you interested in as a consumer? Are you interested in just buying the cheapest products possible and then close your eyes to the consequences it may have in the value chain, and then you have the internal treadmill towards bigger production units, more standardization and more monoculture. Or do we want to support that we take a step out of the treadmill and ask ourselves the question: Which development do I prefer for my country? And local food touches upon a wish of doing something else. Just like we sit and watch*

*Bonderøven<sup>3</sup> on TV or start growing our own kitchen garden. (...) It [local food] fits a wish in us about being able to make a difference. (...) And in a way, that in some way is clear and manageable. I think that local food, like organic food, plays an important role in a globalised world, where we cannot oversee the consequences that our choices have.”*

By getting closer to the consumers local food indirectly puts focus on the consequences, both positively and negatively, of our food production. However, from the point of view of the department of responsibility, local food does not only start an interesting process externally. Local food also challenges the way Coop has usually done business, and the new focus on local food as a concept has started an internal discussion about processes, economy and responsibility. What kind of terms is it that Coop offers the local suppliers? And what is a responsible view on economy?

*“Economy in relation to responsibility, what does that mean? That does not only mean that in order to act responsibly you must earn money. That is how many interpret it. Many thinks that because part of the triangle of responsibility<sup>4</sup> is a sustainable economy, then it means simply that we must make money. That is not how it is. You have to apply a value chain perspective on the economy part of responsibility (...) and this means that you have to make sure that the whole value chain benefits from the trade. It is important that there is no one who skims the cream at the expense of others. (...) Even intermediaries and primary producers must benefit so much of the trade that they are able to invest and develop their business. I think this is the next paradigm of responsibility, which we must look at.”*

Local food is seen as contributing to this internal discussion about the economic dimension of responsibility: *“That also makes local food interesting, because instinctively it is easier both for our co-op managers but also for our purchasers to ask themselves the question. Here we can see that it is to no use that we squeeze them [the local producers and suppliers] so hard in some negotiation, that they do not dare to do business with us next year, or that they go belly up or that their risks become too big. With local food, we can sort of sense and understand the responsibility dimension of economy, as the third part of the triangle of responsibility. We understand this because there is such short distance to those we do business with. We do not understand it, when we talk to Nestlé and just squeeze their price on chocolate. (...) you do not understand what that does to the intermediary from the Ivory Coast or what it does to the primary producer in Ghana. (...) And therefore*

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<sup>3</sup> Bonderøven is a Danish TV-program following a farmer in his dream of living a simple life, become self-sufficient and work in an old-fashioned manner.

<sup>4</sup> The triangle of sustainability is a symbol that combines various aspects of sustainability referring to both environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability.

*I think that local food internally can include a perspective of education in relation to understanding the part of responsibility which concerns economy.”*

Therefore, to sum up: Local food is not seen as directly contributing within the classical key issues of responsibility as health, environment and climate. However, local food is enacted as an indirect way to put consequences of our shopping habits and conditions of trade on the agenda, both externally and internally. This is done by securing a growth layer for innovative producers with another view of food production and by making consumers aware of the consequences of their purchases, because local food means a shorter distance between producer and consumer. Furthermore, local food is enacted as an internal education tool, which is seen to contribute with making responsibility live, not only in the CSR department but also within the core business. Local food is enacted as a catalyst for discussions of terms of trade and a view on economy as something that must be equally distributed.

#### 6.1.5 Department for quality control and food safety

In the department for quality control and food safety, local food is a matter both of innovation but especially of risk and control.

*“It is no secret that it [local food] is something that can make me nervous. It is something, which I, here centrally at the head quarter, am not in control of to the same degree as I normally am in matters regarding for example food safety. And it is overall my responsibility that the food safety in the corporation is all right.”* Here local food is enacted as a potential risk, which is difficult to control. Coop cannot make the same demands as when dealing with big suppliers.

*“They [big suppliers] have a professional competence and they have the possibilities to conduct analytical control and they have a quality control system which goes much further than with the small producers. And then typically they have people who take care of the legislative, some who take care of everything with regard to safety, and some who gets it adapted into the production. With the small businesses then often it is (...) perhaps two persons who have to take care of everything. And of course they cannot obtain the same degree of knowledge about legislation and parameters of safety.”*

In this regard, local food is enacted as something in need of a helping hand.

*“What we are planning to do, is to make some simple documents, which say, well if you are a supplier of e.g. vegetables to Coop (...) then this is what you must be aware of and in this document there will be extracts from the original legislation. There will be a link to the original legislation, but we know that it is difficult to read for many companies and especially if it is creative people. (...) So what we do is to extract the most important demands and formulate these in a more comprehensible language. (...) Apart from these documents, we are going to look at how we can develop it like some kind of learning system.”*

Therefore, to work with local producers also mean to undertake an educational task and act as a translating link between the authorities and the producers. However, even though local food is enacted as a potential risk and something in need of a helping hand local food is also connected with some advantages about influencing the agenda. The IP from the department of quality control and food safety explains:

*“Well, with the big international [companies] (...) if we say that we do not want azo food colouring<sup>5</sup> in our products, then they may say; well this is the standard with us, because else the candy will rub off when you take them out of the bag. Then we have said, well then, there is nothing to be done about that. In this way, they can have another agenda, which is not easy to change because they are so big and have so many customers. (...) Then it is suddenly us who are the small ones.”*

In summary, besides being enacted as risky and in need of a helping hand local food is also synonymous with innovation and a greater opportunity to have influence on the products.

#### 6.1.6 Central purchasing department

The central purchasing department is not directly involved in what they in Coop call *local-local* food, which is a local deal involving mainly the local producer or supplier and the local co-op manager. When local food is handled in this department, it is more in the meaning of Danish products in opposition to groceries from foreign countries. In the central purchasing department, represented by a central purchasing manager, local food in Coop is enacted simply as a response to a consumer demand:

*“From my position local food is a tool for achieving what the consumers demand. That is what is the essence. And the consumers demand a wide range of groceries. Both [food] from the local area they live in but also that they are able to get strawberry in February or bananas all year round. If you look at the poster over there*

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<sup>5</sup> Food colorings, which are suspected of being carcinogenic, create hypersensitivity and damage the environment and which are forbidden in Coop’s own brands and in other products addressed to kids.

*(pointing at a poster with a map of the world hanging above his desk) then it is an expression of both our workplace and our marketplace. It is the whole world.”*

Local food is one tool out of many, which is used to react to a diverse set of consumer demands. And the consumers demand a wide range of different products with different quality parameters.

*“And when you look at the Danish products, then they are preferred by many. However, you cannot generalize. The consumers do not do that either. And some consumers either can’t or won’t pay the price for a Danish product, if it is more expensive than the foreign. So therefore we must also offer a product for those who want to pay a little less for the grocery or have another size or origin or which other parameters which could determine it. Therefore, what is important for us, that is, that we do not want to mission but we want to make it possible for everybody to be able to shop at our stores. So that is what our intention is.”*

About 35 % of the goods sold in the interviewees department are Danish and there is a focus on Danish products, which according to the central purchaser responds to a consumer demand of both supporting the local workplaces, transparency and many other issues. However, what is important is to be able to match a diverse set of consumer demands, and to be able to provide something for everybody. Here local food is enacted as a tool to match a demand of one consumer type.

*“What means the most for me, at the end of the day, is that we have the right goods for our customers. We have an old saying, which goes: The right products at the right prices at the right time. And that is what it is all about.”*

In summary, local food is enacted as one out of many consumer demands and one tool out of many to match these diverse consumer demands. Additionally, Danish products are just a small part of the global marketplace, which is considered the central purchaser’s workplace and marketplace.

#### 6.1.7 Department of innovation

Two interviews were conducted in this department. The department works with transversal projects between the chains and developing the local food concept is an important project. The department develops strategy and setup for the concept.



#### 6.1.7.1 Project leader, Innovation department

The first interview was with a project leader working with different innovation projects where local food is the biggest project. In this interview, there are some similarities with the enactment seen in the purchasing department. To the question of why local food in Coop, the answer is:

*“Because the consumers demand it. Simply. We must deliver what the consumers demand.” (...) Right now there are many who need local products and we do not meet that demand as it is right now. At least not compared to the demand. “*

So in this example local food is enacted as a matter of supply and demand, as seen in the purchasing department. However, this perspective is followed up with other perspectives on local food:

*“There is also this part about responsibility. It [reasons for investing in local food] is also that it is good PR. It has marketing value. It is all that about supporting the local community, which we do a lot. We are kind of the last bastion left in the villages with our Dagli’brugsen. Therefore, there are many parameters all the way round. But my primary focus is to deliver the assortment which the consumers demand.”*

As such, these further parameters add to the complexity of the enactment of local food. It is also mentioned that local food is part of the food manifest, as one of the elements used to enhance and promote quality of food.

*“If you read our food manifest explicitly on local food, then it is much about that we are an agricultural country and we have high quality raw materials and products, and we have people who are very good at making these products. However, there is a long way from making a tiny niche product with a lot of love and then undertaking deliveries to 300 of our stores. It is just too big a step for many. (...) Therefore, we have tried to focus on taking this process a bit stepwise, so they can go from being local-local suppliers to regional and then all the way to being Danish [nationwide] supplier, if it goes that far.”*

This quotation shows local food enacted as products in a development process and Coop as one who can contribute to the professionalization of the local producers and possibly helping them expand their businesses. Similarly as in the department of food safety, local food is enacted as in need of a helping hand on issues around the making of the products e.g. sales and marketing. Several other issues as profiling and differentiating from the competitors and the task of attracting local producers are also highlighted in the interview.

So in summary local food is primarily enacted as a matter of supply and demand but many other perspectives for example in the area of PR and marketing and responsibility for the local community are included, which increases the complexity of grasping local food in this department. Furthermore, local food is enacted as something, which is in a development process, going from small to larger; possibly from local-local to regional or maybe Danish and which is in need of a helping hand in order to accomplish this. This complex viewpoint also shows the innovation department as the one trying to gather the threads in a common strategy for local food.

#### 6.1.7.2 Manager, Innovation department

The other interview in the department was with the manager of the department. From this position, local food is enacted as a part of a bigger vision. It is a part of the food manifest – the result of a strategy process about finding visions and values for the future development of Coop.

*“An important key word in Coop’s strategy process have been about community. Back in time, an important mission was to provide the average Dane access to decent food and be able to guarantee that the quality was all right. It has been about raising the bar for when a product was all right for example by establishing the central laboratory. In this way, there has been different phases in Coop’s history. What we draw [of important values and key words] from this strategy process was much about local community. (...) However, it has also been about the fact that Coop are a co-operative movement, the Dane’s own company so it has been about strengthen (the link between Coop and] the Danish community and local communities. We needed to find a modern version for that.”*

As such, local food is enacted as one of the elements in Coop’s new strategy, the food manifest. It is about values, which are supposed to modernize the company and enhance the position as a co-operative movement. It is about focusing not only on short-term gains but also on more long-term branding value. Furthermore, the focus on local food is about differentiating Coop from other retailers:

*“It [to sell groceries] is no longer enough – you can buy foodstuffs everywhere – there are discount stores everywhere – that is by no means enough. Neither, is it enough that you can trust the packaging and that the food quality is all right. (...) You have to find something else (...), which differentiates you and which is about the same core values or the same DNA.”*

Here local food fits into the strategy of showing consumers some clear values and having a clear DNA to develop the company on.

*“I think it fits very well with Coop’s journey. We have had some years where we have focused on logistics, procurement and all that, where the business has been trimmed. However, maybe the overall direction on everything else than running the business may have been lost a bit on the way. Then the strategic direction has shifted, the CEO has shifted and the strategic process has resulted in the food manifest. It is the vision that we in Coop have to want something more [than running a business]. We have always wanted that in Coop. In a period we have not been so clear on what we wanted and have been fluttering around in different directions in regard to our value based work.”*

Behind the food manifest, where the vision about local food is included, is a vision to focus on this value-based work. With the food manifest Coop wants to contribute to develop Danish food culture, set focus on quality and raise a saturated market.

In summary local food is enacted as an element in the vision and strategy of Coop which is supposed to develop and modernize the company, it is about finding [back] to a clear DNA and some core values for the future development of Coop and it is about differentiation in the retail market.

#### 6.1.8 Summary of Analysis part 1 – Enactment of local food in Coop

The previous sections show that local food is enacted very differently in the different departments and from the different positions in Coop. Even in the two different Superbrugsen stores, local food is enacted as differently as being a natural part of the local community in Møn to being a foreign product in Copenhagen. Local food is enacted as an indirect way to put issues of responsibility on the agenda and contributing to making corporate social responsibility leave the corner office and be more integrated in the business in one department, while it is enacted as a matter of supply and demand in others. Furthermore, local food is enacted as a tool for differentiating from competitors, as being in need of a helping hand, as something that is in a development process, as an element in finding Coop’s DNA, as a potential risk and as a tool for developing Danish food culture to focus more on quality, just to mention some. The enactments are diverse. Some are rather specific and includes specific rationales while others seem more complex and bits of many of these rationales are seen in the innovation department who is supposed to find a setup for the development of local food in Coop.

Some areas of complexity are revealed around local food when enacted differently in different departments in Coop. Some of the issues, which have been repeated in many interviews, will be analysed in the following part of the analysis in order to grasp the *complexity* when local food enters Coop. The *effects* of local food entering Coop will be presented and discussed including how local food and Coop mutually adjusts.

## 6.2 Complexities and effects of local food entering Coop

The issues that will be analysed are *the definition of local food in Coop, concept development(s), food safety, logistics* and finally *terms and conditions of sale*.

### 6.2.1 Defining (and bending) the definition of local food in Coop

One issue, which has been touched upon in several interviews, is how to define local food in Coop - a matter, which is discussed in research as well (see chapter 2.3). Is local food a matter of geographical distance, and if it is, then what distance is a suitable measure for calling a product local? Or is local something else; does the size of the production matter? Is it about supporting local jobs? Is it a matter of where the product is processed or is it important that all ingredients are local? Is local something that includes special values? Many interesting questions are raised and discussed and the images of what can be considered local are diverse.

At the Superbrugsen in Møn questions are not raised of whether Møn's bolsjer and Møn's coffeehouse can be considered local even though the ingredients obviously must have been imported from foreign countries. In contrast, the big, local biscuit factory Bisca is not enhanced as local in the store even though the factory is of great importance for the community:

*"They [Karen Volf products] are on the shelves just like they would be in Superbrugsen in Karise or Roskilde or where ever. (...) We do not make anything extra out of it. (...) It is not like a niche product. (...) There are 400 workplaces out there and of course it is very important for us, but well it has become a mass producer, right."*

Therefore, in Møn it neither is the fact that the goods are locally produced nor is it the fact that the ingredients are local, which makes a product local. It has another dimension to it; it must be niche, and it must contain a good and local story. Nevertheless, in other interviews, a case is mentioned where a Superbrugsen store wanted to sell eggs from the big, local egg packing facility Hedegaard who also is the supplier of eggs to Dansk Supermarked<sup>6</sup>. For that particular Superbrugsen store, it has been the local

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<sup>6</sup> A big Danish retail, a competitor to Coop.

workplaces, which are important in the definition of local food. For the stores in Copenhagen where there are hardly any producers in close proximity of the stores a narrow km definition of local food rules out almost all local products. The IP in the marketing department states:

*“You could say that for the city stores it is a bigger challenge. And it is also here that we may bend the concept ‘local products’ a bit. (...) We started out by saying: It must maximally be from a distance of 50 km from you (...) and then we reached the conclusion that you cannot actually do that, because a local product must be what the consumers consider as a local product. So use your common sense. If you at Frederiksberg think that it is okay that something is from North Zealand, then we should not come and tell you that this is not a local product, because it is from a distance of 51 km and our limit is 50. But (...) if the carrots come from 150 km away, and when you look at the name of where it comes from and immediately thinks ‘aaarrhh,’ then it is probably not a local product.”*

So in this respect the definition of local food is more a gut feeling: Does the product feel like a local product or not when you look at it. However, this gut feeling is being tested: What if it is Italian spices produced in Denmark? What if it is imported tea leaves spiced with Danish sea buckthorn? What if buying a product means supporting a local producer that is a part of a bigger co-operative? The project leader in the innovation department states:

*“The problem is that local products are perceived differently. If you ask 100 people then they will give different answers. Some want it to be within a radius of 10 km and only this specific city. We just have to realize that then there will only be one or two local products in a shop. We do not have so many producers.”*

As such, the definition is also a matter of practicality. It does not make sense to make such a narrow definition that it excludes so many products that the concept cannot be realized. On the other hand, the set of criteria must not be so diluted that the consumers do not accept the local products when they see them. In Coop, it has been a long process before writing a set of defining criteria and they have been rewritten as new products have come along challenging the definition. The project leader in the innovation department says:

*“We have tried to establish a frame (...) [for the definition of local] but we will definitely experience some [producers/suppliers], who will offer us a product which will make us in doubt about our set of rules. We also started out by saying it has to be made only by Danish ingredients. Then somebody comes with marzipan and chocolate, and then we suddenly exclude many categories. (...) We simply have many ingredients, which we*

*cannot grow [in Denmark]. So we have chosen to say that it has to be produced in Denmark and that we prioritize local ingredients.”*

So the definition has ended up as a set of criteria where some are a bit vague in their definition e.g. *we prioritize local ingredients, it must include a good story* etc. The definition is changed, challenged and bent in the process of developing a concept for local food in Coop and the radius for calling something local has disappeared to an extent that there is more focus on regional than local products. The IP from marketing states:

*“And that is super difficult, because it is a balance. If we make local to something regional or nationwide, is it then local anymore? For example, some of our stores have had Læsø salt as a local product, and that it is in the [Læsø] area, but is it a local product anymore? It sells just as much here or in Southern Jutland.”*

Therefore, when local food enters Coop, the *local* in local is challenged, stretched and bent in the construction of a definition, which tries to fulfil both the consumer’s perception of local and where it is still realistic to realise the vision of increasing the amount of local products in the stores.

#### 6.2.2 Concept development(s)

What has also been an *effect* of the concept development of local food is that local food is split into different categories with different defining criteria. There are the *local-local* products and then there are *regional-local* products which for example are products from Bornholm sold at Bornholm, but which can also be products from Bornholm sold in Copenhagen. The third category is the *Danish* products. Where *local-local* is mostly a local agreement between the individual shop and the producer, the other categories are handled centrally. This division has been made as it has been realised that *local-local* is very time consuming and difficult to handle in many of Coop’s stores, and therefore in order to develop this concept further, some processes must be handled centrally. Therefore, one of the *effects* of local food entering Coop is that in the development of the concept of local food there is a pressure on local food to be handled more centrally, and there is a pressure on local food to become regional or maybe nationwide.

The manager of the innovation department states:

*“One of the learnings from this very local-local setup is that it is too demanding. It is difficult for the individual store to manage it and get it prioritized enough. By making this setup [with regional-local], we provide them*

*centrally with this basic package. And then they can always do all the other things [local-local] simultaneously. So with this regional-local concept, there is the local flavour – the value or message included in local food – but at the same time the amount of products increase so we can more credible talk about it as Coop, because we centrally has made this setup.”*

So local food becomes more regional but still keeps the *local flavour*. In this way there is a tendency that local is stretched to become regional or national and centrally handled and controlled although all three categories of local exist simultaneously. This also stretches the definition of local. Is the project really still much about local or is it something else – such as a process of developing more high quality products maybe?

When discussing local food in Coop, the Thise case is repeatedly mentioned as a huge success. The dairy company Thise and Coop have had a close partnership through many years and Thise has developed from a small dairy to the second largest in Denmark now even exporting milk to China. Here, the manager from the innovation department says:

*“I think the Thise case is phenomenal. I wish that 20 years from now we could say that we have been able to create two new Thise – through this [the concept(s) of local food]. It could also be amazing to say that we contributed to have an impact on 100 new local small suppliers.”*

This quote indicates that one of the elements in a local food success in Coop is to take a local producer out of it's very local-local, small and niche like element and help it to become more mainstream and commercial, although of course still keeping its high quality. However, is it then still a local product? The IP from the CSR department, points out that they in Coop are proud of the collaboration between Thise and Coop, but questions if it still is local:

*“Well, it [Thise] is Denmark's second largest dairy. I cannot remember what their turnover is, maybe 800 million. After all, it is not a small company; it is not a niche product. Many Copenhageners think, that Thise is the small one, but weell they are exporting 20 percent of their production (...) so I don't think it is that local anymore.”*

In summary, the concept development of local food in Coop goes in a direction where there is more focus on regional products than on local and where local, regional and nationwide production are seen as a staircase where Coop can support producers in going up the stairs and expand their business if they are interested.

Consequently, climbing the stair, going from the very *local-local* and up is seen as a success. Furthermore, there is a focus of handling more processes centrally instead of a local agreement between the individual shop and the producer. In this way, an effect of local food meeting Coop is paradoxically that *local* becomes connected to *regional* and *nationwide* and that *local* becomes connected to *centralisation*, which normally would be regarded as opposites. In order to make a success out of local food in Coop, there is a tendency to go from *local* to *local flavour* and again paradoxically the case of Thise is pointed out as a success, although the success has also meant that it can be questioned whether Thise can still be considered to be local. The complexities and paradoxes are many!

### 6.2.3 Quality control and food safety

One of the complex issues concerning local food is the issue of quality assurance and food safety. When engaging with small local companies Coop cannot act and require the same demands as when dealing with a big supplier as Nestlé or Kraft.

The IP from the CSR says:

*“As I see it, one of the big challenges is when local products meet Coop as a system. Dammit, we are a like a whole state in the state with our quality department and our product standards and our code of conduct. When we get a new supplier then we usually send a 120 pages declaration where they have to sign at the end and thus confirm that they have all sorts of things through the product chain under control. And the system we have built just doesn’t work for a very small supplier. So we have a very big task ahead of us and maybe we need to dare to ease some of the standards and demands we usually operate with internally to make it possible for them to enter our supply chain.”*

So local food challenges the way Coop usually works with quality assurance and food safety. Coop normally boasts about setting higher demands and standards than the legislation and this way to enact food safety is under pressure when dealing with local food. As quoted in the first part of the analysis the IP from quality control and food safety stated that local food can make her a bit nervous as it is something she is not in control of centrally in the same way as she is with the usual big suppliers:

*“As I see it, we can’t get around these different procedures and administrative boxes, which we have to use after all. Maybe we can find a twist or a light version and we can make it easier to understand but we do not get entirely around the bureaucracy.”*



Therefore, when local food enters Coop there is a pressure on Coop to ease their standards, but there is also a pressure on local producers to professionalize in relation to administration and quality control. In Coop, this is among others planned to be handled by trying to act as a *translator* between the legislation and the producer and to try to educate the producers. However, it will also be handled by loosening some demands, especially to documentation of different sorts. In this way there is a *mutual adjustment* going on between local food and Coop in relation to quality assurance and documentation.

Until now, the categories local meat and eggs have been excluded from Coop as they are considered sensitive issues in relation to food safety. However, there is a pressure on Coop to include these categories, as the consumers are interested in the products. In Møn, they are e.g. planning to try to get local organic pigs from a social project at Lolland, which is both local (or almost local) and includes a good story. Pilot projects of handling local meat is in the pipeline. What happens when local food (read meat) enters Coop?

The IP from the department of quality control and food safety states:

*“What we have said so far is that it is fine that you have a local producer of cattle or whatever it is, where we say that we would actually like to take the meat from the animals that is out on this or this field. We can see there is a nice story to it, and our customers have a possibility to see these animals, which at some point ends at the cold counter. However, what we have said is that we cannot do business with either mobile or small fixed slaughterhouses. “*

So the local cattle and the storytelling can be accepted but the slaughtering is a sensitive issue with regard to food safety, so it cannot be done alternatively. The IP continues:

*“Therefore, we have said that it could be done if we can make a deal with some of the big slaughterhouses, which we usually do business with as e.g. Danish Crown. Because there is so good traceability on the meat that we will still be able to follow the meat even if it entered one of the big slaughterhouses. Then we view Danish Crown as our supplier, and then it is no longer a local product. Maybe there is a local story connected to it and there is a local link from the farm they originate from, but it is not local food in our business agreement, because Danish Crown have the thick variant of the agreement, [the 120 pages mentioned above] so they know perfectly well, what they have to live up to. Then we do not need to worry. (...) If it goes this way, then we still have the good story, but we are in control of all conditions.”*

So paradoxically, the local cattle from the social project can be transported to and run through the mastodon Danish Crown and still be considered local in the eye of the consumer but it is not local and thereby controllable from the perspective of Coop.

In summary, from the department of quality control and food safety local food is connected with some insecurity compared to the big suppliers Coop usually does business with and where they can just send thick declarations of demands. In order to do business with small, local producers, Coop is obliged to look at the extent of what they require from their local suppliers. This means that both parties have to adjust their demands but also that Coop take on the task to try to educate the producers. In return, there is a pressure on local producers to professionalize especially in relation to documenting their quality assurance. Additionally, there is a pressure on Coop to adopt sensitive categories in relation food safety, such as local eggs and meat, which until now have been rejected. This is seen done by running the local cattle through a big central slaughterhouse, keeping the good story while Coop does not have to leave the company's comfort zone in relation to food safety. In this way, you transport the cattle from the locality but keeps the local *link*. When local food enters Coop, untraditional methods are being created and the local concept is being challenged, as local food and Coop are mutually adjusting.

#### 6.2.4 Logistics

Another issue, which is complicated in relation to local products, is the matter of logistics. With the *local-local* concept, the local supplier delivers the products to the individual shop. This is time-consuming especially for the local supplier but also for the individual store. The manager from the innovation department states: *"The [local] suppliers experience it like – well a lot of these suppliers do not think about that now I have to pack six boxes of honey, put them in my little van, then I drive to this store and deliver three boxes and in this store I deliver three, and then I drive home again. Then it has cost 3 ½ hours (...) because then you just had a little chat – it takes half a day. And for the store it is also a special procedure, which is in addition to (...) the normal delivery"*.

With the *regional-local* concept, distribution will be handled centrally in order to take away pressure from both the supplier and the co-op managers. However, these regional-local products do not fit into the usual logics of logistics. In logistics, the distribution of products is usually measured in *penny per product*. Local products have no chance in this way of measuring logistics. This means that although local food becomes centrally distributed it cannot be done in the same way as with other products. Again, a *mutual adjustment*

is happening between local food and Coop's systems. For example, there are alarms on the products at the central storehouse. These alarms are categorized with different classifications depending on how important they are in relation to the degree of sale. So some of the marginal products with low degree of rotation have an alarm that is not highly prioritized, if there is a challenge with delivering these products. However, local food does not fit into this categorization. Local products are important for the stores even though they have a low rotation. The manager from the innovation department explains:

*"Take for example the shelf with products from Bornholm. It contains a mustard from Bornholm. It should be there. If this suddenly is in back order or there is some challenge with delivering it, then we have to act on it, because otherwise such a shelf will quickly be empty. Even though there is not such a huge sale of it in the store, as there is from the milk counter or other places, then it is an important shelf. And if it gets too empty then we become untrustworthy in the promise we have made."*

So local products are more important than what the amount of sale can justify. Local food is a promise to the customers, which Coop has to keep even though it has a low turnover. Therefore, these alarms must be adjusted to fit with local products.

He continues:

*"I experience that everybody understands the need to act a little differently with the smaller suppliers and everybody can see that it is sympathetic."*

So local food is the odd one out in Coop. It is understood that it cannot be treated and measured in the same way as other products and thus in logistics, it does not need to fit in with other products, which in logistic terms are measured, as *penny per product*. It is a sympathetic concept, which stands out from the other products/concepts. On the other hand, the fact that there is now an attempt to develop the local concept to become delivered through central channels shows that there is still a pressure on local food to become more effective and rational in order to fit into Coop's systems.

Finally, I will address that although it is stated that local food is seen as a sympathetic project in line with Coop's overall strategy written in the food manifest, local food also clashes with the practices of how Coop usually does business. Therefore, when local food enters Coop it can also bring dilemmas to the fore. The manager of the innovation department says about the local-local concept:

*“You see, it is a new flow of goods we are inventing and a new means of payment between a store and a local supplier. The house [central Coop] was not particularly thrilled about that, because Coop is a machine of purchasing that is what we live by; to buy a product, guarantee the quality of the product and resell it for a profit. We have a logistic machine that can deliver efficiently around the country – that is of course the core business for this house. Therefore, it has been important for us to say that local products are about differentiating the stores; it will never be the primary way to equip the stores with products. It is of course Coop who delivers truck after truck to the stores.”*

So in order to be accepted in Coop local products must be enacted as the odd one out that does not threaten how business is normally done in Coop. There is a limit of how much Coop are willing to change. As such, the local concept works as a kind of bilateral agreement in Coop working under other conditions, and it must be stressed internally, that it is a way of differentiating the store, and it is not the core business. This division could also be said to highlight a dilemma between short term and long-term gains, between profit of the day and the long-term value of branding.

#### 6.2.5 Terms and conditions of sale

With local food entering Coop discussions of terms and conditions of sales begin. The manager from the innovation department explains about the way Coop usually makes business with big suppliers:

*“There are a lot of demands from Coop to the suppliers about electronic handling and terms and conditions of sales when it is Unilever, KRAFT (...) huge, massive players we are up against. Then we really wrestle about the conditions. We have some strict demands they have to meet in order to get space on our shelves. That is our business. (...) It is tough negotiations.”*

As quoted earlier by the IP from the CSR department, local food challenges this way of doing business. The short way to the local suppliers, you do business with makes it easier to see the consequences of the *tough negotiations* at the end of the supply chain. It is easy to see that it is not sustainable to squeeze the local suppliers so hard in a negotiation that they do not dare to do business with Coop next year or go bankrupt or that they run a too big risk when dealing with Coop. So when local food enters Coop it means an examination and rephrasing of the terms and conditions on sales in relation to local suppliers. In that way local food is not only a promise to the customers, it is also an internal process of questioning, de-constructing

and re-constructing how to do business with local producers. As the IP from the CSR department says, it puts focus on:

*“Profit is not just profit. Profit [in a CSR perspective] is actually that profit must be equally distributed, so everybody in the value chain has the possibility to develop their business.”*

This adds a new dimension to the saying in Coop that was stated by the central purchaser: *The right product at the right price at the right time*. It adds the dimension that the business must be *done* right – understood as under fair terms from both parties. As the IP from the CSR department says, with local food begins the discussion of:

*“What conditions this commerce could be conducted on in order to develop their [the local producers’] business and be of mutual benefit.”*

Nevertheless, there is a limit for that line of thinking. Of course, there is a local producer somewhere with every product, not only with Danish, local products. With local food, there is a larger understanding of that producer, but that understanding is not transferred to include the producer who is a supplier to e.g. Unilever or Kraft. What happens to this producer when Coop and these big suppliers are *“wrestling about the conditions in tough negotiations”* is not questioned. This point is only raised in the CSR department.

However, with local food, there is a recognition of the mutual dependency between the partners. Coop needs the innovative layer that local food brings, the possibility to differentiate from the competitors and they need the local producers to fulfil their promise to the consumers of doubling local food stated in the food manifest. With local food, there is a focus on gentler conditions, more protracted business relations, a closer dialogue between Coop and the producers and on helping the local producers on the way. The manager for example explains about how to help local producers handle the electronic setup for their invoices:

*“We try to help the small getting over this hurdle, so they can be able to deliver to us, but in a fair way. We are not supposed to give all sorts of things away for free – it must still be a business we make with these small suppliers. We must try to meet them halfway.”*

By helping them, the local producers are also helped to fit into Coop’s system – another example of the mutual adjustment. In summary, when local food enters Coop it brings the consequences of Coop’s usual

ways of doing business closer to Coop and with this begins a discussions of fair terms and conditions of sale, but only in relation to local producers and suppliers. In addition, Coop undertakes to help these producers professionalize their business in different ways whereby the local producers also fit better into Coop's systems. Coop meets local food. Local food meets Coop. Mutual adjustment and mutual dependency. However, this adjustment only goes to a certain limit, local food must not cross a line in challenging Coop's normal ways to do business, but must work as a sort of bilateral agreement working under other conditions.

## 7.0 Conclusion

This thesis presents how local food is enacted very differently in the different departments and from the different positions in Coop. Even in the two different Superbrugsen stores, local food is enacted as differently as being a natural part of the local community in Møn to being a foreign product in Copenhagen. Local food is enacted as differently as a simple matter of supply and demand in the purchasing department and as an opportunity for educating in the interrelations in the value chain in another. Furthermore, local food is enacted as a tool for differentiating from competitors, as being in need of a helping hand, as something that is in a development process, as an element in finding Coop's DNA, as a potential risk and as a tool for developing Danish food culture to focus more on quality, just to mention some. The enactments are diverse and multiple, however this enactments co-exist in the day-to-day practices around the organizing of local food.

What happens when local food meets Coop? When local food enters Coop this does not just mean that local food *expands*. When local food enters Coop, local food *changes*. The definition of local products is made and re-made, stretched and bent. As the concept develops, it means an expansion of the volume but it could also be claimed to dilute some of the essence in *local*. There is an ongoing pressure to go from *local* to *regional* to *nationwide* and there is a tendency that goes from talking about (and acting upon) *local* to talking about (and acting) a *local flavour* or a *local link*, when the local products for example become centrally distributed or must be transported to a huge slaughterhouse. There is a pressure on local food to become more efficient and more professional.

But what about Coop? When local food enters Coop, Coop changes too. Local food challenges the logics, which is usually used in the business development. Local food brings Coop to reconsider their practices with regard to local food; from helping and educating the producers, to recognizing a mutual dependency; the profit must be equally distributed. When local food enters Coop, it adds a new dimension to the saying in Coop about *the right products at the right price at the right time*. Business with local producers must be on the *right terms* for both parties. However, this change or effect is only to a certain limit. It is stressed that the concept of local food is something different from how Coop usually works and it does not seem that these new realisations and methods are transferred to Coop's usual business methods. Local food works as a bilateral agreement functioning on different terms. This can lead to dilemmas for example when Coop has to balance the attractive places in the store between local products who need to be displayed nicely in order to be sold and the industry who is guaranteed good places in return for the best purchasing prices.

When local food enters Coop, complexities, compromises and paradoxes arise. When local food enters Coop neither local food or Coop are the same – they have (and continue to) mutually adjust.



## 8.0 Future perspectives

In recent years, it is discussed whether a new paradigm is evolving challenging the productionist paradigm (Lang, Heasman 2004) and here local food is by some scholars interpreted and highlighted as representing post-productionism. Others question this paradigm shift, as it is experienced that new initiatives are integrated in the old paradigm (Hansen, Kristensen 2010). Maybe the incremental changes that happens on day-to-day basis will have a tendency to be integrated based on existing understandings of production, and values from both the productionist and post-productionist paradigm will be mixed. Maybe this sharp division of paradigms and the binary between local as *good* and large-scale as *bad* hides some nuances about how to make positive changes in the food system.

At least, if local food is seen as belonging to the alternative food production and large-scale retail is seen as a product of the conventional food system, then local food entering retail challenges this division of two completely different worlds of production and distribution. This research tries to understand what happens when two unlike actors, which arguably could represent different views of food systems integrates, changing both actors.

In relation to change making in the food system it is interesting not only to stand outside and be judgmental to the critical aspects of the food system, but also to try to get closer to the actors, where the changes happens every day. Qualitative studies as an enactment study provides an opportunity for getting insights and grasping complexity of the change processes in the sector. Thereby it provides an opportunity for understanding some of the translations, which form the basis for the choices that are made and for the development, which takes place in the food sector.

Further research could look into the implications of this meeting between local food and retail with focus on both the possible gains but also possible negative side effects in relation to some of the values, which are associated with local food and alternative food systems. This could among others be the issue of power-relations between the local producer and food retailers. It could also be the understanding of local food as an education tool for understanding the interrelations in the food system, both internally in retail but also for the consumers. Other effects of local food entering retail, which could be interesting to research, could be the effects on diversity, scale of production, sustainability and the effects on the kind of assortment and prices of local products on the food retailer shelves.

This study has focused on the retail side of the meeting. Additional research could be conducted with focus on the producer side, for example by looking at different enactments of local food by producers who are supplying to retail and producers who use alternative sales channels such as farmer markets and small food co-operatives. It could also look at producers who previously have been suppliers to retail, but have changed to alternative sales channels. Here it would also be interesting to include an actor like Thise, who has had a close collaboration with Coop for several years, which has changed the dairy dramatically. This case could highlight both potentials, challenges and dilemmas from the producer perspective.

Additionally, research on the translations of local food using a follow-the-actor approach, in this case local food, could add interesting perspectives on understanding the development of local food and change in the food system in general. This should include actors representing the whole supply chain from producers including for example Økologisk Landsforening to retail including distribution channels and finally the end consumer.

To focus on and distinguish between different actors' perception of local is in line with Eriksen's suggestions for a new research strategy, where she advocates for the need to elaborate on the different definitions and meanings of local and distinguishing between the actors, to which the definition is attributed (Eriksen 2013).

The food thinker Geoff Tansey advocates for the need for a radical vision of our food system but also for acceptance of the incremental changes towards fulfilling that vision. Although it could be argued that we still wait for the radical vision, the need for accepting and understanding the incremental changes is still fruitful. Social sciences will here have the opportunity to translate cases of change processes but also to raise the reflections on the processes and development that takes place. These value reflections are not only fruitful in academia but are also needed in the food sector possibly affecting the possibility for a more radical vision and a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the complex implications and interrelations of the food system. The prospects of change in the food system in a direction of sustainability, fairness, diversity and societal and rural development will increase if all actors have insights to the relationships that shape the food system.

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## 10.0 Appendix - Example of interview guide

Questions to project leader- innovation department:

I would like to record the interview if that is ok with you? The recordings will only be used for this thesis and will be deleted after use.

I study Integrated Food Studies at Aalborg University in Sydhavnen, where I work with many themes, which are also interesting in retail such as sustainability, fairness, transparency, food culture etc. I have insights into Coop, because I was an intern in the department of responsibility four years ago, and have since that followed Coop, among others as a board member in my local Superbrugsen. And through my studies I have used Coop as a practical case for understanding the theory, i.e. as a basis for trying to understand our food system.

My thesis is about local products in Coop, as an example of the innovation/change, which happens right now. I am interested in how to make change. In my study and elsewhere I meet the understanding that retail has power in the food system – and thereby they can *just* do things differently. With my insight into Coop, I experience that maybe it is not so easy, that it is a complex matter to make changes in Coop, and I want to understand nuances and grasp this complexity in relation to local food. As one of my aims is to present dilemmas and complexities, my interest is not only how things are done, but also the ongoing reflections/discussions etc. around local food.

If I use a quote in the report, I will send it to you for approval before writing it in the report so you have the opportunity to comment on it. Furthermore, we can discuss the degree of distribution of the report before I hand it in, and I hope we can have a dialogue about possible sensitive sections.

Will you describe your work and how you are in touch with local food?

What is local food seen from the perspective of your position?

Why does Coop engage with local food?

How is local food defined in Coop? What does it take for a product to reach Coop's local shelves?

I experience local food can be difficult to work with. What are the challenges in relation to local food? (Logistics, terms and conditions of sale, pricing, consistency of supply, food safety, local vs. central, others?) Do you meet any practical and maybe more ideological challenges and dilemmas in relation to local food?

Local food is part of Coop's food manifest and many describe Coop as being on a journey. What is this about?

What is the future of local food in Coop? Where is Coop in relation to local food in 5 years?

If you were to give me an understanding of local food in Coop seen from your position, including both the potentials, challenges and dilemmas in relation to local food – is there then something you will like to add?

Thank you for your participation. I will contact you when I have written the analysis. Will you prefer the text in Danish or English?