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Organic school meals in three Danish municipalities

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Introduction

In order to prevent children and young people from becoming overweight or obese, it is imperative to promote healthier eating patterns. So it is necessary to develop and implement effective strategies that can influence the eating and lifestyle habits of young people. Healthy school meal programme is considered to be an effective strategy to promote such changes and increasingly such strategies become embedded organic supply policies and strategies that pursue environmental goals. The purpose of this paper is to take a closer look into the current status of the organic school meal programme in Denmark. Three municipalities which are involved in the organic school meal programme are chosen as the study subjects.

Methodology

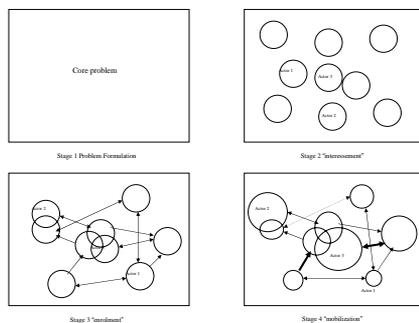
This study is based on the individual interviews with three municipalities on Zealand of Denmark, which have public organic food procurement policies or food and nutrition policy.

POP: Public Organic Food Procurement Policy refers to a policy, in which a specified amount of specified foods are expected to be organic, which are practiced in public organizations offering food.

FNP: Food & Nutrition Policy is a set of written and adopted principles that aims to fulfill nutritional needs of pupils at schools and ensure availability and accessibility of healthy foods.

Theoretical foundation

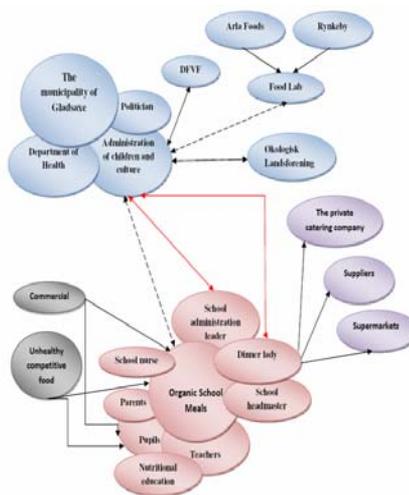
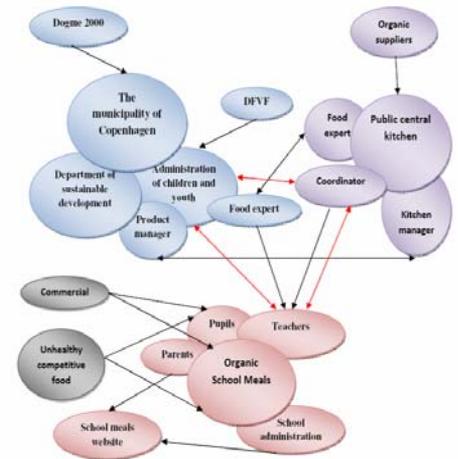
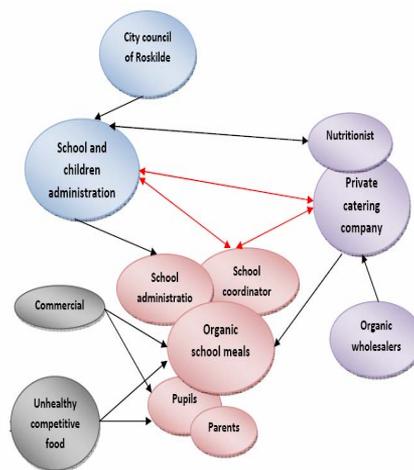
In the context of this paper the provision of food and nutrition at school can be understood as a technology. However there is far from agreement of what this technology does and in fact different stakeholder compete in order to decide what this technology does and should do. School food has become "boundary object" which is explained in detail in the actor-network theory (ANT).



ANT argues that things for instance school food, perform and enact through actors in a network and that it is making sense only through the interaction with other object in the network. ANT is here being applied in the analysis of the four interviews.

Results

Figure 1, 2, and 3 respectively show the involved actors in the organic school meals programme in Roskilde, Copenhagen and Gladsaxe. It can be seen that there are some differences among these 3 municipalities, regarding the cooperation work of school meals between the municipality and the schools. However, they also have some similarities. As the table shows, the difference and similarities of the organic school meals in 3 municipalities.



Organic school meals		Roskilde	København	Gladsaxe
Policy level	POP	⊕	⊕	⊕
	FNP	⊕	⊕	⊕
School level	Coordinator	⊕	-	⊕
	Kitchen operator	-	-	⊕
	Teachers	⊕	⊕	⊕
	Pupils	⊕	⊕	⊕
	Parents	⊕	⊕	⊕
	Nutritional education	⊕	⊕	⊕
Prepared school meals layout	Public kitchen	-	⊕	-
	Catering company	⊕	-	-
	School site kitchen	-	-	⊕

⊕ Effectively involved in the organic school meals program

⊖ Not effectively involved in the organic school meals program

Discussion

The evidence proves that providing organic school meals in Denmark is a complicate process. Firstly, the traditional lunchbox has shaped the eating style of children at schools for long time. This is based on the food culture in a country. Meanwhile, the school meals are not free of charge, and the organic ingredients involved make it more expensive. So there are a low amount of pupils choosing school meals. Secondly, so far the government has not given any extra budget to the school meal service, and no national guideline for the percentage of organic food in the school food has been set. So in the respect the public organic procurement policy can be extended by aspiration of the society. Last but not least, providing only organic food to school children is far from enough. Encouraging our children to establish healthy eating habits will need long-term effort to complete and be successful.