

*Rural identity in organic food
processing – a sensemaking approach*



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Rural identity in organic food processing – a sensemaking approach

Abstract: The main focus in this paper is to analyze identified different relations and interpretations of 'the rural' in three organic processing companies situated in rural areas in Denmark. In order to look at the differences, Weick's (1995) sensemaking perspectives are introduced. The main results show that the three companies are enacting their rural identity in slightly different ways. Besides the differences, similar aspects in the three companies' markets are identified. All three companies are mainly dependent on urban markets. They all use branding strategies oriented towards urban consumers. It is concluded that the rural identity can have many expressions and that the companies are not comparable with the organic rural farming identities in all aspects. The future focus of developing values in organic companies might need a more independent focus.

Keywords: Organic processing, organic values, sensemaking, enactment, rural identity

Identidad rural en el tratamiento de la comida orgánica: un enfoque desde el sensemaking

Resumen: El objeto principal de este trabajo es analizar diferentes relaciones e interpretaciones de 'lo rural' en tres compañías de procesamiento de productos orgánicos situadas en zonas rurales de Dinamarca. Para examinar las diferencias, se han aplicado los puntos de vista de *sensemaking* de Weick (1995). Los principales resultados muestran que las tres compañías están aplicando su identidad rural de formas ligeramente distintas. Pese a las diferencias, se identifican aspectos similares entre los mercados de estas empresas, pues las tres dependen principalmente de mercados urbanos y utilizan estrategias de marca dirigidas al consumidor urbano. Concluimos que la identidad rural puede expresarse de muchas formas y que las compañías no pueden compararse con las identidades rurales orgánicas en todos los aspectos. El futuro objetivo de puesta en valor de las compañías orgánicas necesitaría un enfoque más independiente.

Palabras clave: Tratamiento orgánico, valores orgánicos, sensemaking, identidad rural

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Introduction

Organic production in general is linked to a set of ideas and values which has been developed since early 1980s among especially organic farmers pursuing an alternative way of producing food than the industrialized and conventional way, which is characterized as heavily dependent on external inputs and only focusing on increasing yields (Lampkin et al, 1999; Lampkin 1990). The values of organic farming have been formalised since 1982 by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture (IFOAM), an organization representing organic agriculture globally. The values have during the years undergone several revisions and are today mainly comprised of four overall general principles that are meant to be universal for primary production, processing, and consumption of the organic products. Values and regulations have interacted and developed over time (Michelsen, 2001). Especially when looking at farming aspects in the primary production, there has been a continuous discussion both among practitioners and among scientists on topics related to farming and the values and attributes connected to the organic farming practice (Padel et al, 2009; Reed, 2009; Codron et al, 2006; Lampkin, 1990). The naturalness or closer link to natural processes is one of the main issues addressed by the organic values and thereby it could be expected that the organic products bought by the consumers are more naturally grown and carefully processed. Looking at the value statements regarding processing issues it seems as if they are vaguer regarding processing, than could be expected. There are no specifica-

tions of how companies are expected to process their products in order to meet organic value statements. Careful processing is mentioned as a way to interpret what is expected according to the value statements but nothing specifies this further. In the same way there are limited regulative guidelines for the processing methods mostly concentrating on additives and not on processing methods.

In the past few years there has been an increasing amount of certified organic, processed products for consumption, for example freeze dried noodles and soup powder, but also cheese, marmalade and corn flakes. This continuously expanding range of processed products testifies to an expanding market possibility and expanding processing possibilities. Looking at the public debate among concerned actors, the value discussions are not as explicitly discussed in relation to these products as compared to the farm related issues.

The schism between the expectation of more natural and artisan products and the values and regulation not specifying this expectation are the key focus of the research behind this article (Hansen, 2010). The main idea was to describe different organic processors and their way of translate the organic values and rules into their own identity. Examining identity aspects of the processors led to many different related aspects. One identity related subject occurring in the analysis was the rural identity in three companies translating the rural in three different ways.

In this paper the rural identity will be described in the three companies and the variety of organic and rural identity aspects will be analysed and discussed.

First the paper will provide an overview of other related scientific work. After that the identity study, the methodological approach and the theoretical approach are described. The three companies are presented especially their rural identity aspects. Finally the discussion will provide a discussion of the different rural identities but also touch upon the fact that processors are not very aware of the ideas and values in the organic movement. Before going into the actual study, the next section will provide a view of scientific contributions related to the area of organic food.

The research field

One common discussion theme related to organic food is the discussions of the development and changes of the organic farming practice from the pioneer years to the more market oriented 'corporate organics' (Johnston et al, 2009; Kjeldsen and Ingemann, 2009; Jacobsen, 2005; Michelsen, 2001). This development is in some cases

seen as problematic, when the original ideas are lost for the sake of profit (Johnston et al, 2009). Others are more critical towards this myth of 'The Fall', metaphorically speaking, and claim that it is more ambiguous (Kjeldsen & Ingemann, 2009). Worth noting in this context is the fact that the market orientation and the entrance of organic products into supermarkets have been the main driver for many companies to begin producing organic products. This illustrates the dilemma of the critique of 'corporate organics' since the increasing market shares also contributes to more land converted to organic farming and more organic products to be sold and eaten. The increasing market potential plays an important role in the expansion of organic farming worldwide which must be in the interest of the organic organisations such as IFOAM.

Parallel with the organic farming practice, there has in recent years been a quite comprehensive focus on what motives and understandings of organic food are among consumers both in qualitative and in quantitative studies (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009; O'Doherty-Jensen et al 2008; Hughner et al, 2007; Codron et al, 2006).

Some of the consumer related studies conclude that there are consumer expectations to the organic products (Lusk and Briggeman, 2009; O'Doherty-Jensen, 2008). These expectations can be summarized with words like clean, natural, healthy, and gently processed. At the same time there is a big aspect of trust related to the fulfilment of these expectations (O'Doherty-Jensen, 2008). The consumer studies, then, confirm the importance for companies to actively relate to some of the value discussions related to organic food production.

When it comes to the processing of organic products, discussion and scientific focus is more or less absent, with a few exceptions related to the specific processing methods (Wright, 1994) or to the discussion of specific standards for processing organic food products (Beck et al, 2006). Historically, the companies have not been main drivers in the value discussions of organic production. In recent years, the number of processing companies that enter the organic market has been growing substantially, including very big market players like Kellogg, Heinz and Coca Cola on the international market. Hughner et al (2007:106) emphasize the lack of focus on the entrance of new market players in relation to the consumers of organic food, and mention the confusion of signals the big processors can have in their way of relating to the organic values, simultaneously trying to maintain a 'small and artisan' image and still be a big globalized company.

Regulation

The regulative aspects of organic farming are discussed in Michelsen (2001). One main point by the author is the tension field between values and regulation. There seems to be a challenge in the combination of value statements and the actual regulation issues although the farmers historically have been involved in the development of the regulation for the organic farmers in Europe. Looking at the regulations aspects related to organic processing there is a quite limited range of requirements. Mainly three things are important: The documentation of the organic primary products, the limited amount of additives and the ban on GMOs and irradiation of the food (EU regulation 834/2007). The processing process, for example, related to temperature, time, light etc. is left to the individual companies and their own practices. The guidelines to the companies - either value or regulation based - seem quite vague.

The lack of articulated (or regulated) processing requirements and the weak expression of values from IFOAM directly related to processing combined with the many new market players on the organic market may lead to some organic products not fulfilling the consumers' expectations. This is the background for looking at the sensemaking issues in organic processing.

Rural as an organic value statement

An aspect often associated with organic food and also to be found in several value statements for organic production is to strengthen and improve the rural life (Padel et al, 2009; Murdoch, 2000). In line with this rural development is an integrated part of the regulation of organic farming in several countries (Lampkin et al, 1999) This is, however, not a value necessarily agreed upon by for example the company CEOs since they are not as dependent on the land as the farmers. Interestingly, these rural aspects have a role to play nonetheless in the three cases described below and the different approaches indicate a more or less conscious relation to the 'organic value' aspects of this relation. However, none of the companies mention a direct and active strategy of improving rural life in line with the organic values which may indicate the vaguer relation to IFOAM's value statements among companies.

The purpose of this paper is thus to unfold the rural aspects of the processing companies and to discuss these different more or less conscious strategies in relation to organic values.

Identity and values in organic companies

This section will describe the background and methodological considerations of the research work. After this general introduction the three companies are presented.

Background

Before going into details on the rural identity aspects in this article, there will be a short description of the research project which has been the basis for this paper (Hansen, 2010). In the study, five companies were analyzed in relation to the values of organic food production with the purpose of identifying identity aspects of the companies to see if they were corresponding with or dissociated from the organic values. The assumption was that the organic values are more distant to the processing companies due to the vague guidelines. The main aim was to reveal the different value related aspects of different processing companies and how they in general understood and 'translated' the values and legislation of organic food production. The theoretical concept of 'Sensemaking' (Weick, 1995) was used as an analytical frame for the many values and statements related to the production in general and organic food in particular, in the five companies.

Methodological approach

In order to examine the identity related topics the qualitative approach was used as methodology. This approach has strength in its ability to unfold complexities and distinctions in the subject to be examined.

The main working tool in the study was the qualitative research interview (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Sayer, 1992). The approach is inspired by the phenomenological-hermeneutical collocation (Kvale, 1996) meaning that the aim is to strive to understand the 'lifeworld' of the person interviewed but at the same time acknowledge the interpretive role of the interviewer both before (making the interview guide), during (asking the questions) and after the interview (transcribing and

analyzing the interviews). The interviews were conducted with the help from a semi-structured guide made on the basis of research and knowledge targeting each company and the person to be interviewed. At the same time the guide was open towards detours and change in focus of the interview in line with the phenomenological approach.

In this process there were several methodological considerations concerning for instance the choice of interviewees, which were quite essential in order to get successful data. The companies were visited once and the interviewees interviewed one time for 2–6 hours. In two cases there were also telephone interviews on the basis of the response to the first condensed analysis. It was important to interview a person who was close to the organic focus and who was also able to make decisions in the organization. This resulted in interviews with two co-owners, two heads of marketing departments, and one head of department for organic and environmental products. The interview was in each case combined with research and pre-knowledge of the company image, products and organization in order to make the analysis more valid (Kvale, 1996). All interviews were fully transcribed and the analysis was based on organizing the meaning into different identity related categories. Three main categories were used to organize the material: the general identity, the organic identity and the network activities.

The analysis resulted in a 5 pages description of each company which was sent to the companies for validation in order to prevent mistakes in the further analysis as a part of a test of 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 2007).

The further analysis was deliberately not validated by the companies since it was referring to the theoretical approach and not necessarily in line with what the companies would emphasize as their organic identity. The analysis was not based on direct quotations since this is not in itself a guarantee of the 'true' representation of the interviewee (Padgett, 2009).

The empirical data were analyzed by using sensemaking and enactment terminology. This theoretical approach was chosen with the intention of unfolding identity aspects related to the actual production. By using the enactment approach, it is implicitly assumed that there is a dynamic relationship between attitudes and action, meaning that the identity is closely connected to the daily life in the company. In the interviews, this was reflected in the range of questions, which were a mix of practical facts and reflections related to organic values or the company identity. The practical issues are considered quite central since they can pinpoint the enacted identity rather than the 'wanted' identity as it is articulated strategically. The sensemaking termino-

logy is used as an analytical tool to categorize and make a hierarchy among the value related statements found in the interviews.

Since the study is qualitative and based on interviews in 5 companies it will not be able to generalize identity aspects in organic companies. It will instead be a contribution towards deeper understanding of the organic values in a corporate context.

Sensemaking and enactment

The sensemaking perspective is a theoretical approach focusing on the actor and on the cultural-cognitive sphere of institutionalism (Scott, 2001). The basic assumption in this approach is related to the examination of the actor in the daily routines of an organization. Other understandings take a more either rule- or norm based approach. With the cultural-cognitive approach the focus is primarily on what people *do* and how they make sense of what they do as a way of characterizing an organization. The rule based approach, on the other hand, has a focus on what people *should do*, while the normative approach focuses on what people *ought to do* (Ibid).

The sensemaking perspective is in Weick's (1995, Weick et al, 2005) understanding characterized by seven properties. Four of these are mentioned here. Importantly, it is a concept to describe everyday life actions and how humans translate complexity into something less complex and more meaningful to them. This means that some of the basic characteristics for sensemaking are that it is *grounded in identity construction* and *ongoing*. Furthermore, it is *retrospective* because it is based on experienced life and the need for systematizing the complexity. In the process of making sense of a complexity the individual has some *extracted cues* to hold on to. These cues are personal or for an organization based on common identity in one company, and related to the life world of the person making sense. The cues are related to values and priorities and are therefore crucial in the identity context.

The connection between sensemaking and enactment is emphasizing the action orientation and the mutual influence of surroundings and actor. The concept of enactment related to an understanding where the actions are a product of both actor and what is acted upon. What makes an identity and sensemaking approach different from a strategic approach is the understanding that some of the things related to sensemaking and identity are not conscious or deliberate, but rather related to ideas taken for granted as the room for maneuver in the companies (Weick, 1995).

Making sense of the rural

During the work with the sensemaking perspectives in the organic processing companies it became clear that among a lot of interesting topics, one aspect was particularly interesting in three of the companies, namely the rural identity. These three companies associated themselves with the rural obviously as a part of their identity but enacted this relation in different ways. The focus of this article is thus to look at sensemaking perspectives in relation to organic production and to relate this to rural identity aspects. This makes three different identity stories to tell and thereby three different approaches to the rural identity question.

The literature in rural identity in relation to food is extensive. Murdoch (2000; Murdoch and Miele, 1999) looks at different strategies in the context of rural development and strengthening of the rural identity especially through networks. Murdoch (2000) argues that the traditional view on strategies for development in rural areas as either endogenous or exogenous (Ilbery et al, 2001) can be described with more complexity by looking at the network theory.

Goodman (1999) goes further into the actor-network theory and emphasizes the ANT approach towards actants rather than actors which means that also non-human entities influence the network development at the same level as actor dynamics. The dependency of natural resources is in some cases the link between local companies and the rural economic development (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009; Murdoch and Miele, 2004). Organic and sustainable food chains is a substantial part of the rural development literature (Murdoch and Miele, 2004; Marsden, 2004). The combination of organic companies and rural development is therefore perhaps not so distant. However, despite the extensive literature on food production and rural identity and several attempts to link rural development and organic farming, it seems as if the food production is limited to the farmers. This paper will contribute to widen the discussion by also including the processors. The main focus is related to the internal identity in the companies but also the processors as a 'blind spot' in the context of rural development and organic value discussions.

The focus of this paper will be three companies that all have associations to a rural area due to their geographical location and their identity, but in different ways. The rural identity as a part of the sensemaking perspectives will be the main focus of the presentations below. They all have a rural identity but enact it in different ways.

The company names are fictional due to a wish of some of them to be anonymous.

The three companies

Buttercup Dairy

Buttercup Dairy represents an interesting way of using the potentials of being positioned in a rural area and also introducing a successful 'glocalization' approach (Wellmann, 2001) to some of their products. Here the rural identity is not only spatially bound but also bound to networking relations around the world. The dairy seems to move focus (or widen focus) from a more local rural identity embedded in a vision of organic food in the community of the dairy to a global view on the visions for organic food production, for example by directly supporting an organic Ugandan farming' community.

Presentation of the company

Buttercup Dairy is a small dairy situated in a rural area of the northern part of Jutland, Denmark. It was one of the earliest dairies in Denmark to introduce organic milk, doing so in the 1990s. Today it has grown to become one of the largest dairies in Denmark. Buttercup Dairy is 100 % organic although there is a conventional dairy situated at the same address producing a small amount of mainly conventional cheese.

Buttercup is organized as a cooperative and there are approx. 90 organic farmers who are members and thereby co-owners of the cooperative who all deliver milk to the dairy. One major aspect of the dairy in relation to their farmers is the distance from the dairy, since transportation is one of their most expensive and logistic challenges. Therefore the dairy chose farmers in a relatively short distance and the local organic embedding has been (and still is) obvious. Despite the fact that they are located in Jutland, a great deal of their production is sold on Zealand, especially in the Greater Copenhagen area. However, since 2005 they have delivered milk to supermarkets nationwide.

The sensemaking perspective of the organic production

Buttercup Dairy has a varied and complex understanding of organic ideas. Their sensemaking aspects of the organic production are quite dynamic. In recent years the focus has moved more towards environmental aspects like energy consumption and management of waste water, while also nature conservation themes and reduction of the use of medicine on the cows have been subjects of attention. Also in relation to the product specific topics, they give attention to for example careful processing which is put into practice by separating the Jersey-cow milk from the other milk. The Jersey-cow milk is characterized by a higher content of proteins and fats than other milk and is therefore well suited to make soured milk products without having to process them a lot. Regarding additives, they also express their attitude in line with a value statement 'of the natural' exemplified by their description of low-fat chocolate milk. This product gets a natural thin texture. However the texture of low-fat chocolate milk found in the stores often has a thicker texture both in conventional and organic varieties. This is only possible due to the use of additives which the dairy dissociate itself from.

Rural identity

Although many of the value related topics in Buttercup are related to organic values, the rural aspect is not directly expressed as an organic issue. On the other hand, there are several different associations linked to the rural identity. First there is the direct spatial link to the local society. This is expressed by the meaning of being a relatively large workplace in an area with a lack of jobs. The interviewee at the dairy emphasizes the importance of being able to offer local citizens security in having a job in an outskirt area. Another important impact locally is the organic farmers. As already mentioned the almost 100 organic farmers delivering milk to the dairy also exert an important impact on the local area since some of these farmers might have been conventional milk producers without an opportunity to deliver to the organic local dairy.

The area where Buttercup Dairy is situated is a so-called 'outskirt-area,' which means that there are less job opportunities and less cultural activities here than in more urban areas. The outskirts areas typically struggle with problems of depopulation and unemployment (Ilbery et al, 2001). It is obvious that this position provides a cer-

tain identity. Typically these areas feel that they are forgotten in the national political arena. The interviewee at Buttercup refers to some of the important identity aspects of this position where they clearly feel part of the rural minority. On the other hand, the dairy also represents a 'glocalized' attitude towards networks and supplier relations. This can be described by their articulation of Ugandan women working on a fruit farm with organic fruit for yoghurts. Here the dairy uses a 'local' narrative to include the products from Africa. The consumers are presented to the woman and her family relations on the yoghurt cartons. This is confirmed by the interviewee who expresses his personal change in focus for the visions of the dairy. The global organic dimension is something he has gradually realised as an important dimension of the organic vision. The products are linked to the rural identity by narratives. For example, producers and geographical places are pictured and mentioned on the milk cartons. The dairy has been quite successful in creating an image of a small and personal dairy in contrast to Arla Foods which is by far the biggest dairy in Denmark. A range of Buttercup's products are linked to the local area – in 2009 the dairy received an award for a North Sea cheese highlighting the link between the dairy and the neighbouring sea. The name provides the cheese with a local character and reminds the consumers of the geographical attachment to the North Sea

When interviewed, the marketing director at the dairy talked about his visions for organic production as having changed from being local to being global in the sense that an organic farm in Uganda also contributes to expand the organic area of the world. Interestingly the Uganda story still uses the 'local' cues to create relations to this area very far from Denmark.

Parallel with the focus on the rural in different meanings the dairy is very strongly linked to urban life and what this represents. The urban link is both related to the high percentage of products sold in cities and in terms of good networks with quality restaurant chefs and delicacy shops. This can be exemplified by the launch of a new product from the dairy that was sold at an exclusive department store in Copenhagen and small samples of the products being prepared by one of the gourmet chefs from a Michelin star restaurant in Copenhagen. Another example of the orientation towards the urban is the link to a 'cultural segment.' The Buttercup milk cartons have been decorated with stories and illustrations from young upcoming writers and illustrators, thereby signalling a much more urban image than the traditional rural small towns, farmland and 'the North Sea' image.

Conclusion - Buttercup

Buttercup has a quite complex organic identity with a wide range of value based actions in their daily production. An example of this identity is in the rural relation. Here they have developed a sort of local relation to the global trade relation with Ugandan fruit farms. The interviewee sees the organic development in Uganda as equally important as the local development of organic agriculture in Denmark. The consequence of this attitude is termed 'glocalized' behaviour because it is not directly bound to the local area. On the other hand the dairy is closely attached to its local area and aware of its importance as a local working place for quite a number of people. The urban-rural networks are quite important in the identity since the farmers are representing one network and the retail/restaurant/consumer network represents another equally important network.

Tulip – The Butchery

At Tulip Butchery the main rural identity is concentrated on the social 'glue' of the small community, while the products are actively decoupled from the place of production with a 'disembedded' image and a 'globalized' use of resources depending on quality issues more than on the local.

Presentation of the company

Tulip is a partly family-owned company situated in a small town in the middle of Jutland, not far from business areas in Jutland. The company produces meat products – primarily different salamis and liver paste – both organic and non-organic. It is a very successful company and in a few years they have expanded quite rapidly, which has made it necessary to expand with new production buildings for producing the organic products. It all started with a butcher shop owned by the parents of the current butcher and co-owner of the company. Today there are two production sites: One producing the conventional products mainly for the butcher shop and one newly established, producing only organic products. Almost all organic products are sold in supermarkets nationwide (mostly in the Copenhagen area) and also in smaller shops around the country.

The company has a high focus on export markets and also on being visible in many different sales channels in Denmark. Their strategy is to make different types of products for different types of sales channels. For discount supermarkets they have

one type of packaging and only a few types of salamis, while they in the more expensive supermarkets have different packaging and a wider product range.

The sensemaking perspective of the organic production

Tulip has its focus primarily on quality. When the butcher decided to produce organic meat products in the early 1990s it was with the goal of being able to improve the quality of organic meat products compared to his competitors. Even today Tulip is focused on the product quality aspects prior to other things. This is also the case for the organic production. Quality is more important than environmental aspects or a local production story. The marketing director has emphasized several times that they only want to take responsibility for the products from the company and leave the responsibility of the meat production to the meat producers. As long as the producers can document the organic label and a good quality, it is acceptable. This means that the meat can be from anywhere in the world as long as it is documented organic. The company is not associated with the organic movement although both co-owners have been working with organic meat since the early 1990s. They have a very autonomous way of approaching the organic values and are not interested in the existing organic networks, which they term as 'hippie-like talking without acting'. One important related identity aspect is the fact that they are generally quite confident of their own products. They do not express the need for advice or help from others.

They are – as all organic meat producers in Denmark are at the moment – critical towards the use of nitrite in organic meat, which is now allowed according to EU regulation. They both think it will be a problem for the image of the organic products if they add nitrite. They do not think that additives fit well with the organic image. On the other hand they themselves use nitrite in their conventional production, which indicates that their statement is related with what they see as an image for organic food, rather than a basic value.

Rural identity

Tulip has a clear rural identity in terms of the view on the role of a company in a small community. They cooperate with the local municipality and have agreements of offering jobs to people who have personal problems or a reduced ability to work.

According to the interviewee the motive for this is to ensure better functioning families in the local community. He illustrates this point with a metaphor on the well-functioning family having a positive impact on the way their children function, which again is important when they play football in the local club with the children of the interviewee. Here a certain view of a small society is unfolded. The small town is a social organism and everyone plays a role in this organism. At the same time the company benefits from this arrangement by having very loyal workers, as the interviewee expresses it. The role the company plays in the local area fits well into a patriarchal view with the patriarch personified by the interviewee. Svendsen (2004) describes a charismatic leader-type as one who exerts large influence on the surroundings and through his/her personality is able to obtain a natural authority among workers. This characteristic fits well with the rural identity aspects of the interviewee at Tulip. The marketing director (and co-owner) has a very personal style in his way of approaching the different customers. Every week he drives around to many of the shops and supermarkets to talk personally with the managers to ensure that the products are placed correctly and to discuss any problems. Also in case of complaints from consumers, he asks for a personal meeting with the consumer asking him/her about the problems and offers a large pack of products to replace the products that were unsatisfactory.

At the same time they work deliberately to de-couple the products from the local community in the sense that they want the products to be bought for the image and the quality and not for the nationality or regional attachment. The marketing director calls the products 'Gucci-products,' meaning that they should carry the same meaning for people as a Gucci accessory; costing more money and being of a superior quality compared to other similar products. Buying Gucci products has a symbolic meaning as well as a qualitative meaning. The comparison thereby indicates that the Tulip products aim to be symbols of quality and exclusiveness. This strategy also means that they are quite export oriented, also to markets traditionally known for having high quality meat products such as France, Italy and Spain. The marketing director is confident in his products, also in relation to these foreign markets, which are known for their culture of high food awareness.

Conclusion - Tulip

Summing up the main points from the Tulip case, we see a company with a successful strategy in terms of creating products of a superior quality not bound to the local resources but to the actual processing procedures and skills. The company presents an interesting tension field between the local embeddedness and the product-oriented disembodied strategy. In many ways, the behaviour of the marketing director

is comparable to that of a traditional grocer, characterized by a personal contact as opposed to the anonymous supermarkets. This is not what is usually associated with an international brand like Gucci or with the main sales channels for the Tulip products, which in national supermarkets are characterized by anonymity in consumer relation.

The company has an interesting double role in their rural embeddedness due to their views on the importance of the 'social glue' in a small community coupled with the international focus on new markets and products with a disembedded or detached image also reflected in their 'global' attitude towards the producers of meat. Unlike Buttercup, there is not a local producer network surrounding the company and the success of the company probably does not have any impact on the organic meat production in the local area. The interviewee has a patriarchal approach towards the company, the customers and the relation to the local society and has a natural authority because of his personality, which has given him a range of possibilities. The patriarchal identity also has consequences in relation to the network activities because, for instance, the organic networks are considered unprofessional and therefore not interesting for Tulip.

Lily – The Mill

Lily Mill's main focus has been to carry on and 'empower' the family farm by placing more value on the production site by beginning the processing of the grain, grown at the farm, to flour and other grain products of high quality.

Presentation of the company

Lily is a relatively newly established mill situated at a family farm in a rural area on an island close to Southern Jutland. The main motivation for founding the mill was a wish to get more value concentrated on the farm. The owners, who are a married couple, both worked full-time in addition to the work on the farm and sold the organically grown grain to a big mill. With decreasing prices for organic grain, they watched the farm lose value quickly, although they were injecting more and more money in an attempt to preserve the old farming buildings. They felt they had to reconsider their approach. They then decided to start a production of stone grinded flour and other grain products, which meant that they stopped working outside the farm and focused on the farm and the mill. As such, they decided to make a reconfiguration of the food

chain and contributed to the rural development in concentrating value on the farm (Marsden, 2004).

They sell most of their products in a supermarket chain characterized by a wide range of quality products. This chain is located mainly in the greater Copenhagen area. Besides this sales channel, Lily also has a range of sales channels in restaurants and smaller health shops or bakeries.

The sensemaking perspective of the organic production

The owner of Lily has been an organic farmer since the early 1990's and he is familiar with the many farming related issues surrounding organic farming dilemmas. The farmer's approach is reflected in his way of making sense of organic values. As an example of the farmer's basic values, he mentions that he has stopped the use of slurry on his fields after a period of being unsatisfied with the discrepancy between the allowed uses of slurry in organic farming as opposed to value objects in organic agricultural practice where a healthy soil is important. This is a good example of what he associates with organic values and also that he is familiar with the internal debate of organic farmers. When it comes to the mill he has a lot of considerations about the quality of the flour, for example the choice of grain variety and the cooling facilities in the grinding process. He also focuses on the natural qualities of the flour e.g. related to rising capacity.

Another focus area for the company is educational aspects. In the former stable buildings they have built kitchen facilities and now use them for baking and cooking courses. The content of the courses is related to the use of the flour and other grain products, but the courses also introduce the organic value approach more broadly.

Rural identity

Lily is closely connected to a rural identity and is linked spatially to the family farm. The products from the mill are profiled with stories about the grain production at the fields. In that sense it is associated with the term 'little boxes' (Wellman, 2001) characterized by being local networks where there is a clear and direct relation between the implicated persons. In the interview with the owner he expressed a joy

of making products where he knows the whole process from growing the grain, grinding it to flour, pack it, and sell it. He considers this a big responsibility and at the same time a big satisfaction compared to his former life with work outside and a farm producing grain to an anonymous mill. At the time he was interviewed, he could not produce enough grain himself and had to buy grain from other producers and this was causing a lot of considerations about how to be in control of the process from growing, harvesting and storing the grain. His strategy to overcome this dilemma was to have personal relationships with all suppliers and only choose suppliers from the local area. This also fits into the little box terminology. Another distinctiveness of Lily Mill is the geographical location close to the German border, which creates a certain relation to historical events. The interaction between Germans and Danes in this area has traditionally been quite absent, which also is the case for the parents and grandparents of the mill owner. He himself has chosen to change this "tradition" and is now employing Germans as well as Danes on the mill. He is aware that this choice is controversial, which he underlines by saying that his grandparents would be 'turning over in their graves' if they knew what he had done. In that way the borderland gets a certain meaning in relation to the local attachment.

The term 'little box' does not fit when it comes to the sales strategy. Here the mill has a similar network building as Buttercup Dairy combining the rural and the urban. Lily Mill has the same tension or strategy as Buttercup Dairy between rural identity and the modern and urban design of their flour bags, made deliberately to attract young, urban and affluent families or gourmet restaurants and bakeries.

Conclusion - Lily

Lily emphasises the vicinity of the producer-network relations termed the 'little-box' approach. The organic values are rooted in the farming terminology since the owner himself has been an organic farmer since the early 1990s. Because of his educational background in marketing and his wife's background as a journalist, the company is very skilled at telling an authentic story by using narratives on the flour bags. These narratives and the handwritten dates for shelf life of the flour create an impression of a personal product. With this educational background it is likely that the 'little box' is also part of a deliberate strategy rather than a description of the farming life without any strategic considerations.

This argument is supported by their wide network with important relations to a wide range of persons, from an agricultural advisor (who supported them when they started up the mill), to chefs and bakers around the country and internationally, to a young team of designers responsible for the design of the flour bags.

Lily has a rural identity clearly linked to the farm and the farmland production. In that sense they are termed as a 'little box' company with personal relations in control of all steps of the production process. This is combined with more urban oriented networks and a sales strategy towards a young segment in the urban areas.

Discussion

The presentation of the three companies shows three more or less different ways of making sense of the organic production and of the rural identity. Two of the companies use the geographical location and the dependency on the local natural resources as a basic part of the products they produce (Buttercup and Lily). Although Tulip also presents the story of the small butcher shop on their homepage, they work actively to give their products a more brand-oriented image not bound to the local resources. This is illustrated by the comparison with the Gucci brand – a brand with an exclusive and international image.

Two of the companies, Buttercup and Lily, have through their local organic producers a direct link to the local resources and the link to rural development goes through these organic milk and grain producers. Although the meat company is ensuring local workplaces for the local population, it is not in the same way directly linked to the local resources but is more 'global' in its use of resources, with meat from Danish and European producers and a European network of processors manufacturing the products (slicing the cold meat or drying the hams).

Buttercup Dairy and Lilly Mill seemingly succeed in maintaining the local identity and at the same time direct their products towards the cities. By nursing the rural image and at simultaneously having good networks locally and nationally they seem to receive a great deal of the consumers' confidence. Buttercup is on this basis beginning to widen its focus and include organic farmers in other parts of the world as a part of their local history.

In contrast, Tulip Butchery has a more disembedded product identity. Their products are not marketed as local – only when it is related to a specific quality, for example a ham dried in the Belgian Ardennes-mountains because of the perfect drying facilities there. Their rural identity is more connected to the company as a working place and in that context as a place to help people who need assistance to get

back on track in the job market. As such, the rural relation can be seen as a strategy for hiring workers and ensuring loyalty among the workers, but not as a part of a marketing strategy, as opposed to Buttercup Dairy and Lily Mill.

Lily Mill has a rural identity connected to the family farm and to the production of grain for the mill. This identity is connected to the feeling of being in control of all the steps, from growing the grain, to harvesting, storing, and processing it. The owner talks positively about the short food miles chain this processing offers. At the same time they are well integrated in more urban and academic networks due to their educational background and their knowledge of the importance of a conscious marketing strategy where the image is not too 'hippie-like'. This is an important dialectic relation between one of the 'old' organic values related to locally produced food and knowledge of the process from the grain to the consumer, and a more market oriented strategy of selling the products with a modern and exclusive identity

All three companies are making sense of their organic products in relation to the rural location, albeit in different ways. They are all conscious about the power of a good story in the physical attachment to the place: The Buttercup co-operative dairy with a long history and with specific geographical characteristics close to the west coast and to the Limfjord; the Tulip butchery with a long history, beginning with a small butcher shop; and the Lily farm, which has existed for many generations. Still there are big differences in the product identity from the 'glocalised' Buttercup products to the locally bound Lily mill products and the international Tulip products.

When delving further into the company stories it becomes clear that the identity and branding aspects of all three companies are approaching crossroads. They are all relatively small businesses that, due to their success on the market, are changing their identity more or less voluntarily. Some of the changes can potentially cause a clash between the values and identity, and the market orientation that increasingly is pressuring them into producing certain products or producing in certain ways.

This is similar to the critique raised in Johnston et al (2009) where the very big companies that have entered the organic market are discussed in the light of food democracy. In relation to the three identity stories in this paper, it is clear that they do not belong in this type of company. But without any public and open debate about the lack of focus on this area, it can be problematic for Danish companies to maintain a trustworthy image with links to reality, rather than just a good story. Thus the need for a more reflected discussion on what organic processed food should be in the future arises from this research. It is necessary to discuss how to articulate and translate the expectations to the organic products in a corporate context. In that way the

future processors of organic products can act more conscious when choosing more natural or carefully processed approaches. From this qualitative study of Danish companies it seems as if the companies themselves are not all very aware of the potential of communicating with consumers by reflecting the organic values more explicit. This paper has been concentrating on the rural identity aspects of the companies and the conclusion is that it can be used as an asset in many aspects. The link between organic and rural seems to have a potential to be emphasized much more clearly and reflected by the processors. In this study the companies themselves were not familiar with any value discussions by organic organisations related to the actual processing processes. The farming related issues were much more present for them. This confirms the lack of effort from the national and international organic organisations both regarding the actual processing methods but also in the effort to include the companies as carriers of values to be reflected in the organic principles.

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