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## **CoopsForFood: Creating socially inclusive food provision schemes through food hubs – the example of Graz**

Market-based alternative food provision schemes (AFPS) such as farmers' markets, farmers' shops, box-schemes and on-farm selling as well as community-based alternative food provision schemes such as food-coops, CSAs, community gardens and community owned grocery stores, have found their niches in our case study area in the city of Graz, Austria. These schemes have been attributed to have some potential to transform the food system.

However, now, some years after they have been established in their markets, empirical data can be collected in order to investigate whether they can actually redeem their ascribed potential. Looking at the socio-economic and cultural background of members resp. consumers of AFPS's in Graz, one can see that they lack of social inclusiveness. Barriers for the participation of consumers of different social classes – such as different aspects of time and location, literacy, awareness, attractiveness, identity – are barely reflected by the actors of these AFPS. Likewise, the issue of social exclusion and food justice in the context of AFPS's has not been given a full account within academic literature so far (Fourat et al., 2020).

Within the project 'CoopsForFood'<sup>1</sup>, which is implemented in cooperation with two community centres located in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Graz, barriers for inclusive participation in AFPS are addressed. Within a participatory process we are conceptualising food hubs for three areas in Graz, which do not only aim at diversity in engaged consumers, but also at supporting ecological-sustainable and fairly paid small-scale farming and effective logistics. In terms of organisational structure, we are exploring the pros and cons of the creation of a multi-stakeholder cooperative ('Genossenschaft'). While at the ODT-Forum 2021 some conceptual thoughts on this project have been presented, this year we would like to focus on the needs from the perspective of consumers living in low-income neighbourhoods (incl. lower educational level and high rates of people with migrant background). Based on references to similar AFPS's in other cities, such as the 'Lebensmittelpunkte' in Berlin, we will draw our focus on the constitution of food hubs of different kind and with different features beyond being a food allocation point in our target neighbourhoods in Graz.

### **Bibliographic references**

Fourat, E., Closson, C., Holzemer, L., & Hudon, M. (2020). Social inclusion in an alternative food network: Values, practices and tensions. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 76, 49-57.

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