

Organic consumption: a form of hybrid communication.

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Background

- Healthy growth project:
 - How do mid-scale food value chains handle quality and quantity in a growth process?
- Economic relations are embedded in social relations →
- Organic products are distinguished from non-organic through an added value
- (an implicit critique of the argument that values must result in a connected behavior, in a similarity between value and behavior)

Motives for organic consumption

- Health: organic products are more healthy than non-organic
- Ethical consumption: govern of consumption – govern of the self (consumption is governed by social relations such as campaigns)
- Animal welfare
- → something is observed as good as opposite to a bad → a paradox

The re-entry of economy and moral

- Consumption is economic communication that involves allocating resources by the medium of money following the economic code of pay/not pay
- Moral communication is also present in the form of the code good/bad
- Temporally it cannot be observed which of the two codes are the main code. All that can be observed is that an operation of buying a product is performed.
- The exact motive will remain unknown
- Since a buy is made of an organic product the operation can be understood as a re-entry of the moral code into the economic code → another distinction than buy/not buy

Hybridity

- Hybrids are the morphogenetical products of paradoxical economic communication. They are the result of interplay between different logics of action. The paradox stems from the contradiction between economic action and on the other side technological, scientific and political action (Teubner 1996: 60)
- Hybrids are at the same time *both and not one*
- Hence it cannot be determined if organic goods are allocated due to moral or economic concerns

Forms of hybridity

- Health and ecology
- Aesthetics and food
- Fair trade: politics/moral and economy
- Actualization of different functional codes through the hybridity → double coding
- It cannot be determined which code 'steers' which code, both codes appear as if they were one
- All forms mark something as good opposed to something marked as bad

The possibilities of organic consumption

- The paradox of organic consumption: the re-entry of the moral code into the economic codes allows operations to be both and not economically coded at the same time
- The productive paradox: we can now act morally and fulfil simple bodily needs in one operation
- Double coding: doubling of the possible motives
- → more possibilities that can be actualized
- Organic communication allows for new distinctions → new relations can be facilitated

The function of moral in organic communication

- Moral coded communication good/bad with the purpose of creating esteem that allows for relations to be formed
- Esteem as a basic necessity in forming relations

Limitations

- The re-entry of moral into economics generates new complexity in the form of more possibilities
- New modes of selection are required: how to select
- Selection requires knowledge → more complexity, what is the 'right' organic?
- New possibilities for exclusion from morally approved communication in the form of price (defensive localism)

Conclusion

- Values, being economic or moral, are relational
- Organic consumption is a moral coded form of communication allowing esteem to be achieved
- The esteem from others provides recognition and facilitates social inclusion by establishing a foundation for recognition
- Organic communication as a way of reducing complexity by allowing different codes to be actualized in one operation