

The paradox of organic food systems: Inclusion through exclusion

Klaus Brønd Laursen

PhD student

Department of agro-ecology

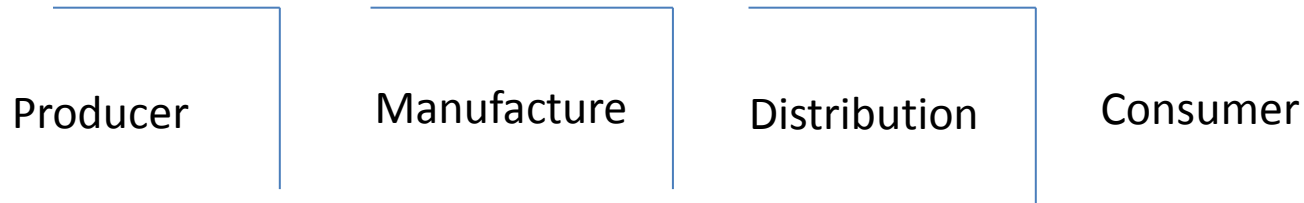
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The approach

- The purpose of the PhD project is to study the organization of organic food chains.
- The PhD is partly funded by the Healthy Growth project that aims to study how mid-scale value based food chains can scale up
- The secondary aim of the PhD is to introduce systems theory in Niklas Luhmann's version into food and agricultural studies
- How can a food chain be observed from the perspective of systems theory ?

The convectional food chain as a system



Added value

- An organic product consists of two types of value
- The 'material' value
- The added value
 - The features that allows for an additional value to be added to the product
- Examples: Animal welfare, localism, pesticide free products, organic labels

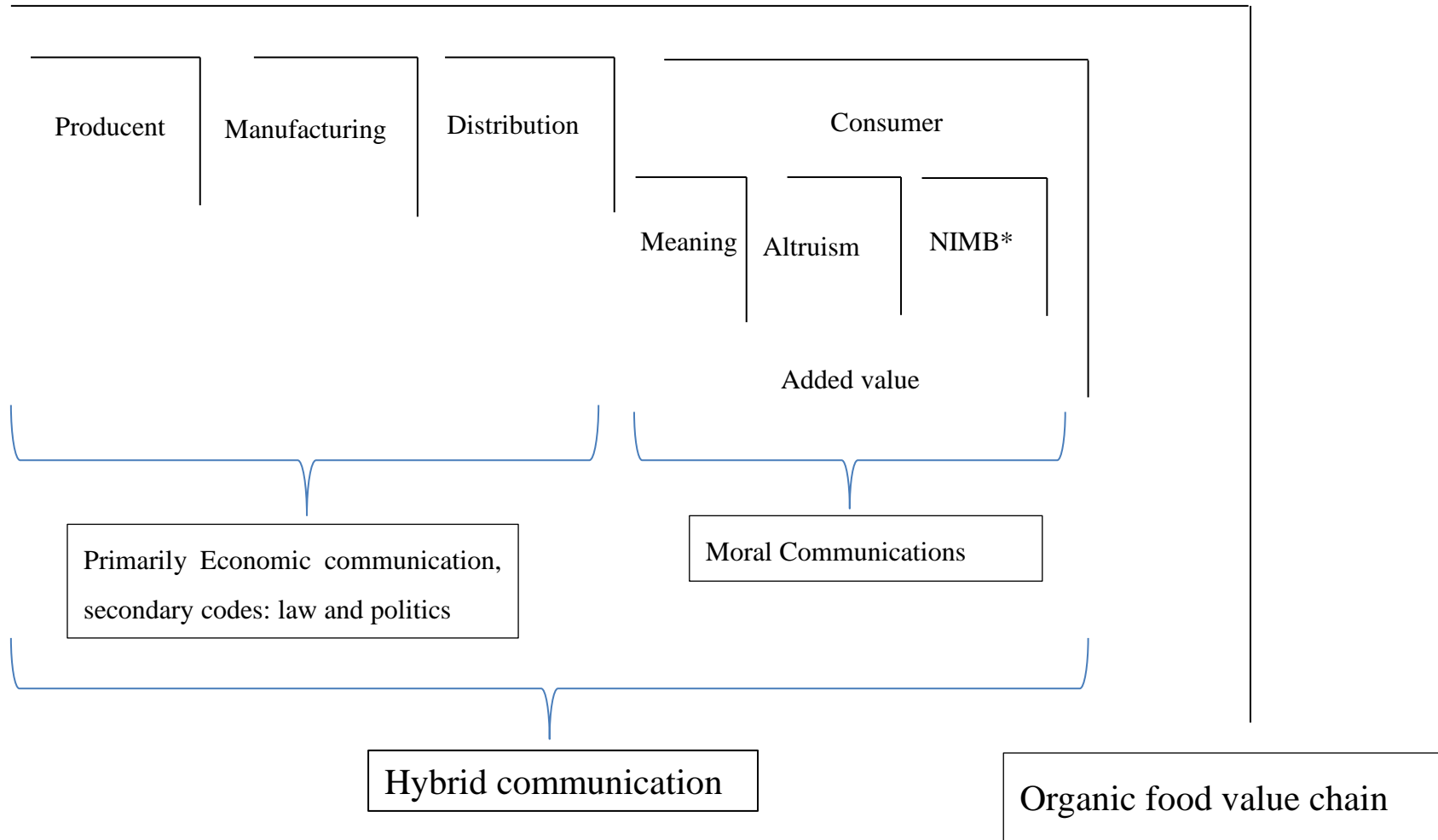
Added value observed from the point of systems theory

- All communication is a process
- This applies to both economic and moral communication as well
- Economic value and moral can only be observed when occurring in a relation
- → From value / added value to relations of value
 - Values can only be observed as relational

The functional codes

- Primary codes
 - Economic: pay / not pay
 - Moral: good / bad
- Secondary codes
 - Law: legal / illegal
 - Politic: power / no power

The organic food chain as a system



Hybridity

- Most organizations (and other forms of communications) couple to one functional code. The communication can then be programmed by other functional codes
- In hybrid communication, the communication depends on both codes to be present at the same time. They are at the same time mutual exclusive and mutual constitutive

Inclusion

- The chain defines its own criteria's for inclusion
- Economical through price
- Morally by determine what is observed as good and what is observed as bad

Exclusion

- Economical exclusion through price
- Morally by determine what is bad
 - Use of pesticides
 - Low animal welfare
- The moral code only shows that there is 1. order observations made from the distinction good/bad it does not per say tell us what is actually observed as good

The paradox

- Hybrid communication reduces social complexity and at the same time produces new complexity
- The inclusion can only come about as a result of exclusion
- This generates new paradoxes
- The will to do good cannot be facilitated due to high prices

What to make of this

- If aiming at understanding organic food chains one must move to the level of second order observations
- This requires that the analyst must give up any normative perspectives
- Organic products cannot be observed as being better, just as being there
- The chain must be observed as an operational closed system that constitutes itself through its own inclusion/ exclusion mechanisms