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More organic food on the public plate – need for a New Public Governance?

*WG 2. Institutional food procurement and school feeding programmes: exploring the benefits, challenges and opportunities*

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**More organic food on the public plate –  
need for a New Public Governance?**

**Mais alimentos orgânicos no prato público:  
uma nova governança pública é necessária**

**WG 2. Institutional food procurement and school feeding programmes:  
exploring the benefits, challenges and opportunities**

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**Abstract.**

More organic food to public plate can contribute to reaching important goals of the Sustainable Development Goals. Public procurement policies (POPP's) has proven to be a well suited strategy to increase the uptake of organic produce. Transition of the agricultural system in a more sustainable direction however, cannot be achieved through public policy alone. Instead the concerted action of a long range of stakeholders along the supply chain seems to of importance. The objective of this study was to examine the views and attitudes of important representatives from the three powers of society (civil society, market and public actors) on enabling and disabling factors public procurement policies in order to provide recommendations on governance strategies for sustainable public food consumption. We use Bourdieu' thinking and the ideas of New Public Governance to explain some of the enabling and disabling factors in the dynamics of the organic public plate. The results points to the fact that political decision for supporting and a strong financing from different levels of government and innovative approaches to training of staff focusing on development of craftsmanship and inspiration about organic food in NPG frame were considered by stakeholders to be key enabling factors that opens new possibilities for public organic food services and sustainable development. In contrast to the value conflicts in top managers, were considered to be disabling factors.

**Keywords:** Organik food, public plate, NPG, POPPs, Bourdieu theory

**Introduction**

Food systems where the production, transportation and consumption of are organize in environmentally friendly ways has over that past decades spread as a promising way to help maintain soil quality, protect ground water and biodiversity. One of the results has been the growth in organic food & farming strategies which in many countries has become an important cornerstone of agricultural policies (Lehtinen, 2012; Sonnino, 2009). In most countries the private household consumption has mainly been driving the development (Hughner et al, 2007; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005), but over the past decades public procurement policies has increased in importance (Smith et al, 2015) as a promising way to reinforce stable consumption



Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



of organic products. The value of food bought for the public plate is considerable and includes public sector institutions such as care homes, hospitals, schools, universities and canteens. In Denmark organic food in the public sector has increased considerably from 2013-2014, a result of the targeted public policies in that sector (Mikkelsen BE, 2012; Mikkelsen BE & Lundø M, 2016b). More organic food on the public plate is considered as an important mean to achieve goals of "The agenda of sustainable development 2030" that UN have set since 2015. However, it has increasingly been recognized that changing public food systems to accommodate more organic food is a complex process that requires the cooperation of a range of stakeholders in the food supply chain. Whereas public policy during the 80'ties was driven by the mindset defined by (Hood, 1991) as New Public Management (NPM) the dynamics of public policymaking has undergone marked changes. This change from Public Administration (PA), over New Public Management (NPM) to new rationales has been referred to by Osborne (2006). New Public Governance recognizing the legitimacy and interrelatedness of both the policy making and the implementation/service delivery processes (Osborne, 2006). That means that for public sector food successful POPP implementation cannot be left to governments and its agencies and institutions alone. Instead it can be speculated that a range of different stakeholders representing all parts of the supply chain and the foods system needs to cooperate if organic food policies in the public sector is to be implementer successfully.

The aim of the study was to examine how multiple stakeholders cooperate on implementing POPP's in the case of Denmark and whether the idea of New Public Governance can be considered an appropriate model for understanding stakeholder behavior. Using Bourdieu theory we aim to explain difficulties, time delays, dysfunctions and controversies in the transitional process. The objective is to examine the views and attitudes of important representatives from the three powers of society (civil society, market and public actors) in the implementation of POPPs in the case of Denmark and to identify potential contributions they can make to a multi stakeholder governance of sustainable food consumption strategies in the public.

### **Conceptual foundations.**

The paper takes the new public governance (NPG) approach as its point of departure in its attempt to understand how traditional forms of governing important societal issues gradually seems to be replaced by new types of governance in which more powers of society participate. In other words, desired futures of public service provision can no longer be expected to be created only by the public but requires the joint collaboration of civil society, market and public actors. New public governance (NPG) has been suggested as a way to refer to such multi-stakeholder cooperation around a given topic – in this case implementation of POPP's in public sector foodservice. NPG can be understood as both a plural state, where multiple inter-dependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services and as a pluralist state, where multiple processes inform the policy making system and the policy implementation. NPG builds on organizational sociology and network theory and the characteristics of NPG has been summarized by Osborne. It is Plural and pluralist in the sense that coordinates three social powers. It builds on inter-organizational governance in the sense that it involves more than just public stakeholders. It focuses on service processes and outcomes rather than to the hierarchy. It focuses on preferred suppliers, and often inter-dependent agents within ongoing relationships in the sense that in this way it ensures stable feed flow. It builds on both trust and relational contracts in the sense that is maintained the timing every day. And its Neo-corporatist in the



Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



sense that there is a new ethos of cooperation among different powers with emphasis in the qualitative results (Osborne, 2006).

Thus, the context for public service delivery is neither public administration nor new public management but rather a far more complex context within which various combinations of local, national and international organizations continue to play a major role in the governance of localities, shaping and implementing public policies. For instance successive UK governments have initiated, made use of, and changed collaborative arrangements and collaborative governance over the last four decades in Place-based systems of care, because of the gap in leadership of local health system that following NHS structural changes in 2013. Local planning for health, system of care, governing of resources to meet needs were required and led by service providers, engaging with commissioners. So, developing at the local level system of care in response to need for cooperation, innovation, and resource management succeed (Vangen et al, 2017).

The notion of a field was originally conceived as a mental tool capable of explaining the logics specific to each differentiated space of relationships and practices and is by definition applicable to all areas of sociological research (Dubois, 2014). As such, the notion of a field can be used to capture the logics of practices such as those involved in public food service provision. The notion of New Public Governance seeks to integrate the constitutive structure and instrumental function of governance, aiming at creating balance between the three powers in by informing and infusing governmental performance with public values. An example of NPG implementation is the diverse public foodscapes created by public service provision in the food area. Conceptually the idea of foodscapes is a way to capture the complex nature of public activity in relation to service provision in institutional settings (Mikkelsen 2011). Public foodscapes are increasingly seen as object of public policy making aiming at influencing foods systems in a more sustainable direction.

The functional status and the professional practices of public foodservice institutions kitchens and their gradual transition into organic ones can be understood as a result of actions of individuals and groups. The totality of behaviour of these individuals and groups can be described conveniently by the concept of 'habitus'. Habitus according to Bourdieu links the global with the local and is the mediating link between social structure at the macro level and individual action on the microlevel. An example is 'Local Children's Safeguarding Boards' that originate in 1970s and Local authorities Police, NHS Community, Education' Courts, Secure services, Probation Youth involve are participated and that can very well be analyzed with Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'symbolic capital', 'practice' and 'disposition' (Vangen et al, 2017; Gjalte de Graaf, 2007).

Initially, sociology presents itself as a social topology and the social world can be represented as a space (with several dimensions) constructed on the basis of principles of differentiation or distribution constituted by the set of properties active within the social universe. A simplified model of the social field as a whole can be constructed that makes it possible to conceptualize, for each agent, his or her position in all possible spaces of competition, where existing groupings are more likely to be stable and durable, while other forms of grouping are always threatened by the splits and oppositions linked to distances in social space (Bourdieu, 1985). An example is the notion of foodscape is increasingly being used within health promotion, public health nutrition and food studies as a tool to describe our food environments. The foodscape framework offers obvious advantages in that it enables scholars



Third Internacional Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



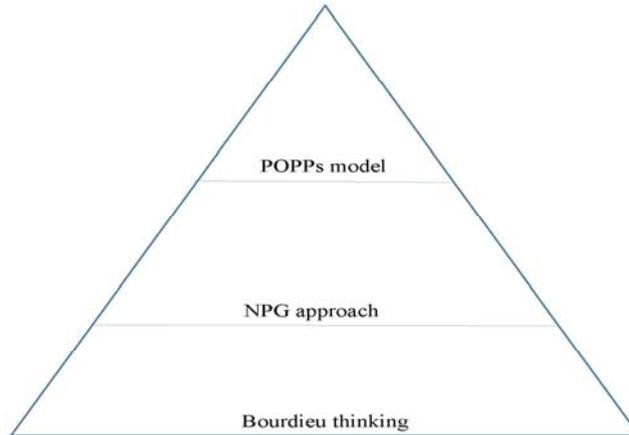
to analyse how food, places and people are interconnected and how they interact. (Mikkelsen BE, 2011).

We can understand the totality of the complex “public plate” field as such a social space. We construct the foodscape metaphor as a corresponding model that allows for an understanding of the field of forces involving a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field, as well as to the direct interactions among its agents. According to this way of view every field can be understood as a site of a more or less overt struggle over the definition of the legitimate principles of how the practices of the field should be. For instance how should sustainable food practices in the public look like and what are enabling and disabling factors for any necessary change. The diffuse substance in the social field is the 'habitus' which is distinct in each individual or group, and is differentiated between staff members and executives who want to maintain or change the functioning of public foodscape. Habitus is an endless capacity to engender products - thoughts, perceptions, expressions, actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production and also, is this general and unifying principle that reinterprets the essential and specific features of a position as a unify life way, in other words, as a single set of practices, goods and choices that belong to individuals (Bourdieu, 1977). However, the source of energy, which gives power and feeds the social field made up by the public foodscapes, is the capital, mainly in its economic form. The capital of the different types and subtypes distributes in social space and it at a given moment in time represents the immanent (in that time) structure of the social world and it can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be in the form of educational qualifications; as social capital, made up of social obligations (“connections”), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital in the form of a title of nobility; and as symbolic capital. In other words, capital—in whatever form—that presupposes the intervention (the appearance and interaction of individuals and actors) of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity, but the different types of capital can derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation, which is needed to produce the type of power effective in the field in question (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu explains that the agents and groups need to be endowed (amount of knowledge, culture, social relationships and position, money that acquired by a person or inherited until now) with a specific quantity and structure of resources they can put at stake in order to obtain the right to enter a social field and they change it, and also each social field values particular sorts of resources or 'capital'. So, in transformation of public foodscapes to organic and more sustainable ones, in addition to pure financial capital, information and education and inspiration to the commanders and staff and, above all, decisive leadership is required.

The above view of the public plate – the public foodscape – as a field of transition – can be illustrated as in figure 1. It attempts to show the connection that can be made between elements of Bourdieu theory as source thinking that explains a new NPG approach that can drive public procurement policies.



Figure 1. The connection: Bourdieu thinking, NPG approach and POPPs model.



The above figure 1, illustrates the connection we attempt to make between Bourdieu theory, NPG approach and POPPs model. In this triangular view the theory of Bourdieu offers a generic tool for analyzing reality in social fields of transition. At the middle level we see NPG as an strategic way for policy makers to organize public service delivery. At the top level POPP's is viewed as an operational mean that practitioners to helps us achieve policy goals of more organic food on the public plate.

## Methods

To explore the case of how food systems and key actors in Denmark work together on POPP implementation a case study methods approach was chosen. The idea was to illuminate the nature of POPP development and implementation in the different governmental layers of public sector food and to get a close, in-depth and first-hand understanding of POPPs' implementation in Denmark. The seven interviewees, who were chosen directly were all involved in the operation of this mechanism (POPPs) from different but key positions in the POPPs and with long experience, were able to express their own view on the questions and to contribute to recording reality, as it was been appeared during this period. The case study was conducted with qualitative methods based content/document analysis. Interviews were conducted via Skype during the period of 15-10-2015 until 15-09-2016 and questionnaire with six themes was created to be investigated. The research questions were specified in the interview guide, so that the interviewers were informed about the purpose of the research in advance. A questionnaire with six themes was created with the main points to be investigated were: the confidence of Danish consumers in the quality of organic products in public kitchens, the procedures of participation – bottom-up or top-down, the growth rate of POPPs, which problems appeared and how these can be overcome and if this model can be used as an example model to other countries.

Finally the interviews were transcribed verbatim and the thematic analysis was conducted as follows: a sampling material from text corpora was taken, all text components were written down in categories that are extracted from the material systematically and from the questionnaire. Some categories were subdivided further or split up into individual features or values, and some categories were united after. The text passages relevant to the categories



Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



were marked after scrutinizing and the pieces of texts were registered to the categories. The material was then coded with those categories, which were applied a label and were ready for deep interpretation (Marrying, 2014 & Krippendorff, 2010). Then the meaning of the material was reconstructed and this was expressed in the appropriateness of the category definitions, were examined by two researchers and the answers have shown to be in correspondence to the examination questions.

### **Findings.**

The data were analyzed and identification of important themes was carried out. The themes were categorized in first analysis, as in (Table 1) with, A Team of themes (with frequencies up on 4) and B Team of themes (with frequencies until 3). We clarify that frequencies indicate how many times the specific issues appeared in the interviews (texts) and do not in themselves indicate increased importance or not importance. In the next, the same data are characterized as strength or weaknesses in relation to goals of POPPs model. However, some themes attract more consensus than others, according to frequencies. The limit 3 and 4 is used to declare that some themes are up the statistic term 'average' and some themes until 'average' (between 0 and 7 then average is equal to 3.5), because the interviewees are seven.

**Table 1.** Themes and their frequencies of qualitative research.

A. Team of themes (with frequencies up to 4)	
Stakeholder engagement	(7)
Leadership and political support	(7)
Danish “front running”	(6)
Enabling cooking and profession skills.	(6)
Trust in organics	(5)
Capacity building strategies	(5)
Model governance (3 kinds):	
a. Blended Top-down	(3)
b. bottom up	(2)
c. Mixed model	(1)
“Environmentalisation” (goal to 2020)	(5)
Price premiums	(4)
Localism and short chain strategy	(4)
Innovation.	(4)
B. Team of themes (with frequencies until 3)	
Timing	(3)
better food education	(3)
Workers’ implementation	(3)
Middle managers-civil service	(3)
NGO organization	(2)
Ecology.	(2)



Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
 IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



The findings from our qualitative research suggest that themes rated as important by informants were: leadership and political support, multi-stakeholder engagement, Danish “front running” or “the early moverness” of the Danish organic food and farming case, capacity building strategies, consumer trust in organics products (in general in the DK organic regulation) and “Environmentalisation” (Government 2020 goal: all public kitchens to be organic). However, without being indifferent to issues such as education, model governance, price premiums, timing, ecology, innovation and managers' conflicts. These findings are shown in two categories - as enabling factors that tends to force environmental goals into organic public foodscapes kitchens and as disabling factors that tend to hinder the achievement of POPPs goals. In the following we elaborate on the enabling factors are characterized:

Theme	Elaboration
Stakeholders engagement.	The stakeholders engagement, including government, municipalities, NGO's, catering staff, producers, consultants and enterprises and their cooperation helps to maximize effect and decrease the conflicts of interest. All these factors are included in NPG approach.
Leadership and political support.	The implementation of organic food in Denmark is perceived as successful because it is based on continuous political support decisions and funding. These two findings are important in procedure transition, special in fist stage.
Danish “front running”.	The DK model with POPPs has a long record – and thus a sense of “early moverness” to it. It has exerted a substantial influence, in developed world as a successful example, however, its implementation is depended "special circumstances" prevailing in each country.
Enabling cooking and profession skills.	The integration of craftsmanship and learning in public in catering kitchen is seen as a core element in POPPs. New methods of processing organic products reduce waste and costs (e.g. potatoes are only washed), because of using raw material and whole product without wastes.
Trust in organics.	Professionals and citizens trust the SPECIALISED gold, silver, bronze labeling schemes. This is a point where all social actors (NPG approach) agree and work.
Capacity building strategies.	The spread of POPP's builds on an approach valuing information, training, teaching, craftsmanship for leaders, for workers and staff in public kitchen, and for citizens with courses to support the organic transition. Engaging with organic products and producers seems to inspire and motivate people who deal with them.
“Environmentalisation”.	The strategic Government goal of 2020. POPP's have been linked to clear tangible environmental benefits and have been enjoying increased public opinion support. For instance the fact that Copenhagen's underground water is clean and enough soils are healthy.
Localism and short chain strategy.	POPP's is believed to have the potential to go hand in hand with local and regional sourcing strategies and can help local producers (local eggs, vegetables and other products). Also, local products can decrease the fuel using in transportation.
School gardens- better food education.	School gardens are seen as a mean that can help children to have interest in local foods production and to learn how they end up on tables. In addition schools are seen as institutions should teach kids about food and local products.
Workforce development.	The fact that organic transition enables foodservice workers and professionals to participate is perceived as important and innovating procedure with inspiration and transparency should be kept in mind during implementation. This is seen as contributing to maintaining confidence, increase public organic kitchens and helps the organic kitchen in Denmark to be a 'role model' that humans are invited from other countries to visit it. However, some of the kitchens have reached the goal of organic conversion, with a preparation that started ten years before.
NGO organization.	NGOs as non public partners are seen as important in the sense that they can support ideas and practices of sustainable development widely in society and can assist in trying to orient today's society and future generations in friendly environmental lifestyle. NGOs can create strong support green social movements and help in changing people's mindsets about organic produce, with bottom up model participation.
Ecology.	Ecology as a broad concept is seen as a mindset that helps people to have deep consciousness for properties, requirements and characteristic of natural ecosystems, which produce organic products. The state ought to encourage the vocational schools to educate students in ecology and sustainability.



Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
 IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



Mixed model governance (Blended Top-down, bottom up model strategy) (strength/weakness).	Transition projects are more successful, when having top level support, in the first stage, but after a first round the value of bottom up is seen as being increasingly important. So, the government set on the goal and financing, but public kitchens decide. The weak part is, when one of the levels (top or bottom) can obstruct policy implementation.
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Disabling factors identified:

Theme	Elaboration
Price premiums.	Organic costs have failed to be reduced so are bit more expensive (special the meat 50% more), however, offer benefits for public health and environment. Innovation and new technology in production has failed to reduce costs in delivery of Organic products.
Innovation.	The new organic products and techniques are few in comparison with conventional products, because of small budget in R&D. Now there is a new red cabbage, three kinds of wheat that there were not 3 years before. In addition, there are coconut, nuts, split peas, organic rice, beans (packaging size) and dairy. Also, using the new LEAN technique is optimized workflow.
Timing.	There are delays in the supply sources and the same with bureaucracy of budget. POPPs helps to be organized big and standard supply system. It needs more participation and political decision of high managers and of course much more organic public kitchens.
Middle managers-civil service.	Competition and contradictions between middle managers top managers and staff can hinder the achievement of the objectives of the organic kitchens. If the officials are not dedicated to organic kitchens, it might be difficult to turn things around.

The findings points to the advantages offered by the NPG approach to understanding POPPs and suggest a deeper and more general benefit for sociological and political analysis. One of the methods of a content-analytical procedure is to count certain elements in the material and compare them in their frequency with the occurrence of other elements. Stability can be tested by applying the instrument of analysis again to the material (Mayring, 2014). In this case study, an organizational model to understand the emergence of POPPs with many parameters is examined in order to record and imprint advantages and disadvantages of this model. Our examination looks at the recent decade where clear strategic goals of increasing the consumption of organic products in Denmark has been set towards 2020. As such it offers a snapshot of "the performance of the POPP dynamics" during that period.

**Discussion**

The coexistence of the three powers in the NPG when applied in a context of the POPP model unites but also releases new forces to the realization of important policy goals. The theme identified as the Mixed model governance: top down and bottom up shows that multiple forces in society are supporting the idea of a promotion of organic products in Denmark. The study underlines the importance of citizens' confidence in the efforts and in the outcome which aligns well with findings from other research that shows there is a broad citizen support of the POPP idea (Mørk et al 2017). The study suggest that public engagement itself is not enough. Also support from green movements and NGO' that attempts to orient today's society and future strategies in more eco-friendly direction to protect environment and to promote public health to balance markets' practice pushing for speed and efficiency. These achievements are possible because of, 'the centrality of citizens as co-producers of policies and the delivery of services fundamentally distinguishes the New Public Governance approach' (Robinson, 2015).

In the NPG approach the competition and contradictions between middle managers top managers and stuff are suggested to potentially hinder the achievement of the objectives of the



Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
IN AN URBANIZING SOCIETY**

17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



organic public plate policies. In particular in transitional periods where 'the antagonistic principles confront one another and the world is reversed, while battles take place in boundaries between fields, the sites or the causes' (Bourdieu, 1990: 228). Education and workforce development might be is the strong tool to reinforce successful transition.

According to (Bourdieu, 1986:24,26) the scope of the educational system tends to increase, and together with this increase is the unification of the market in social qualifications which gives rights to occupy rare positions.

According to (Larsen, 2011), difficult problems require strategic leadership within the domain of NPG to decide which value conflicts need resolution and how they are best resolved and sort out which conflicts are worthy of organizational energy to resolve and now the Bordieu' concept of 'Theory of practice- habitus' appears to explain the behaviour of agents in field. However, one new reality is formed in organic public kitchens according to findings in paper: workers people participate in a new life style and should implement this innovating procedure with inspiration and transparency; POPP's has the potential to go hand in hand with local and regional sourcing strategies; waste reduction issues using the slogan "work smarter not harder"; trust in organics that use the sign-labels; These results are due to decisive leadership and political support on continuous political decisions and funding, but habitus is the mediating link between social structure (macro) and individual action (micro) (Gjalt de Graaf, 2007).

### **Conclusions.**

The NPG approach in our view is useful in order to understand to the coordination of state services, voluntary sector and market forces that needs to take place in successful implementation of organic public plate policies due to its underlining of the centrality of citizens as co-producers of policies and the delivery of services. This we find fundamentally distinguishes the New Public Governance approach from other approaches. The core elements of the apparent success of POPPS' are political decision for supporting and financing from government, the innovative methods of training and teaching applied among key stakeholders and the special focus on personnel in at the street level of service delivery - the public kitchens. Key elements of the training and workforce development we conclude are its emphasis craftsmanship and inspiration about organic food. We find that Bourdieu' theory serves well as a theoretical foundation for the NPG approach and that social space, capital, habitus, and practice theory gives appropriate fuel for our analysis.

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Third International Conference  
**AGRICULTURE AND FOOD  
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17 - 21 SEPTEMBER 2018 | PORTO ALEGRE | BRAZIL



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