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Meanings of Local Food in Danish Print Media: From Marginal to Mainstream

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to find empirical evidence that can verify the seemingly new and growing interest in local food in Denmark, and shed light on what meanings the concept of *local food* holds in Danish print media. A content analysis of Danish print media is undertaken of articles reporting on local food over a 10-year period. A total of 993 articles are collected from national, regional and local newspapers as well as trade journals and magazines. Incorporating print media as agents in the construction of meanings of local food is a relatively understudied field of research. The article finds six major themes, which are central to the understanding of local food in Danish print media, namely 'local food networks', 'food values', 'food system', 'food tourism', 'food events' and 'local food in supermarkets'. It concludes that there are important differences between print media sources; nationwide dailies portray national imaginaries, apart from local imaginaries portrayed in regional dailies and local weeklies. This said, local food cannot be understood without reference to the local scale. However, at the same time, both culinary globalization and culinary nationalism have resulted in the strong push for local food. Keeping with this, it is argued that the increasing interest in local food by mainstream supermarkets blurs the lines between the marginal and mainstream. Thus, local food can be understood both as flow and friction between dualisms of local–global and marginal–mainstream.

Introduction

The study of food can be motivated from many different perspectives. The one chosen here is to assess whether it is possible to find any empirical evidence that could verify the seemingly new and growing interest in local food in Denmark, and shed light on what meanings the concept of *local food* holds in Danish print media. Dominated by a highly industrialized, export-oriented agriculture, Denmark provides an especially instructive case regarding the meaning of local food.

For decades, Danish food culture has generally been assigned a low measure of culinary self-consciousness (DeSoucey, 2010). Studies have found that Danes are not particularly interested in food and do not have a highly developed food culture (Askegaard and Madsen, 1995). Others have claimed that Danish cuisine is an oxymoron (Christensen et al., 2006). However, cuisines are never static, as Bentley (2004)

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points out, but are constantly evolving and are reshaped. In recent years, Denmark (along with the other Scandinavian countries) has become recognized for the new Nordic cuisine (Byrkjeflot et al., 2013), which some argue has reinvented Nordic, and thereby Danish, culinary traditions (Manniche and Larsen, 2013). Against this background, the study of food in Denmark is experiencing a significant growth in scope. However, compared with the US and the UK (see Hinrichs and Charles, 2012) research on local food in Denmark is currently lacking. This article seeks to address this gap by investigating the ways in which local food is represented in Danish print media. In other words, it looks at the way meanings are constructed through texts (Tonkiss, 1998). There are many complex and conflicting meanings tied up in the discourse of local food (see Ostrom, 2006; Futamura, 2007; Fonte, 2008). Local food means different things to different people in different contexts (Eriksen, 2013). We know that 'food conveys meaning as well as calories and nutrients' (Bentley, 2004, p. 215). This article will further this statement by examining *which* meanings. That is, meanings refer to the particular ways of talking about and understanding local food. Hence, the article should be seen as a first attempt and a basis for further research.

A content analysis of Danish print media is undertaken of articles reporting on local food. It is based on an examination of 993 newspaper articles published from 2003 to 2013. The focus is on entries from this time frame to ensure that the findings are contemporary and relevant. Incorporating print media as agents in the construction of meanings of local food is a relatively understudied field of research. Yet there has been some work in the area of local food and discourse analysis (see Johnston et al., 2009; Germov et al., 2011; Kurtz et al., 2013); however, not in a Danish context. The underlying assumption is that focusing on texts about local food can contribute with new insights. Clearly local food has always existed. From this point of view, all food is by definition *local* (Montanari, 2006). Yet the *re-localization* (Hinrichs, 2003),¹ branding and commercial promotion associated with contemporary local food seems to be a new feature in Denmark. This repositioning is interesting in terms of understanding and theorizing about the dynamics of these new patterns of place-based growing, selling and eating.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section gives a brief review of the different meanings local food holds in the food studies literature. The third section outlines the research method and empirical data utilized for the research. The fourth section presents the main findings from the content analysis by descriptively tracing major themes on local food in Danish print media. The fifth section discusses the findings informed by theoretical perspectives. Finally, some concluding remarks.

Review of the Literature

This section directs the attention to the literature on local food originating primarily in North America and Western Europe. Whereas the US literature typically has a strong normative commitment to food-related social movements (located under different headings, cf. Feagan, 2007, p. 24) contesting the hegemony of the conventional industrial food system, the European literature tends to focus on rural development (see Goodman and Goodman, 2009; Hinrichs and Charles, 2012). Drawing on a range of sources, the following reviews the many complex and conflicting meanings tied up in the discourse of local food. Before moving onto this, it is, as Pearson et al. (2011) stress, important to recognize that there is no widely accepted definition of what constitutes local food.

Some scholars define local food ‘on the basis of the distance that the food travels from production to consumption’ (Pearson et al., 2011, p. 888). For their study, Rose et al. (2008, p. 271) define local food as ‘produced within 100 miles of an individual’s residence’. Martinez et al. (2010, p. iii) point out that definitions ‘related to geographic distance between production and sales vary by regions, companies, consumers, and local food markets’. Besides distance, most definitions are based on political boundaries such as a region in a country (Edwards-Jones, 2010). For the purpose of their analysis, Schönhart et al. (2008, p. 244) follow a narrow definition of local food ‘in which all activities of the food supply chain – from agricultural food production to consumption – are located within the same geographic region’. Also Bosona and Gebresenbet (2011, p. 294) refer to local food from a geographical perspective; that is, food produced, retailed and consumed in a specific area. Fonte and Papadopoulos (2010) associate local food not only with geographical locations, but also with particular communities, histories and institutions.

Other scholars, such as Gracia et al. (2012), point out that local food has a social dimension, which refers to the social relationships between the actors, i.e. consumers and producers, in the local food system. Reflecting this understanding of local food, scholars have examined the social ties fostered by relational proximity between producers and consumers (see Bowen and Mutersbaugh, 2014). Futamura (2007, p. 222) argues that local food not only refers to commodities produced in proximate sites, but ‘also implies that consumers believe that locally grown food products are likely to present desired qualities’. Localness is often associated with specialty, traditional and/or quality foods (Morris and Buller, 2003, p. 560). Delind (2006) claims that there are two major arguments concerning the value or virtue inherent in local food: 1. local food as a development (or redevelopment) tool and, 2. local food as a vehicle for personal improvement. According to the second view, local food is seen as fresher, riper and healthier than its long-distance counterpart. Blake et al. (2010, p. 411) argue that the diverse understandings of local food are unified by the ‘association of “local” with trust, shared norms and values, heritage, quality, stewardship, familiarity, simplicity, artisanal and community, which construct an alternative to the industrialized food systems’. Ostrom (2006) points out that local food is closely intertwined with positive associations. Along these lines, Born and Purcell (2006) warn against the *local trap*, the tendency to assume something inherently good about the local scale. They argue that there is nothing inherent about any scale.

Ostrom (2006) found that while there were many complex variations in the way local food is constructed, there seems to be consensus about the relevance of the term. What all of these different meanings have in common is a sense that local food is values based, geographically and relationally determined and that proximity is important (see Eriksen, 2013). This said, there is still a need to continue to uncover the nuances in meanings of local food. The intent of this article is to further the conceptual development of local food by extending the debate by utilizing a content analysis of Danish print media’s usage of the term local food.

Method

This article reports findings from an inductive study of an explorative nature, in the sense that the aim is to look for patterns in the data material of what meanings of the concept ‘local food’ are developing in Denmark. The article uses a content analysis methodology to reveal the way meanings of local food are produced and repro-

duced in Danish print media. In search of meanings of local food, a content analysis of 993 articles is conducted.

Content analysis is one of numerous methods to analyse texts and has a long history in research within communication, sociology, psychology, business, etc. Content analysis is well-suited to analyse the multifaceted characteristics of local food. An advantage of the method is that large volumes of textual data and different textual sources can be dealt with. Content analysis is a research method used for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to their contexts (Krippendorff, 2012). In this article, content analysis is defined as 'the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). There are various techniques that make up the research methodology of content analysis. This article takes a summative approach to qualitative content analysis (*ibid.*). Qualitative content analysis has much in common with discourse analysis, which provides insights into the way texts both help to shape and reproduce meanings and forms of knowledge (Tonkiss, 2004). The summative approach involves counting keywords and interpreting their contextual meaning. The initial part of the summative approach is quantitative, but its goal is to explore the qualitative usage of keywords in an inductive manner. Borrowing from Krippendorff (2012, p. 22) 'all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers'. The summative approach to qualitative content analysis starts with quantification and moves on to interpretation. The purpose of the quantification is to identify and count the frequency of codes in the textual material (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). A central aspect is that the many codes are classified into fewer categories (Weber, 1990). Categories are themes that are expressed in the text or derived from text through analysis. Credibility of research findings requires that the researcher can form categories that reflect the subject of study in a reliable manner.

The data cover the 10-year period from 2003 to 2013. The chosen time period was based on estimation that a 10-year period would be sufficient to reveal enough material for the study. Data consists of texts, namely collected news articles on local food in Danish. The data are accumulated from Infomedia, the largest Danish electronic media database of full-text media sources containing over 50 million articles over the past 20 years. Collected data include the following sources; nationwide dailies, regional dailies, local weeklies and trade journals and magazines (Infomedia, 2014). To manage the amount of data, the search is limited to print media articles, and so it does not include cookbooks, web sources, Radio and TV spots, social media sources or the like. The keywords *local food* (lokal mad) and *local food products* (lokale fødevarer) facilitated the search. In the Danish language there are two terms for local food: 1. *lokal mad*, which directly can be translated to local food; and 2. *lokale fødevarer*, which can be translated to local food products. In the following, the term local food will be used to refer to both terms unless otherwise specified.

Between 2003 and 2013, Infomedia has a total of 1,610 articles containing the keyword *local food*. The number of articles on *local food* makes up about 1% of the total number of articles on *food* in Infomedia over the whole period.² To compare, articles on *organic food* makes up about 5% of the total amount of articles in Infomedia on *food*. In comparison, the previous 10 years, from 1993 to 2003, show that whereas *local food* makes up about 0% of all articles on *food* in Infomedia, articles on *organic food* are somewhat constant (about 5%). Figure 1 graphically illustrates an upward movement in articles containing the keyword *local food* from 2003 to 2013. This de-

velopment is consistent with other discussions about the new Nordic cuisine (e.g. Byrkjeflot et al., 2013). Note also the increase despite the recession. The interest in local food is growing steadily during the 2008–2011 financial crisis.

Figure 1 demonstrates the total sample. The rationale for delimitation aims to produce a sample that, in line with Tonkiss (2004), is relevant to the research problem, representative of the field of interest and manageable to analyse in detail. As such, it is important to note that not all references on local food over the sampling period are about local food in Denmark, which is the focus of this article. In fact, about half of the articles on *local food* (lokal mad) are related to traveling, tourism and eating experiences abroad. This is not the case in regard to the articles on *local food products* (lokale fødevarer). It is beyond the scope of this article to examine the

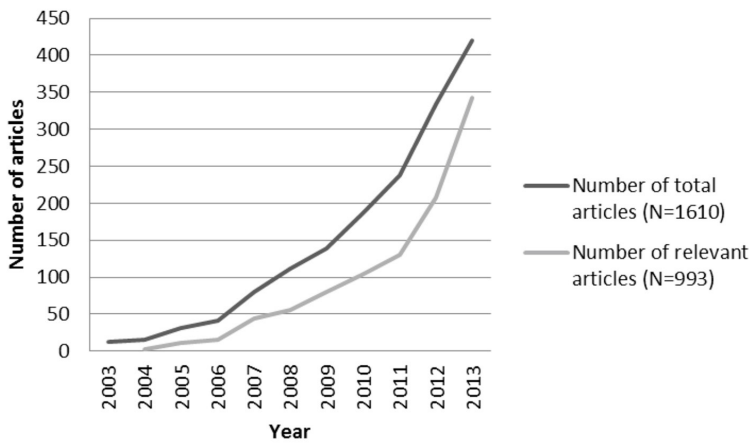


Figure 1. The number of total and relevant retrieved articles with 'local food' and 'local food products' in it from 2003–2013.

Source: Infomedia, December 2013.

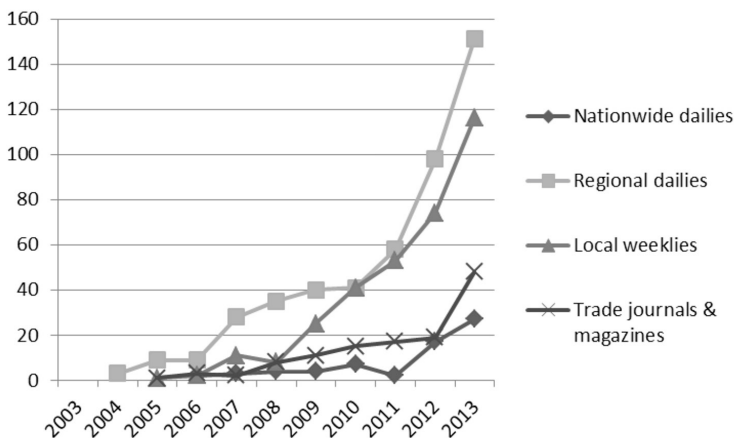


Figure 2. Relevant retrieved articles divided on source from 2003–2013.

Source: Infomedia, December 2013.

role tourism plays in the reproduction and expansion of ideas about local food in a non-Danish context. As such these articles are excluded. Note also that articles with identical content and date published in different sources are only counted once. Taking this into account, the total number of articles is reduced to 993 relevant articles. As shown in Figure 1 there are no relevant articles retrieved from 2003.

Figure 2 shows the number of relevant articles divided by source: nationwide dailies, regional dailies, local weeklies, and trade journals and magazines. As the figure demonstrates, regional dailies and local weeklies make up the largest amount of articles. Print media convey information on a mass scale. The national and regional dailies are read every week by 84% of the Danish population and play a crucial role in news coverage in Denmark (Minke, 2009). The local weeklies are read by about 80% of the population every week (*ibid.*). They are considered relevant because of the hyper-local i.e. geographically based and community-oriented (Metzgar et al., 2011) content. Trade journals and magazines are periodicals containing news and items of interest concerning a particular topic, trade or industry. This raises the question whether the article sources portray different aspects of local food, e.g. to what extent are the ways that nationwide dailies talk about local food different from the ways local weeklies talk about local food? This aspect will be addressed later. However, first the coding of the data needs to be clarified.

The data analysis in this article begins with identifying codes. Frequency counts for each identified code were calculated, and the source was also identified. The aim was to understand the frequency of codes used to refer to local food but also to understand the underlying contexts for the use of the concept, e.g. by reporting how the usage differed by source. Counting was used to identify patterns in the data, and it allowed for interpretation of the context associated with the concept of local food. The attempt was to explore the range of meanings related to local food. Within each article, the sentences containing the term 'local food' and/or 'local food products' were highlighted and used to determine central codes. From the textual content, the researcher identified 39 codes, see Table 1.

Compiling the codes into central categories transforms the 39 codes into six categories. This is illustrated in Table 2. Classification is used to group elements with common traits, as well as to distinguish between elements considered to differ in one or more central aspects (Bowker and Star, 1999) (see also Bailey, 1994, pp. 12–16, who lists both advantages and disadvantages of classification). Codes classified in the same category are presumed to have similar meanings. The identification of the categories is subjective and the result of an analysis of how they relate with the codes. The meaning thereof remains open to interpretation. The categories are not mutually exclusive, and specific codes can fall into more than one of the six categories. However, this categorization is useful when seeking to draw a representative sample of codes for more detailed analysis.

Note that more than one code, from any of the categories, may appear in each article. The article now turns to the empirical findings in order to explore what meanings of local food are developing in Danish print media.

Findings

This section provides a summary of the main findings from the content analysis. Given the large amount of codes ($n=39$), the findings presented are related to the

Table 1. The 39 codes in alphabetical order.

1. Access	2. Branding	3. Chef
4. Direct relations	5. E-commerce	6. Financial crisis
7. Event where local food is part	8. Experience economy	9. Farmers market
10. Farm shops	11. Food trend	12. Food tourism
13. Food values	14. Funding	15. Grassroots movement (social movement)
16. Local development	17. Local food and art	18. Local food and culture
19. Local food event	20. Local food in supermarkets	21. Local food and kids (youth)
22. Local food labelling (certification)	23. Local food on TV	24. Food policy
25. Local food price	26. Local food project	27. Local food resource/ food product
28. Local food system	29. Local food network	30. Local food production/ distribution
31. New Nordic cuisine	32. Organic food	33. Project where local food is a part
34. Public institutions	35. Public/ private canteens	36. Public procurement
37. Recipes/ food writer (blogging)	38. Restaurant	39. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

Table 2. Overview of the main categories and the related codes.

Categories	Codes
Actors	Chef; Grassroots movement (social movement); Local food and kids (youth); <i>Local food network</i> ; Recipes/ food writer (blogger); Restaurant; SMEs
Food culture	Food trend; <i>Food values</i> ; Local food and art; Local food and culture; Local food on TV; New Nordic Cuisine; Organic food
Food issues	Financial crisis; <i>Food system</i> ; Food policy; Local food labelling (certification); Price; Public/ private canteens; Public institutions; Public procurement;
Local development	Experience economy; Local development; <i>Food tourism</i> ; Funding
Events and projects	Event where food is part; <i>Food event</i> ; Food project; Project of which food is a part
Marketing and Sales	Access; Branding and marketing; E-commerce; Farmers market; Farm shops; <i>Local food in supermarkets</i> ; Local food production/ distribution; Local food resource/ products.

most frequently used code across sources within each of the six categories (c.f. the codes in *italics* in Table 2), which involve different but related meanings of local food.

The category *Actor* refers to any agent, perceptible at the level of discourse, who plays a part in a text (Buchanan, 2010). Based on the content analysis seven codes or groups of actors were identified. It appears that the most frequently used code across sources in this category is *local food networks*, which refers to the social connection of actors within specific regional geographies. Articles with content on *local food networks* appear primarily in regional dailies, local weeklies and trade journals and magazines. In contrast, nationwide dailies more often portray celebrity *chefs*. Further content analysis shows that the number of articles referring to local food networks increased rapidly around 2008 and continued to grow throughout 2013. Moreover, about 50 different local food networks are mentioned in the articles. The networks are geographically spread all over Denmark, but typically anchored locally. They include producer-controlled networks (usually named after the specific municipality or region they are located in) and consumer-controlled networks (usually named

after the city they are located in). A couple of the networks are national (named after the country) in the sense that they include food producers or networks from all over Denmark.

The category *Food Culture* refers to a myriad of facets (cf. Table 2). Based on the content analysis, it appears that the most frequently used code in this category is *food values*. Food values are here understood, not merely as nutritional value, but also as a matter of symbolic value such as positive associations, ethical considerations and qualitative meanings of local food. Articles referring to *food values* appear across sources. Additionally, trade journals and magazines have a high frequency in references to *organic food* and nationwide dailies to new Nordic cuisine. There are a number of different values attached to local food. In general these are health, reduced CO₂ emissions from transport, quality, and sustainability, but also values such as authenticity, food security and safety, taste, origin and season are mentioned throughout the articles. References to values associated with local food frequently highlight that consumers want food with meaning. Organic food and local food are portrayed as good examples of this. Consumers want quality food, and are willing to pay more for a good story, less environmental impact and exciting taste experiences. At the same time, the interest in quality food is described as increasing in recent years along with the interests in healthy and local food.

The category *Food Issues* spans multiple subjects and includes a number of codes. Based on the content analysis, it appears that the most frequently used code in this category is *food system*. Articles referring to *food system* appear broadly across sources. Further content analysis shows that local food is considered a new ideology about better food. It is seen as an important component to stop the monopolization of food production, which is controlled by multinational companies and cause a standardization of food cultures. Politicians must support small, local food producers. In the globalized market the large food giants have huge political power. Bureaucracy for example makes it expensive to be small. Moreover, there is a greater interest in local speciality products as a backlash to discount the wave. It is a development that parts of the retail market are supporting. The world has become so globalized that many begin to 'return' to the local.

The category *Local Development* includes a number of codes. Based on the content analysis, it appears that the most frequently used code in this category is *food tourism*. Articles referring to *food tourism* appear across sources. The articles generally support the notion that a focus on local food and small-scale food production attracts tourists (from home and abroad) and makes it more appealing to live and work in the local area. Most articles emphasize that tourism must be taken seriously as a profit- and job-creating business in rural areas. The same applies to local food. So, it appears that tourism and local food should come together to promote the tangible and edible products together with abstract products, such as destinations. Food tourism is, among other things, about developing 'experiential attractions', which can strengthen a region's profile – for example, through local food. Danish regions and municipalities use local food to tell positive stories about the area. The way to a good reputation, it is claimed, is through the stomach. Overall, the goal is to create local development.

The category *Events and Projects* refers to any occurrence (event), which may be recurrent, annually or more frequently, or may be a 'one-off' (Beaver, 2012), or a set of activities (project) intended to produce a specific output, which has a definite beginning and end (Law, 2009). Based on the content analysis, it appears that the most

frequently used code in this category is *food event*. Articles referring to *food events* appear primarily in regional dailies and local weeklies. The main food events described in the articles are geographically based food markets and food festivals. The majority of appearances cover 2011–2013. The food markets are generally described as opportunities to present food produced in and around a specific region, but generally spread across the country. Food markets and food festivals are recognized usually as unique opportunities for bringing together small producers to promote local food products associated with the local area. Other central food events are cooking competitions between chefs, communal eating and soup kitchens, as well as meetings and conferences where local food is served; appearances cover the 2010–2013 period. The food events are used as a means to promote local foods through local dishes made from local produce.

The category *Marketing and Sales* includes a number of codes. Based on the content analysis, it appears that the most frequently used code in this category is *local food in supermarkets*. Articles containing the code *local food in supermarkets* appear across sources. The number of articles referring to local food in supermarkets increases rapidly in 2013. A common characteristic is the assumption that consumer demand for local food is growing. Some of the Danish supermarket chains are using this trend to sell local food in their local stores. It is not new that supermarkets sell local food. What is new, however, is that it is becoming more formalized and visible that they are doing so. The most frequently mentioned case is Coop Denmark,³ and more specifically the supermarket chain SuperBrugsen, which in 2013 launched a campaign to systematize its efforts to sell more local food in its local shops. The campaign is part of an overall strategy by Coop Denmark to strengthen the chain's local profile. The goal is to become the Danish local food supermarket, partly because in this way it can differentiate itself from the larger international chains, and partly because it wants to meet an emerging demand for more unique food products.

Discussion

To recapitulate, the findings paint a broad picture that integrate a diversity of meanings and captures how Danish print media portray local food over the sampling period. Six major codes or themes have been identified: local food networks, food values, food system, food tourism, food events and local food in supermarkets. In reflecting on what local food means, this section is restricted to these themes informed by theoretical perspectives on local food. Thus, it travels back and forth between findings and theory.

Local Food Networks: New Food Initiatives

The findings suggest that when local food is referred to in Danish print media, there is a tendency to associate it with local food networks. The findings show an increase in the reporting on local food networks in Denmark around 2008, which continued to grow throughout the sampling period. Local food networks are presented generally, in this context, as effective tools to ease the availability, affordability and accessibility of local food. The types of networks referred to most frequently are producer-controlled networks and less frequently consumer-controlled networks. The consumer networks are typically member-based and -driven food cooperatives

that offer locally produced organic fruit and vegetables. They support fair and direct trade between consumers, local growers and other suppliers. The producer networks usually consist of small food producers – typically farmers. The general aim is to establish a joint marketing system to promote the local food. This is consistent with an extensive academic literature, which has developed since the 1990s, about alternative⁴ food networks (AFNs) or ‘short food supply chains’ (see Marsden et al., 2000, p. 426) transforming modern food provisioning across Europe, North America and many other parts of the world (e.g. Renting et al., 2003; Seyfang, 2006; Feagan, 2007; Tregear, 2011; Kneafsey et al., 2013). Much of this research suggests that AFNs mark the transition away from the conventional industrial food system that distances and detaches food production from food consumption. This aspect, however, is not explicit in the way Danish print media generally portray local food networks, i.e. as producer networks. Yet articles referring to consumer networks emphasize aspects such as reconnecting consumers and producers, non-profit, reducing food waste, and distance from farm to table.

The meanings Danish print media generally associate with local food networks correspond to the divergence in North American and European literature (Goodman and Goodman, 2009; Hinrichs and Charles, 2012). Whereas the US literature typically assesses AFNs ‘in terms of their oppositional status and “transformative potential” to deliver progressive systemic change in food provisioning’, the European literature assesses it as catalysts of revitalized rural economies (Goodman and Goodman, 2009, p. 11). The findings indicate that local food networks are seen as a key element in rural development. However, it appears that when compared to other parts of Europe, local food networks in Denmark are not as common as, for instance, in the UK, Italy or France. A reason might be that the ‘alternative’ food sector in Denmark is relatively small. Denmark is dominated by long-standing export-oriented agriculture, where food is provided by supermarkets. There simply is a limited outlet for a local food production.

This said, food networks per se are not a new phenomenon in Denmark. Network cooperation spread in rural Denmark prior to World War II, where the agricultural co-operative movement (*Andelsbevægelsen*) was strong (Chloupkova et al., 2003). The number of cooperatives declined around 1960 and the following decade (Svendsen and Svendsen, 2000). From the 1970s onwards, organic food networks evolved in Denmark. However, by the 1990s these networks became an integrated part of the mainstream food system (Kjeldsen and Ingemann, 2009). Nonetheless, by the turn of the twenty-first century, new organic food networks entered the scene, especially farm shops, speciality stores, box schemes, community supported agriculture (CSA), food co-ops. Along these lines, Manniche and Larsen (2013) point out that several regions in Denmark have established small-scale production of regional, organic or other premium-priced, high-quality foods. This has not received much academic attention. A possible explanation might be the perceived insignificance of this development – for example, the total turnover of organic food networks is estimated at less than 1% of the total Danish food market (Kjeldsen, 2005) – another explanation might be that it is difficult to point out the sites and scales at which new food initiatives emerge. For example, when observing the national scale, Kjeldsen et al. (2013) were unsuccessful in identifying significant indications of new food initiatives. However, as they demonstrate, observing trends on the local scale point in the opposite direction. The content analysis shows a similar pattern when focusing on

print media sources: nationwide dailies do not, to the same extent as regional dailies and local weeklies, paint the full picture of local food initiatives in Denmark.

Food Values: Valorizing Local Food

Another relevant finding is that there are clear connections made between local food and value-laden virtues such as CO₂ reduction, improved health, fresh produce in season, and good quality. This corresponds with the literature on local food (see e.g. Ostrom, 2006; Eriksen, 2013). Dagevos and Van Ophem (2013, pp. 1476–1479) differentiate between four elements that constitute food values: 1. product value (nutritional value or sensory properties, e.g. texture, colour, freshness, taste and flavour), 2. process value (consumer concerns, e.g. animal welfare, free-range livestock products, environmental pollution, genetic modification, chemicals, food miles or fair trade issues involved in how food is produced or traded and farmed animals are treated); 3. location value (physical setting, e.g. spaciousness, variety of food products, etc., and experience characteristics, e.g. entourage, entertainment); and 4. emotional value (experience, entertainment, (self-)indulgence, identity, or the story behind products or brands). The reporting of local food in Danish print media refers broadly to all four aspects. As Sims (2009, p. 328) points out, local food is associated with a host of values ‘and there is, therefore, a “feel-good” factor associated with consuming them’. However, as Ilbery and Maye (2005) argue, these food values are limited in their descriptive detail, with potentially varied interpretations of what they mean and how they relate to local food. Born and Purcell (2006) warn against the *local trap* – that there is nothing inherently good or bad about any scale. Dupuis and Goodman (2005) acknowledge that the local is not an innocent term, and are concerned that localism can be based on the interests of a narrow elite. Yet, the reference to local food in Danish print media is distinctly positive.

Food System: Local and National Imaginaries

The findings show that different print media sources tell different stories about local food. There is, for example, a tendency that regional dailies and local weeklies, to a larger extent than nationwide dailies, talk about local food events and local food networks, which may indicate a hyper-local imaginary of local food culture. Nationwide dailies, on the other hand, tend to talk to a larger extent than regional dailies and local weeklies about celebrity chefs and new Nordic cuisine (NNC). This may indicate a national imaginary of national identity and branding. The NNC can be considered a significant precursor of an emergent national or ‘Danish’ cuisine. Fischler (1988) claims that, because food is key in the construction of identity, cuisines are ‘invented’. The NNC was invented by gourmet chefs and other food professionals (all male) in 2004 (Risvik et al., 2008). Borrowing from Belasco (2002, p. 12), national cuisines ‘may be most important to the people who stand to profit the most from their construction... while it is unclear how important national cuisines are to people’s daily lives’. Along these lines, the NNC has a slow trickle-down effect. As Micheelsen et al. (2013) point out, its elitist character is a barrier for consumer acceptance. The NNC carries elitist overtones in the sense that it is something exclusive to which only few have access. Another take on this is that the NNC can be seen as the preserve of an elite, who are seeking to impose their food preferences

on the population (Micheelsen et al., 2013) by laying down canons of a 'correct' diet (Mennell, 2005).

The interplay of local and national inflection reflected in Danish print media is a central finding of this article; it indicates that nationwide dailies portray national imaginaries, apart from local imaginaries portrayed in regional dailies and local weeklies, which do not reveal everything that is going on. Local food cannot be understood without reference to the local scale. As James (1997) notes, food is more often *localized* than nationalized. However, at the same time, both culinary globalization and culinary nationalism have resulted in the strong push for local food (Wilk, 2006). In this sense, local food can be understood both as flow and friction between dualisms of local–global and, as we shall see, marginal–mainstream. Thus, as Ohnuki-Tiemey (1999, p. 240) argues, the local and the global 'are mutually constituent forces'. Academics across disciplines offer perspectives that call into question the neat opposition of local and global. What is global and what is local are fundamentally related within an overall system (see e.g. Hinrichs, 2003). Wilk (1999) uses the history of Belizean food to show how local and global imaginaries are not contradictory trends but in fact aspects of the same process.

Food Tourism: A Driver for Rural Development

The findings indicate a strong relationship between local food, tourism and rural development. The potential for using local food as a driver of tourism (Blichfeldt and Halkier, 2013) and rural development (Marsden et al., 2000) is widely recognized. There are many examples of how the interrelationship between food, tourism and rural development has been put into practice around the world (see Du Rand and Heath, 2006). A central view is that local food increases tourism due to local place-branding and experiential opportunities. Local food can be considered as an experience in a destination and has many possibilities to be used to market a destination (Du Rand and Heath, 2006). From this perspective, destinations are trying to incorporate local food into the tourism product (Mason and Paggiaro, 2009). The close interconnection between a local place-brand and a local food is novel in a Danish context (Manniche and Larsen, 2013). From this the question raises whether the initiatives related to local food and tourism are likely to achieve the socio-economic development objectives sometimes claimed for them, e.g. enhanced employment, increased economic and social activities. This article is not able to answer this question based on extant knowledge. However, a number of European case studies explore the potential (e.g. O'Connor et al., 2006; Fonte and Papadopoulos, 2010). This said it has yet to be seen 'who gains and who loses' from the emerging local food trend in Denmark. Nevertheless, the local scale per se is no guarantee for the realization of rural development objectives.

Food Events: Branding Place at the Local Scale

An important resource within food tourism is represented by events (Mason and Paggiaro, 2009). The findings suggest a wide range of local food events— that is, food festivals, culinary routes, food markets – have been established across the different regions in Denmark. Local food is used to enhance cultural expressions of public debates, official dinners, art exhibitions and other food-related events. Cross-network

collaboration between local food, arts and crafts, and tourism networks are identified as key elements in the success of food events. The articulation of food events may contribute to the regional identity of products, attract local customers and tourists. Blichfeldt and Halkier (2013) claim that food events may be intertwined particularly with place due to their grounding in local food and local culinary traditions. Such events may generate income and provide recreational and leisure activities for locals. They maintain that food events are well suited to contribute to the branding of a particular locality. Stories and events are imperative if rural areas wish to engage in commodification of local food to improve their position and foster development.

Local Food in Supermarkets: From Marginal to Mainstream

Another prevalent topic is the introduction of local food into mainstream supermarkets. The findings show that conventional retailers in Denmark have begun to take an interest in local food. In their infancy, local food has typically been distributed through direct marketing strategies – that is, farmers' markets, farm shops, box schemes, food co-ops – parallel to mainstream channels. However, it appears that Danish supermarket chains are starting to systematize efforts to supply and market local food. This is part of an overall competitive strategy to differentiate the supermarket chains from the discount and international chains, and to meet an increasing consumer demand. Organic products are no longer enough for the retailers to distinguish themselves. This means that they are looking for something new. Local food is therefore one of the drivers. However, using local food as a way of branding supermarkets may contribute to a cheapening of the potential for how we look for ways to enhance the viability of local food.

Some scholars suggest that such moves by leading retailers may dilute the meaning of local food (Goodman and Goodman, 2009). Renting et al. (2003) argue that the increased corporate control brings with it the danger of a downward pressure on producer prices and product quality, thereby undermining the purpose of local food. There are concerns that the supermarkets will hijack the momentum behind local food and exploit it as a niche retail marketing opportunity without having any genuine commitment to local small-scale producers (Jones et al., 2004). One example of this is how organic food has shifted from the marginal to the mainstream. Kjeldsen and Ingemann (2009) argue that from the 1970s onwards organic food networks in Denmark have evolved from being primarily a marginal social movement to becoming an integrated part of the market mainstream. In 2006, around 80% of organic food products in Denmark were sold in supermarkets (see Denver et al., 2012). Today, the organic food sector in Denmark does not differ significantly from the conventional food sector. One of the indicators is that the average farm size within the Danish organic dairy sector is larger than conventional farms (Statistics Denmark, 2013); another indicator is that it becomes export orientated rather than local. This, as Kjeldsen and Ingemann (2009) suggest, can be seen as an example of the co-optation of an alternative system by the established mainstream. As local food is gradually distributed in supermarkets it will become mainstream. Yet supermarkets may provide new opportunities for local food producers (Jones et al., 2004) due to, for instance, the infrastructure they create (Dunne et al., 2011). Reisch et al. (2013) point out that narrowing the distance between production and consumption would help to reduce preferences for industrially prepared meals over local food. The availability of local food through supermarkets has the potential to reach more consumers

(Hinrichs and Charles, 2012). Despite concerns, one way of diffusing local food more widely in society is by translating it into mainstream thinking. Thus the marginal interacts with the mainstream in complex ways, underlining, as we saw above regarding the local and the global, that it is not a case of 'either/or kinds of end states'.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to find empirical evidence that could verify the seemingly new and growing interest in local food in Denmark, and to shed light on what meanings the concept of *local food* holds in Danish print media. This has provided a number of important insights into the amplitude of meanings local food carries.

This article has found evidence that Danish print media reporting on local food are increasing. This seems indicative of a new local food trend, which is likely to continue developing. The positive thing about this new attention to local food, despite its elitist tendencies, is that it may turn out to be a much needed lever for the food culture in Denmark. But what explains the increasing curve between 2003 and 2013 in Figure 1? A possible answer might be that the drive for local food is related to the development of the NNC, but also to climate change, the financial crisis, and Danish rural development policies. It appears that the interest in local food in Denmark began with the invention of the NNC around 2004. There are generally no articles referring to local food in a Danish context prior to 2004. This said reporting on local food in connotation with CO₂ reduction intensified around 2009, which was the year the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP15 was held in Denmark. It can also be observed that the interest in local food is growing steadily during the financial crisis of 2008–2011. The return to local food production is not necessarily a particularly new project – aspects related to re-localization were pretty much apparent during the crisis of the 1930s through to the 1970s (North, 2010). Additionally, it appears that Danish rural development policies play a role in the formation and steady increase of local food networks and food events through funding.

The article identified six major themes that are central to the understanding of local food in Danish print media, namely 'local food networks', 'food values', 'food system', 'food tourism', 'food events' and 'local food in supermarkets'. This suggests a multiplicity of meanings translated into one concept. Compared to organic food and the NNC, which are defined by a strict set of rules or guidelines, local food obeys no rule but 'local' and its interpretations are never fixed. The findings show that local food is often used in conjunction with objectives to achieve rural development. This is consistent with the 'European school' of research on local food, which, according to Goodman and Goodman (2009) and Hinrichs and Charles (2012), is interested primarily in how local food shapes or contributes to rural development. In general the reference to local food in Danish print media is distinctly positive.

Adopting a content analysis approach has provided a useful framework and allowed different levels and dimensions of local food to be taken into account. The content analysis revealed that interpretations of local food are contingent upon local and national scale. The findings indicate that national imaginaries, apart from local imaginaries, do not necessarily reveal everything that is going on. It appears that articles on local food in regional dailies and local weeklies to a large extent refer to hyper-local aspects, which advise and inspire local development, whereas articles in nationwide dailies seem to associate local food as exemplars of national cuisine by referring to celebrity chefs and NNC. This said, local food cannot be un-

derstood without reference to the local scale. However, at the same time, both culinary globalization and culinary nationalism have resulted in the strong push for local food (Wilk, 2006). Keeping with this, it may be argued that the introduction of local food into mainstream supermarkets blurs the lines between the marginal and mainstream. In this sense local food can be understood both as flow and friction between binary dualisms of local–global and marginal–mainstream.

Notes

1. Hinrichs (2003, p. 34) suggests that ‘historically, present-day localization can be seen as “re-localization” – a return to the greater regional food self-reliance of the past’.
2. Between 2003 and 2013 Infomedia had 487 214 articles with ‘food’ in it and 116 855 articles with ‘food products’ in it.
3. The supermarkets Kvickly, SuperBrugsen and Dagli’Brugsen are driven by Coop Denmark – the largest provider of staple goods in Denmark
4. ‘The descriptor “alternative” is often used to signal oppositional or radical dimensions, such as aspirations to “reclaim” ownership of food production, “re-connect” consumers with producers through shorter supply chains, “resist” global capitalism, solve problems of social exclusion and ecological degradation and restore access to healthy food as a human right rather than a commodity’ (Kneafsey, 2010, p. 179).

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