

Localness as the new orthodoxy?

-critical reflections on localisation of food systems



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Questions

- Is localisation useful as a guiding principle for developing organic food systems?
- Is localisation a value relevant to incorporate into organic principles?

Concepts:

Local = physical co-presence

Regional = both physical and virtual co-presence

global = virtual co-presence



Localisation vs. globalisation

- Localisation is often mentioned as the antidote for the negative consequences of globalisation
- "The local" is attributed positive characteristics, whereas the "global" is portrayed in negative terms
- This conceptualisation is common in various forms of "deep" ecological theory and practice
- Binary distinction between "ecological communitarianism" and ecological modernisation?
- globalisation/localisation or glocalisation/grobalisation?
- Is local good and global bad?



Attributes associated with "global" and "local"

Global	Local
market economy	moral economy
an economics of price	an economic sociology of quality
TNC's dominating	independent artisan producers prevailing
corporate profits	community well-being
intensification	extensification
large-scale production	small-scale production
industrial models	"natural" models
monoculture	biodiversity
resource consumption and degradation	resource protection and regeneration
relations across distance	relations of proximity
commodities across space	communities in place
big structures	voluntary actors
technocratic rules	democratic participation
homogenization of foods	regional palates
<i>Ecological modernisation</i>	<i>Ecological communitarianism</i>

(Hinrichs et al. 1998, Kjeldsen, 2005)

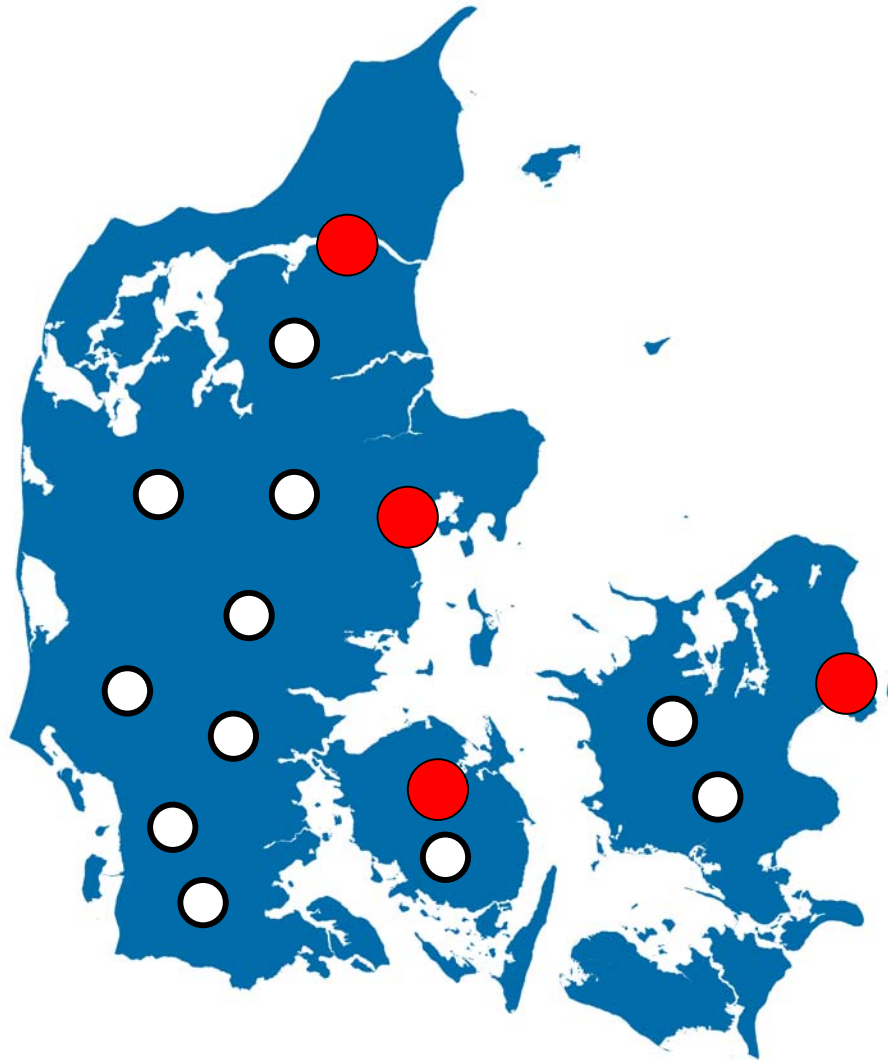


Problematic assumptions

- “Local” does not automatically lead to community between producers and consumers
- Local markets can be every bit as instrumental as large-scale markets
- Buying local as defensive localism?
- Spatial uneven distribution between organic consumers and producers (predominantly urban consumers)
- The local scale does not necessarily constitute an economically viable scale for organic food networks
- Conflating the social with the spatial (spatial integration = social integration; spatial integration = system integration)
- Organic consumption is primarily an urban phenomena



The organic foodshed?



- Urban consumers
- Rural producers

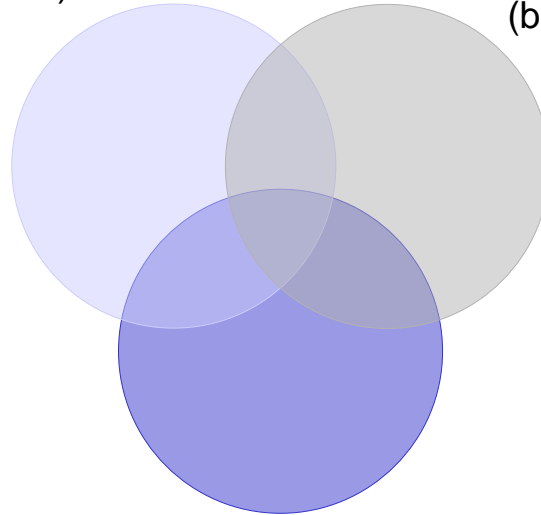
Foodshed driven by urban-based organic consumption; larger scale than conventional understanding of “local”; social integration not dependent on spatial distance



A revised understanding of global/local

SOCIAL INTEGRATION
social cohesion
(community; social justice)

SYSTEM INTEGRATION
coupling to relevant actors
and resources
(business networks; economic
performance)



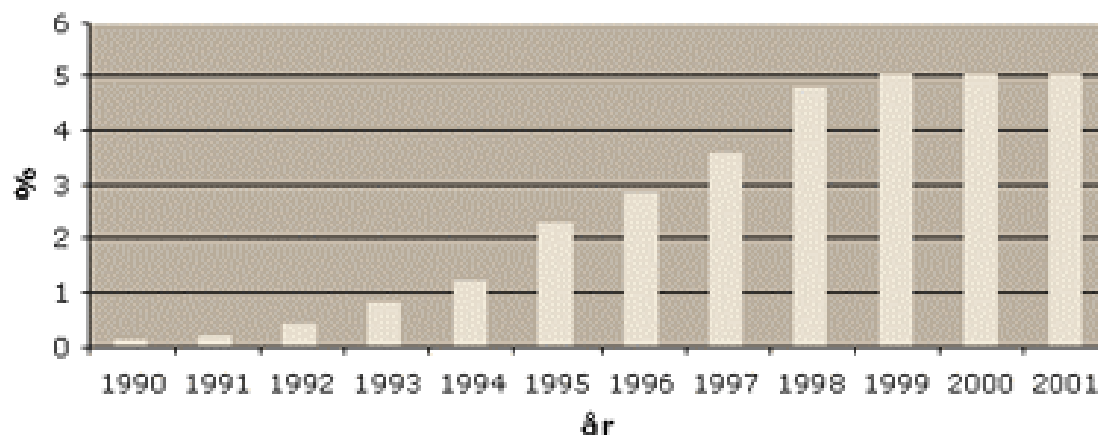
SPATIAL INTEGRATION
regional embeddedness
(short food chains; seasonal variation)



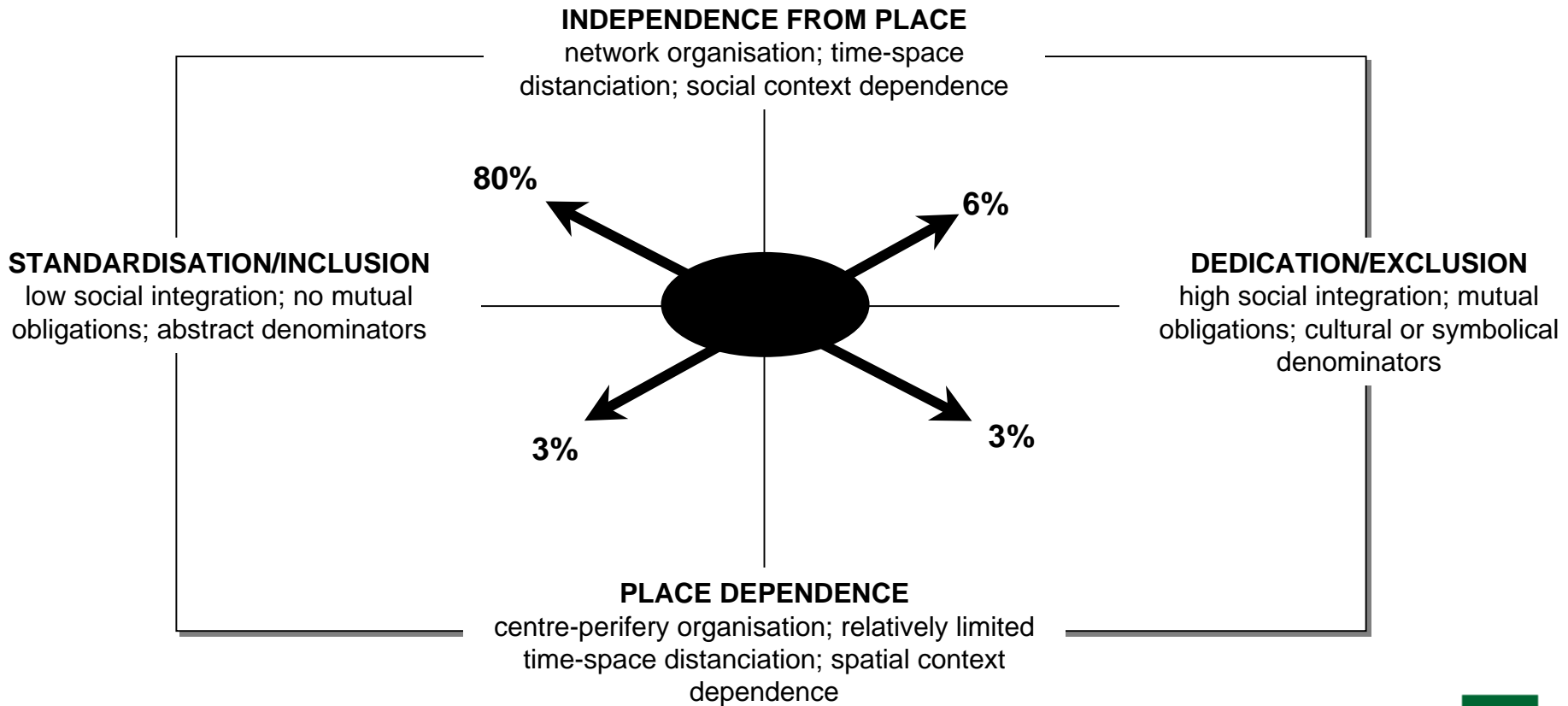
The Danish context

A "mature" market:

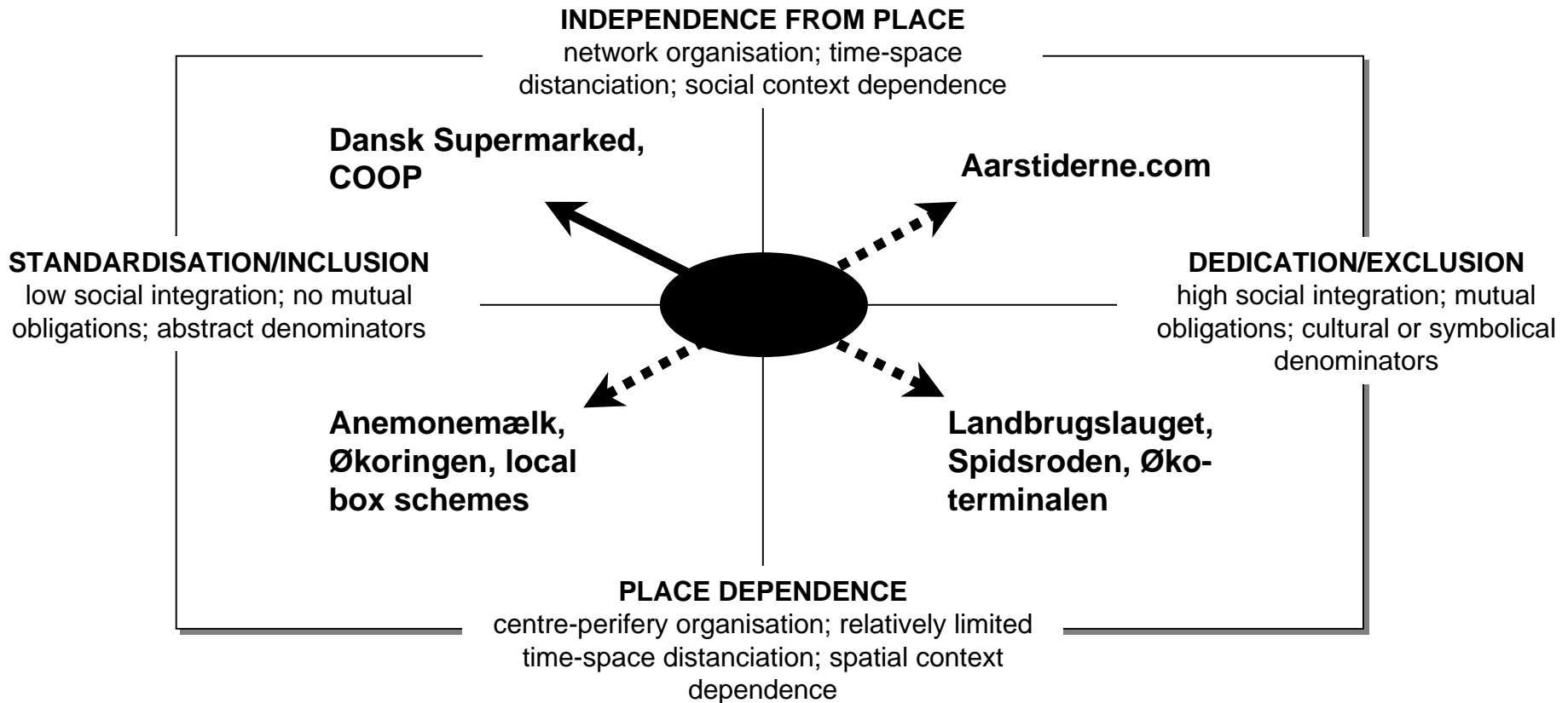
- Market presence for decades
- Relatively high market share (5%)
- Individual products have higher share
- Spatial uneven distribution of organic consumption
- High diversity of organic food networks



Distribution of Danish market shares



Danish food networks



Conclusions

- From locality to regionality?
- Social integration can be attained with other means than localisation
- All problems cannot be solved locally!



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