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Animating Domain-specific Complex Knowledge

An Analysis of Organic Food Communication

Abstract

The pivotal point of this paper is an analysis and a discussion of the animated film "MultiTrust". The film is a result a research project dealing with the "Multicriteria assessment and communication of effects of organic food systems". A primary intention of this project was to help consumers make informed choices when it comes to purchasing organic foods. The animation presents a novel way of communicating domain-specific knowledge of organic food products to consumers. In order to analyze "MultiTrust", a model of analysis is presented, which is framed by the research field communication and language for special purposes and – due to the filmic format – informed by social semiotics and multimodal analysis. The findings of the analysis are documented at the level of presentation, orientation and organization. The paper ends with a discussion of the potential of the animated film as a means to communicate domain-specific knowledge of organic foods to a lay audience.

1 Introduction and Research Agenda

Research into consumers' decision-making when it comes to buying organic food shows that one of the primary reasons why consumers do not buy more organic foods is lack of information (e.g., Zanoli/Naspetti 2002; Duffy/Fearne/Healing 2005; Barnes/Vergunst/Topp 2009; Bodini/Richter/Felder 2009). Demeritt (2002) even goes as far as to report that lack of knowledge and awareness is the main reason, when consumers do not buy organic food.[1] Due to the mundane yet highly consequential fact that, in the industrialized part of the world, "producers and consumers no longer know each other" (Bellows et al. 2008) food communication is, quite simply, inescapable (Bodini/Richter/Felder 2009). Congenially, Zanoli and Naspetti express the need "to devise a better communication strategy" (2002), with a view to "informing consumers about the extra quality inherent in organic food" (Duffy/Fearne/Healing 2005); and, generally speaking, there is, in the relevant body of research, a call for 'better' organic communication (e.g., Conner/Christy 2004).[2] And it is exactly this call for 'better' ways in which to

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[1] Naturally, there are other barriers; according to Bellows et al. (2008) they include but are not limited to "price, store location, food quality or availability, information, trust" etc. These, as well as potential additional, barriers are beyond the scope of this paper.

[2] As I have dealt with the issues of what may constitute good organic communication elsewhere (see Kastberg 2014 *forthcoming*), I will refrain from entering into that discussion at this point.

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communicate domain-specific knowledge of organic foods to lay people, which constitutes one of the cornerstones of the research project on the "Multicriteria assessment and communication of effects of organic food systems" (MultiTrust 2012). The research project was conducted under the auspices of ICROFS (ICROFS: undated).[3] A primary intention of this multifaceted research project was to "make it easier for consumers […] to observe and evaluate the different contributions that organic food systems offer", with a special emphasis "to promote communication, participation and learning" about organic foods (ICROFS: undated). One tangible result of this endeavor was an animated film aiming at presenting a novel way of communicating about the quality attributes of organic foods. Whereas the film as such does not present a tool ready to be employed in the service of consumer communication, it does envision a communication platform which we may utilize when aiming specifically at engaging and involving consumers. A way which – ideally – allows consumers to build up decision-making competences as well as – in the process of doing so – to construct domain-specific knowledge.

Research Agenda

With a point of departure in the above presentation, the research agenda of this paper can be summarized as follows: To present and to analyze the animated film "MultiTrust" (2013) with a view to critically evaluating its potential in meeting the requirements for 'better' organic food communications (as called for above). In order to do so, I will begin by situating my approach, disciplinarily within the general framework of language for special purposes (henceforth LSP) and more specifically I will adopt an LSP approach to expert lay communication of domain-specific knowledge (section 2). I will then proceed to describe how visual components of expert-lay communication are typically dealt with, i.e., as static and text-bound visuals (section 3). Due to the fact that the empirical object of study of this paper is an animated film, I am compelled to enrich this framework; I do so by turning to a presentation of a model of analysis informed by social semiotics and multimodality. The paper goes on to present an analysis of the animated film "MultiTrust" (section 4) and ends with a critical discussion and evaluation of the communicative potential of the animated film as a means "to promote communication, participation and learning" (ICROFS: undated) about organic foods (section 5).

2 Communicating Domain-specific Knowledge of Organic Food Products to Lay Audiences

The customary way in which authorities have sought to inform publics about the added-value, e.g., the nutritious quality, of organic foods is via wide-spread labeling initiatives. On a national level examples could be the German "Bio-Siegel" or the "USDA Organic"

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label in the U.S.; on a supranational level a prominent example is the "EU Ecolabel for Consumers".[4] Whereas labeling is a cost-effective means of food communication, the problem is, naturally, that any labeling is rendered futile if the consumer does not understand it. A study by Janssen and Hamm (2012) highlighted this when they demonstrated that the mere fact that the new mandatory European Union logo for organic food was introduced on an EU-wide scale did not in and of itself ensure that the logo was understood, let alone trusted by the consumers. As Conner and Christy point out "consumer misunderstanding of the [organic] label's meaning points to a need for better communication if the label is to function optimally" (2004: 42). From the point of view of communication theory it is safe to say that the mere fact that an eco label (in fact any label) is propagated does not ensure understanding, let alone trust (Lockie et al. 2002: 29). If we look at the media most widely used for such large-scale organic, mass communication campaigns "the majority of organisations [rely] on free media coverage to communicate their campaign messages as it provides the opportunity to reach millions of people at minimal cost" (Duffy/Fearne/Healing 2005: 23). And whereas this is certainly cost effective, the question of evaluating whether or not the intended message did in fact reach (and was subsequently understood by) its recipients "is primarily based on the amount of media coverage generated" (Duffy/Fearne/Healing 2005: 24). There is, however, no algorithm for understanding which dictates that what is sent out is also what is received – let alone heard, understood and adhered to. So, if we look at organic food communication as a communication problem, i.e., a problem stemming from the lack of or from the wrong kind of communication (Windahl/Signitzer/Olson 2009)[5] then, in communication theoretical terms, we may say that whereas the transmission of a label may be necessary, it is by no means sufficient – at least not if understanding (of said label) is what is aimed at. The communication problem, then, is not one of transmitting information; thanks to a wide variety of new and increasingly social media information can be made universally and instantaneously public at the click of a mouse button. It is rather the case that there is, quite simply, "a lack of knowledge about certification and labeling" (Padel/Foster 2005: 623). Not surprisingly, studies consistently show that consumers do not ask for more information per se, but for information which will allow them "to choose with more freedom and knowledge" (Zanoli/Simona 2002: 652). That is:

> certification and labeling is a starting point […] but most of all [consumers] desire to understand and to be aware of how organic production and processing is indeed different from the conventional one, and how organic products can be distinguished.
>
> (Zanoli/Simona 2002: 652)

In sum, we are not dealing with a lack of information in general (the information is 'out there'), neither is it a matter of merely filling knowledge gaps with regards to organic

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4   In addition to national, state-authorized labeling initiatives, a number of commercial eco labels also exist.

5   And not, say, as a social problem, a financial problem, a political problem etc.

foods among laypeople (Hansen et al. 2003). Reacting to this Bodini, Richter and Felder propose to widen the notion of organic communication when they maintain that:

> [a]ppropriate [organic] communication should be based first and foremost on informing consumers about the extra quality inherent in organic food. Second it should focus on the product's key quality attributes, and third, it should use producers as multipliers or well-informed salespeople as a source of authentic quality communication.
>
> (Bodini/Richter/Felder 2009: 374)

In accordance with this notion the theoretical vanguard of organic communications[6] suggests an appreciation of communication which leaves behind the idea of (mere) transmission of content altogether. We are, consequently, challenged with the task of communicating information about organic foods in a qualitatively different way, namely in such a way as to allow the consumer to create his or her own knowledge based on what s/he perceives,[7] i.e., knowledge of the kind that allows for informed decision-making with regards to organic foods (Yiridoe/Bonti-Ankomah/Martin 2005: 196).

Acknowledging (a) that transmission of content does not suffice "to promote communication, participation and learning" about organic foods implies that what is called for is knowledge-enabling communication. Acknowledging (b) that "[p]roducers and consumers [of food products] now no longer know each other" makes the establishment of a common ground of sorts a prerequisite in order "to overcome possible alienation and exclusion" (all quotations Bellows et al. 2008: 23-24). Based on the double assumption that whereas not all consumers may know an organic farmer, but that all consumers (mutatis mutandis) own a laptop with Internet access, the MultiTrust project has envisioned an Internet-based platform aiming at promoting "communication, participation and learning" about organic foods. The gist of the platform is presented in the Danish-language color animation film "MultiTrust" (2013). In the following I will first present the theoretical background behind choosing an animation format for communicating domain-specific knowledge (section 3). I will then proceed to present and analyze the animation in question (section 4), and towards the end of this paper I will critically discuss the animation and its potential to serve as a knowledge-enabling device (section 5).

3   On Animated Organic Foods Communication

When thinking about animations, an intuitive reaction could be to dismiss them as mere children's pastime; and whereas there certainly is a potent industry dedicated to the production and promotion of animated children films, it is by no means the whole picture. Animated films have found their way into many aspects of what we normally refer to as communication and language for special purpose (e.g., Kalverkämper 1996). If we take science education, for instance, the Danish "Animated Science"

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6   As well as that of communication theory in general.
7   I have dealt with the core issues of communicating knowledge extensively elsewhere, see e.g., Kastberg (2007, 2010, 2011).

project is a good example. Here we find numerous examples of animated film clips dealing with – and mediating – such topics as biology, chemistry, geography and physics (Animated Science: undated). It is, however, not only in the more formally institutionalized educational settings that we find animated films communicating domain-specific content. In business and industry, too, examples of animations with a technical content are legio. Take for instance the animated assembly manuals from the Indian "Sintech Precision Products Ltd." Here – among other examples – we find an animated version of its assembly manual for installing centrifugal pumps (Sintech Precision Products Ltd.: undated). From within the field of marketing communications we know that there are quite a lot of animated sci-tech ads, i.e., advertisements in which the selling point comes about by alluding to science, typically in the form of an engineering breakthrough, and presented as animation. One example out of a myriad of others is "Pride Auto Care" in the U.S. which uses animated films to demonstrate to its customers how, for instance, the ABS brake system works (Pride Auto Care: undated). This particular animation is even enriched by interactional features allowing the viewer/listener to manipulate content. But while the examples of animated science, technology and engineering are both numerous and stemming from virtually all areas of the scientific landscape, there is a clear tendency that animated films are predominantly used in one specific communicative constellation, i.e., when domain-specific knowledge is communicated from an expert or authority to a lay person. That is also the case when it comes to the empirical object of study of this paper, i.e., the animated film "MultiTrust" (see section 4). In this animated film experts on organic food products convey to a lay audience of consumers "the extra quality inherent in organic food" (Bodini/Richter/Felder 2009: 374). The ur-point of departure, as it were, being that an "information gap exists between the […] agri-food industry and consumers" (Duffy/ Fearne/Healing 2005: 17). Within the research field dealing with organic foods communication the communication problem is summed up in these words:

> Overall, although there is some knowledge and awareness about organic products, consumers are not consistent in their interpretation of what is organic. Secondly, while consumers typically understand the broad issues about organic foods, many tend not to understand the complexities and niceties of organic farming practices and organic food quality attributes. Uncertainty regarding the true attributes or organic, and scepticism about organic labels […] may hold some consumers back from purchasing organic.
>
> (Yiridoe/Bonti-Ankomah/Martin 2005: 193)

Translated into the vocabulary of an LSP approach, we may say that the field features an expert lay divide, that is characterized by a lack of domain-specific background knowledge on the part of the lay person, which, in turn, results in the lay person building up a skeptical outlook on the domain-specific knowledge in question – as well as what experts may derive from it. All of which firmly embeds the communication problem in question within an LSP research agenda.

From Visual to Animations: From Traditional Semiotics to Social Semiotics

Within the field of LSP, visualization has been studied for quite some time (e.g., Schröder 1993). Within this framework, visuals have typically been contrasted to language with a view to analyzing which mode of representation would be best suited to convey a certain message. More often than not the point of departure has been Barthes (1977) and his idea that a visual would always be dependent on a verbal text – in essence due to the visual being too "polysemous". The most elaborate and theoretically in-depth account of the interplay of verbal and visual means with which to communicate domain-specific content is Kalverkämper's article (1993) on the domain-specific visual[8] in which an exhaustive model of interpretation and analysis is presented. Within LSP-oriented studies of visuals, the insight that each mode of representation has its strengths and weaknesses (Kalverkämper 1993: 219; Ballstaedt 1994: 38) is commonly accepted; an insight which, in turn, has spurred several productive avenues of research. A dominant – and maybe more applied – strand of research contrasts verbal and visual means, with a view to gauging their communicative potential, was initiated by Ballstaedt (1994, 1995) and Weidenmann (1998). The ideas were operationalized further by Molitor-Lübbert (1996) within an LSP setting. Different though these approaches may be, they do, on the one hand, adhere to the legacy of Barthes (1977), i.e., verbal and visual means of communication are contrasted and compared, but, on the other hand, they do also expand on the original idea in as much as they propose a sort of functional grammar of what mode is best at conveying what content (e.g., visuals are better at communicating spatial orientation, whereas verbal means are better at conveying abstract objects etc.). At a more abstract level the above insight also spurred an understanding that visuals lack the meta-communicative quality of language, i.e., that visuals cannot describe and explain themselves (Gombrich 1984: 142); and that visuals cannot replace language as a means of communication (Plümacher 1998: 53), i.e., that the different modes were not interchangeable at will. The analytical model presented in Ditlevsen et al. (2007) does, in many ways, form the capstone of this approach. In its capacity as capstone, however, the model of analysis presented in Ditlevsen et al. (2007) also highlights that the object of study is (still) the traditional, the static text-bound visual. That is: the research community has – as a general rule – so far not ventured into the realm of analyzing the dynamic or animated visual. In order to so do, I turn to social semiotics and multimodality, i.e., a field of study that is able to not only theoretically encompass animations, but also able to address analytically the integration of more modalities than the two addressed so far. Needless to say, it lies beyond the scope of this paper to trace, describe and discuss the myriad of relations between what we may refer to as a traditional semiotic reading of the relationships between language and visuals[9] and the one presented by social

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[8] In the original German: "das fachliche Bild".

[9] I refer to this appreciation of semiotic as traditional in as much as it may be traced back to the seminal work of de Saussure (1916/1974); no (other) evaluation is implied.

semiotics.[10] I will therefore merely point to core formative differences. As may be inferred from the above, in much LSP research on visuals the (linguistic) text is prior, in social semiotics, by contrast, the social is prior, i.e., the social setting in which any mode of representation is embedded. Turning to social semiotics the scope when it comes to semiotics is widened in this sense:

> in contrast to traditional semiotics […], social semiotics does not focus on 'signs', but on socially meaningful and entire processes ('texts'). The sign is an analytical category; the text by contrast is a social category. (Iedema 2001: 187)

Turning to social semiotics and multimodal analysis also implies acknowledging a wide variety of other modalities than (merely) text and visual. Such as, but not limited to, "gesture, depiction, gaze" (Baldry/Thibault 2006: 18), rhythm and music (Leeuwen 1999 et passim) etc. etc. Consequently, analyzing multiple modalities has given rise to the idea of the "resource integration principle" (Baldry/Thibault 2006: 4), i.e., a principle that allows for analytically encompassing "this constant criss-crossing of semiotic and perceptual modalities" (Baldry/Thibault 2006: 3). The idea of the text, as a result, is no longer limited to its more strict linguistic definition: "[m]ultimodal texts are *composite* products of the combined effects of all the resources used to create and interpret them" (Baldry/Thibault 2006: 18).[11] This, in sum, leads to the following analytical credo: that I am informed by communication and language for special purposes when it comes to the framing of my research agenda; that I am informed by social semiotics when it comes to leaving the (linguistic) text as the explanatory principle par excellence; and that I am informed by multimodality when it comes to acknowledging and integrating the multiple modalities present in the animated film. I will apply this credo and present it in lieu of the analyses in the next section.

4   Analyzing the MultiTrust Animation Film

Prior to conducting the analysis of the animation, a brief introduction to the envisioned platform, its stakeholders as well as the project's idea of multicriteria assessments of organic foods are in order. The platform envisioned rests on two general assumptions: Firstly that each stakeholder (e.g., Freeman 1984) in the 'from farm to fork' value chain (in crude generalization: farmer, processor, seller, consumer) harbors different criteria for determining what good organic food is. What the consumer of, say, organic meat, sees as good organic practice may to the farmer be too expensive to adhere to, in the processing plant too time-consuming, to the seller logistically too demanding etc. Acknowledging the differences in the basis of decision-making of each stakeholder translates to the first dimension of multicriteria assessment. The second general assumption reads that each stakeholder makes decisions (be it with regards to fodder, store display, purchase etc.) based upon not one but multiple criteria. For the

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[10]   The term was introduced in-depth by Hodge and Kress (1988); Thibault would later (1997) discuss its relationship to traditional semiotics (see previous footnote).

[11]   Italics in the original.

consumer of organic meat, for instance, one criterion may be that the animal has been feeding on organic fodder, another that the animal has been treated better than stipulated by current law, a third that the transportation of the animal from farm to processing plant has been humane etc. In the ensuing analysis I will (a) focus my attention on the consumer and (b) on the platform's communicative potential and, in turn, leave out all other aspects.[12]

The color animation film analyzed was produced in 2013 by the award-wining Danish production company and animation studio Tumblehead Aps. The animated story lasts 3 minutes and 3 seconds; apart from the animation itself, the film features a male narrator throughout as well as soft guitar playing in the background. Adhering to social semiotics in general and the multimodal analysis of the animation in particular, the ensuing analysis is framed by a model of analysis presented by Iedema (2001). In his model, all texts, i.e., all instances of meaning-making endeavors, always perform "three overarching functions, or *metafunctions* […] 'representation', 'orientation' and 'organization'"[13] (Iedema 2001: 191).[14] The gist of the model can be illustrated like this:

Metafunctions
Representation
i.e., that a semiotic system is capable of representing "objects and their relations in a world outside of the representational system".
Orientation
i.e., the ability of a semiotic system to "project a particular social relation between the producer, the viewer and the object represented."
Organization
i.e., the ability of the semiotic system to "form texts, complexes of signs which cohere both internally and with the context in and for which they were produced."

Fig. 1: Metafunctions as a model of analysis (all quotations Kress/Leeuwen 1996/2003: 40-41).

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[12] I have dealt with other aspects of the envisioned platform elsewhere, e.g., its stakeholders, its conceptualization of multicriterial assessment etc. (Kastberg 2014 *forthcoming*).

[13] Italics in the original.

[14] Needless to say, Iedema (2001) derives his model of analysis from core principles of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (1994 passim), but since the genealogy of the model is not my primary concern here, I refrain from entering into any such discussions. It is probably also worth mentioning at this point that the idea behind this, i.e., that one may refine and crystalize the constitutive elements of any piece of communication, is not exclusive to systemic functional linguistics. A wide variety of other scholars from of what we may refer for to as applied linguistics – in the widest possible meaning of the term – have ventured to propose similar ideas. Bühler's "organon model" (1934/1999), Jakobson's six functions of language (1960), Beaugrande and Dressler's criteria of textuality (1981) are also attempts at capturing the essence, if you will, of language use.
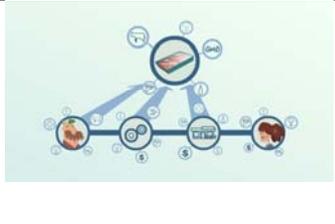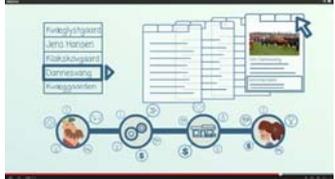
Below I will present and discuss the "MultiTrust" animation film following the three levels in this model of analysis. Each phase is given a condensed, individual transcription. The results of the analyses are subsequently integrated and critically discussed in section 5.

Level of Representation

In terms of analyzing the level of representation, the animation is segmented into phases (Baldry 2005), i.e., semi-autonomous, semantically coherent parts (Baldry/ Thibault 2006: 47). In the table below, the content of each of the 14 phases found has been assigned a single picture frame depicting the overall content of the phase in question.

Phasal analysis		
Phases	Animation of phases	Description of phases
Phase 1	Multikriterielle vurderinger i Økologien	The film begins by introducing the research project from which the animation stems.[15]
Phase 2		The film begins by depicting a consumer, who is puzzled by the many quality criteria she is faced with when wishing to purchase organic food products.
Phase 3		The film jumps to a farmer, who is, too, overwhelmed by the number and diversity of criteria of organic food production.
Phase 4		The film now introduces the Danish eco label, and explains how the authorities, recognizing this confusion, seek to remedy it by way of placing a national eco label on all organic products.
Phase 5		The problem is, however, that the national Danish eco label cannot help out either since it, too, covers a variety of different criteria – and products.

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[15]   The Danish title translates to "Multicriteria assessment of organic foods".

Phase 6		Returning to the organic farmer, he, too, is puzzled by the eco label, and left to his own device may opt – out of his own accord – to focus on some criteria while neglecting others.
Phase 7		But farmer and consumer are not the only stakeholders directly involved with organic food products; the processing plants as well as the point of sale of organic foods are equally involved – and may, in turn, focus on entirely different assessment criteria.
Phase 8		A fact which leaves both farmer and consumer even more confused as to how to assess the quality of organic foods.
Phase 9		The film now changes from describing the problems to hinting at a solution. It does so by posing a question: So, what if there was an ICT platform where the consumer could find all the information she needs?
Phase 10		A platform where the consumer could type in her preferences when it comes to assessment criteria.
Phase 11		The film expands on this idea and poses yet another question: What if the ICT platform was not only a platform for the consumer but a platform for all stakeholders involved (farmers, processors, sellers and consumers alike)?
Phase 12		On such a platform the consumer's criteria could be reciprocated by, say, the farmer's documentation.

Phase 13		In this way the consumer would have access to multiple criteria for organic foods; this would allow her to conduct a multi-criteria assessment of the quality of organic food products.
Phase 14		The film ends by listing the sponsors as well as the creators of the animation are listed.

Fig. 2: Visual rendering of phases at the level of presentation.

Level of Orientation

The protagonist, either the consumer or the farmer, are always shown from the front. At the beginning of each phase (cf. above) the protagonist is typically shown in a full body shot in the protagonist's natural habitat, as it were. The farmer on what is clearly a piece of farmland; the consumer in what amounts to a supermarket. As the narrator speaks the camera zooms in on the protagonist, ending the phase with either a half-body shot or even a portray shot. The consumer is always shown looking slightly to the left, the farmer always looking slightly to the right. A feature which allows the two protagonists to look a one another during the two phases where they meet in the animation (phases 8 and 12). There is no doubt that the narrator's voice is the element around which the animation evolves. When the narrator problematizes multicriteria assessments – be it from the viewpoint of the consumer or the farmer – the camera zooms in on the protagonist in question and speech or thought bubbles appear around the protagonist's head. Bubbles in which the core concepts of the narrator's speak are depicted. Following the narrator's voice, the bubbles inflate and deflate. In terms of animation-internal orientation the protagonists meet when they have something in common; that is when they are equally frustrated about the problems of multicriteria assessments (phases 7 and 8), and when they are both taking part in the solution (phases 11 and 12). Other than that we see them individually. In terms animation-external orientation towards the viewer, we see that the protagonists are clearly cartoon-like figures and clearly display gender and cultural stereotypicality. Whereas the cartoon-like and featureless depiction may be aiming at evoking an idea of universality, the fact that the consumer is a woman shopping (sometimes holding a toddler by the hand) and the farmer is a man, dressed in what seems to be a hillbilly farmer's attire, is alluding to gender and cultural biases of yesteryear. Apart from the introduction and the outro (phases 1 and 14) one or both of the protagonists are present in all the phases but two, i.e., the phases 4 and 5, where the Danish eco label is introduced. The label is depicted center stage and filling app. one third of screen. When the ICT platform is introduced (phases 11 and 12) the platform takes up most of

the space available and the protagonists are shown integrated into it – leaving no doubt as to their role.

Level of Organization

The level of organization elicits the underlying rhetorical structure of the animation;[16] as we saw in the above phasal analyzes we are dealing with a narrative structure. According to Brémond, the starting point of any narrative action is perceived to be a state of deficiency which, in the course of the narration, is remedied through a procedure of improvement; the result of which is a satisfactory state (1970: 251). In the sense that this dramatic pattern not only has a clear direction of movement, i.e. from a *from-state* to a *to-state*, but indeed that it is also aimed at improving a state (perceived to be worthy of improvement) it reveals itself as being instrumental in nature. Something which is in accordance with the credo of social semiotics, i.e., that language use/communication is inherently functional (e.g., Kress/Leeuwen 1996/2003). With this as a point of departure we can turn to the narrative analysis of the animation. Over the centuries, the Aristotelian dramatic structure of narrative action (*mythos*) – summarized into such overall stages of exposition, complication and resolution – has been para- and periphrased many times. In his *Die Technik des Dramas*, Freytag (1863/1969) offers a description of the dramatic relationship between these diegetic stages, which is traditionally illustrated graphically in this way:
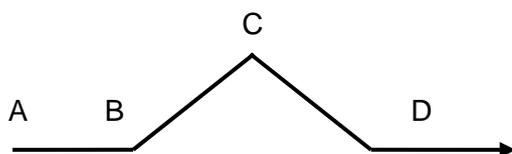
Fig. 3: Freytag's illustration of the dramatic genre pattern (Freytag 1863/1969: 102).

A concise account for the relationship between these stages has been put forward by Barth: "*AB* represents the exposition, *B* the introduction of conflict, *BC* the 'rising action', complication or development of the conflict, *C* the climax, or turn of the action. *CD* the denouement, or resolution of the conflict" (Barth 1968: 99). Given that the animation is directed at consumers, and given that the driving force of any narrative is conflict (Russell 2009: 30), it is no surprise that the resolution in the above animation emerges as a result of a conflict involving and evolving around the character of the consumer. The compelling nature of the above dramatic structure owes one of its most potent didactic elements to the fact that it inherently instills in the audience a "narrative desire" (Brooks: 1984), i.e., a desire for resolution, for meaning, for closure, as it were. Brémond puts it this way: "[the narrator's] fantasy has no imposed limits, except the obligation […] to resolve the problems and release the tensions created by the narra- tive" (1970: 251). Let us take a closer look at how this is unfolded in the animation. As

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[16] This analytical level is – within multimodal analysis – often referred to the "metafunctional interpretation of phases" (e.g., Baldry/Thibault 2006).

we saw in the phasal analysis, the two main characters seem to be at loss as how to conduct multicriteria assessment of the quality of organic food products, in narrative terms the phases 2 and 3 correspond with A-B. This bewilderment is initially thought to be remedied by the introduction of the national eco label (phase 4), but – alas – due to the fact that the eco label in question is not geared for multicriteria assessment it is not able to resolve the rising conflict. In fact the opposite is true, for turning to an eco label which bears all the hallmarks of a certified national authority and finding out that it cannot live up to the expectations only escalates the rising conflict (phase 5). When, subsequently, the complexity of the processing plant and the point of sale is added (as depicted in the phases 6-7), we are faced with 'rising action' (cf. B-C above). The conflict proper is depicted in phase 8, in which – as a result of the previous introduction of conflict and 'rising action' – both the consumer and farmer are portrayed as being at a total loss. The denouement or resolution to the conflict sets in in phase 9 where the consumer is placed in front of a laptop computer where she is using the envisioned ICT platform to help her out. In the phases 10 to 12 the attributes of the platform are sketched out, and in phase 13 the consumer – thanks to the platform – is now able to conduct a multicriteria assessment of the quality of organic food products prior to purchase.

5   Critical Discussion and Evaluation of Results

As we have seen, much large-scale organic communication of domain-specific organic knowledge has been conducted as mass communication of an organic label (section 1). The animated "MultiTrust" film has ventured to propose a new approach to communicating about organic foods, in which the "focus [is] more on the […] questions on how to increase involvement and reduce uncertainty in relation to organic food consumption" (Aertsens et al. 2009: 1158). With the animated film as my empirical point of departure I introduced a transition from a more traditional, a more text-bound semiotic reading of visuals to a social semiotic reading allowing for analyzing dynamic, animated films (section 3). The animated "MultiTrust" film was subsequently analyzed; and three levels of analytical observations were presented (section 4). In this fifth and final section of my paper, I will sum up and critically evaluate key findings from the analyses. This section ends by applying these key findings to the theoretical insights concerning the communicative potential of the animated film as a means "to promote communication, participation and learning" about organic foods.

At the level of representation, the animation primarily identifies with the consumer and the difficulties the consumer is facing when wishing to make an informed choice as to the purchase of organic food products. The consumer is left to her own devices – neither the point of sale nor the (Danish) eco label is adequate when it comes to assisting in making informed choices. Due to the fact we (whatever else we may be) are all *also* consumers, it is of course no coincidence that the consumer takes center stage at the level of representation. Kincaid delivers the argument:

> Drama has more effect on an audience than many other forms of communication because it tells an engaging story, it involves the audience emotionally, and it depicts changes in characters with whom the audience identifies. (Kincaid 2002: 150)

The viewer is invited to identify with the consumer when she goes through a development from bewildered or puzzled to enlightened (I will take that point up again below). At this level it is also implied that consumers really want to invest time and effort in learning how to make these informed choices about purchasing organic foods. In a perfect world that may be the case, but food – be it organically or traditionally produced – is "a low involvement commodity in developed countries" and "most consumers when buying (organic) food will apply an automated rather than reasoned cognitive process" (both quotations Aertsens et al. 2009: 1157-1158). So the question poses itself whether a platform like the one envisioned will be able to bridge the above-mentioned information gap between expert and lay. For in order for such a platform to become a success, it will demand from the consumer (as well as all other stakeholders involved) an extra effort – both in terms of effort and time. And congenial to the general call by consumers for independent or third party validation of organic products (Padel/ Foster 2005: 621) we might expect that the same standards would be called for in terms of validating the content on the ICT platform. In terms of the feasibility of such validation requests, a platform like the one envisioned might, however, benefit from piggybacking on the widespread and increasing popularity of sharing content – and evaluations – on social media, in turn leaving validation to Groundswell (Li/Bernoff 2011) or Wikipedia-style mechanisms. Needless to say, this would also imply a loss of control over content – a fact which commercial stakeholders may not welcome let alone accept.

At the level of orientation, the animation – again – continuously focusses on the consumer. That said, at the level of orientation the consumer is also positioned in the proximity of the farmer on crucial occasions. The consumer and the farmer begin by inhabiting each their own corner of the screen. They gravitate towards each other on two occasions: when they are depicted as equally puzzled and when they are both inserted into to ICT platform. At these two crucial points in the animated film, we see them inhabiting the same screen; what, orientation-wise, however, really constitutes a meeting point between farmer and consumer is the consumer's use of a laptop computer in a phase between the two encounters. The raison d'être being that even if both parties would harbor a wish to (physically) get to know one another, the logistics alone would be insurmountable. A joint website, hence the laptop, would be the obvious choice for establishing a (virtual) common ground. At the level of extra-animation orientation, the laptop, too, becomes a fix point for identification – not all consumers may know an organic farmer, but all consumers (mutatis mutandis) own a laptop with Internet access.

At the level of organization the animated film reveals itself to be narrative as well as argumentative in nature. The story is structured linearly around what resembles the unwrapping of an enlightenment process. I.e., *from* realizing that the quality of

information currently available does not suffice to make the informed decision wished for, *via* the improvement thanks to the (envisioned) ICT platform, *to* reaching the state where the qualitatively enriched information allows for informed choosing. As we saw above, according to Brémond the narrative desire must be adhered to, i.e., the animation is obliged "[…] to resolve the problems and release the tensions created by the narrative" (1970: 251). The *to-state* of the animation, however is not necessarily one of "releasing tension", in the sense of cleansing (or *catharsis*), as Aristotle would probably have put it, but rather that of enlightenment (*anagnorisis*), which Aristotle himself saw as the product of going from a state of not-knowing to a state of knowing. This further implies that the *from-state* of the narrative pattern of the animation, its "state of deficiency" in Brémond's sense, is a state of not-knowing and that its procedure of improvement is a mediational procedure aiming at a *to-state* of having obtained (some sort of) knowledge about – in this case – how to conduct a multicriteria assessment of the quality of organic food products. There is little doubt that the underlying idea of scaffolding, of incremental learning has been chosen – and with good reason – due to the fact that it reproduces – albeit at a local level – the prevailing rational epistemology of educational systems in the entire industrialized world. So successful is this epistemology that it not only permeates, it in fact also structures learning in said part of the world. In that capacity the level of organization rests on a very firm foundation indeed. It may, however, for the very same reason also be seen as condescending or patronizing, or – put in simpler terms – as pedagogical overkill.

In the course of this paper it has been shown, among other things, that the issue of promoting "communication, participation and learning" about organic foods is even less straightforward than it may have seemed initially. For if we take seriously that the consumer not only needs to be exposed to, say, a new EU logo but that communication means "to make clear what the new logo stands for and remove unfounded consumer concerns" (Janssen/Hamm 2012), then we also need to take seriously that gauging the deposit of whatever communicative endeavor we may perform, is critical to our success. Consequently, if an ensuing post-communicative performance, e.g., decision-making by the consumer, is a criterion for gauging our communicative success, then transmission cannot stand alone. For whereas all sorts of content may be relatively easily transmittable at the click of a mouse button, reception, understanding and any ensuing operationalizing based on this understanding is not. While there is little doubt that the organic communication of the kind envisioned in the animated "MultiTrust" film mirrors the Zeitgeist of late or postmodern societies inclined to favor deliberative and participatory public engagement (e.g., Putnam 2004), it is also quite demanding. Demanding in terms of the ever-present troika time/money/manpower. Whereas we may quite effortlessly transmit the EU eco label, understanding what the label stands for, what it means is infinitively less straightforward. Taking current communication theory (e.g., Littlejohn/Foss 2011) as well as the dominating constructivist learning theory paradigm seriously (e.g., Glasersfeld 1995 passim), any enlightenment process is both a unique and a local one, bound in time and place; and as such not easily communicable.

As mentioned above turning to Groundswell or Wikipedia-style mechanisms, hosting blogs etc. etc. may in many ways be in tune with the Zeitgeist, but by thus emancipating, if you will, the organic consumer one makes it difficult – if not impossible – to control organic communication. And not all stakeholders in the above platform will be able or willing to let go of control of content. In late modern, western societies there is no way around emancipating and empowering the consumer – and neither should there be. But however empowered and emancipated a consumer may turn out to be, this in and of itself is no guaranty that s/he is willing or able to participate in the communicative effort in the first place. For apart from a sprouting denialism (Diethelm/ MacKee 2009), a growing decision fatigue among citizens of industrialized societies, and – last but not least – information overload there is also the consumer's "relative transaction costs for becoming informed" to take into consideration (Caswell/Mojduszka 1996: 1248). All said, in appreciating that any model of communication is also a model *for* communication (Carey 1989) it is maintained that, theoretically, communication seen and performed as participative holds promising qualities with regards to helping the lay person to understand and to assess the "complexities and niceties of organic farming practices and organic food quality attributes" (Yiridoe/Bonti-Ankomah/Martin 2005:193) – more so than does organic communication seen and performed as transmission or interaction. Needless to say, large-scale empirical studies of organic communication formats and the learning outcomes they spur in consumers are necessary in order to explore real-life practice of organic consumers and add nuances to the analyses presented in this paper.

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