

# Modernity, time, space and organic food networks

Project title : Modernity, time, space and organic food networks<sup>1</sup>  
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## Background for the project

Since organic products were introduced in the supermarkets from the late eighties and onwards, the composition of Danish organic food networks have changed dramatically the past 15 years, both in a social and spatial sense. This recent development poses a significant challenge to the organic movement and the principles behind organic farming. The project is based on the assumption, that it is reasonable to describe organic farming as a critique of modern (conventional) agriculture and also as a critique of certain aspects of modernity itself. There are many different discourses at play in defining what organic farming is, among them orientations like organic farming as indigenous development (organic communities), organic farming as alternative technology, organic farming as responsible management/stewardship or organic farming as preservation of nature. One common thread across the various discourses that can be defined historically, is the critique of the modern scientific/technological rationality and the spatial organisation of food networks. A crucial challenge for organic farming in the future is thus how this critique is addressed through practice, in order to maintain trust among consumers and credibility in the local, national and global food market. The project starts its inquiry from this starting point, using the recent historical development of six alternative Danish organic food networks as the empirical basis for an inquiry into how the challenges of modernisation can be addressed. The six case studies are These Dairy, Aurion Bakery, The Organic Food Terminal at Tinglev, Aarstiderne.com, Spidsroden and Landbrugslauget.

## Objectives for the project

The objective for the project is to inquire into how the selected cases constitutes answers to the critique of modernity, which can be identified in the organic movement. The project aims at suggesting how organic farming can maintain its distinct characteristics in a globalised food system and develop food networks, which to a higher degree than conventional networks incorporates social proximity, economical justice and ecological responsibility and integrity in its practice.

## Progress - 2003

The following cases have been studied in detail, using various modes of inquiry, as listed below. Interviews have been carried out during spring and summer of 2003. Actors from both production and distribution/retailing as well as consumers have been interviewed.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the current working title for the project. The former title was "Organic food networks and sustainable development"

<b>Case</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Mode of inquiry</b>
Thise Mejeri (Thise Dairy)	Share-based cooperative dairy; producer controlled; relatively traditional distribution methods	Company accounts, scientific reports, telephone interviews
Bageriet Aurion (The Bakery Aurion)	Bakery and mill; initially consumer owned; biodynamical products, sold via health shops	Company accounts, scientific reports, telephone interviews
Økoterminalen i Tinglev (The organic freshware terminal in Tinglev)	Organic fresh ware terminal, based in Southern Denmark; producer owned; went bankrupt in 2001	Company accounts, scientific reports, various written documentation, semi-structured qualitative interviews
Årstiderne.com	Web-based vegetable box scheme; private ownership (stocks)	Company accounts, various written documentation, participant observation, semi-structured qualitative interviews
Spidsroden	Cooperative farm outlet in downtown Copenhagen; consumer controlled	Various written documentation, semi-structured qualitative interviews
Landbrugslauget	Danish CSA (community supported agriculture); consumer owned and collectively organised	Various written documentation, semi-structured qualitative interviews

The last part of 2003 will partly be used for interpreting interview data, as well as further development of the theoretical framework of the project. Besides that, the following courses have been completed in 2003: "Theory Construction" (Inst. of Political Science, Aarhus University) and "Modern Sociological Theory" (Copenhagen Business School). At present, I have attended courses amounting to 30 ECTS, and the only other course I will attend is the SOAR course "Modernisation processes in organic food networks" in January 2004, which I co-arrange with two colleagues.

#### **Plans - 2004**

The remaining time in 2004 will mainly be used on completing my Ph.D. thesis, which should be handed in by late may 2004, as well as attending the above-mentioned course. Brief visits to foreign research communities (Cardiff University, Essex University and University of Pisa) is under preparation and will be carried out in January and February of 2004.