

FOOD RESCUE IN ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS

using the example of the B2C marketplace *Too Good To Go*: A Contribution to the Dialogue between Practice Theory and Diverse Economies

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INTRODUCTION

All over the world there are 690 million people who are suffering hunger. At the same time, about one third of the food produced worldwide is thrown away every year. In Germany alone, around eleven million tonnes of food waste were generated in 2020. Therefore, we aim to study the problematic of surplus food which has so far been largely sidepassed in alternative food geographies. Rather than investigating non-profit orientated projects or community-based initiatives, we decided to focus on the commercial enterprise *Too Good To Go* (TGTG) which presents itself as the world's largest B2C marketplace for surplus food.

Question:

Which practices of surplus food distribution and food waste reduction are initiated by *Too Good To Go*, and how (far) can they contribute to a social-ecological change of the food system?

Aims:

- 1) Linking the Diverse Economies and Practice Theory perspectives to explore the often underrepresented transformation-oriented practices of everyday life (Schmid & Smith 2021)
- 2) Investigating the contribution of *Too Good To Go* as a commercial start-up to the creation of a more sustainable approach to food

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Diverse Economies

Engagement with the performative emergence of future (non-capitalistic) worlds by using 'alterity' as a fluid concept to investigate alternative economies and spaces.

Practice Theory

Practices are understood as embedded in wider structures and performed by individual actors to explore the constitution of everyday social realities and possible transformations.

(Gibson-Graham 2008; Schmid & Smith 2021; Reckwitz 2003)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TGTG changes and reconfigures operational processes regarding food waste in various ways which we investigated by focusing on *practices-as-entities* and *practices-as-performances*. The former can be understood as sets of interconnected practice elements, whereas the latter are situated enactments of a practice highlighting how future grows from the present (Shove et al. 2012; Schmid & Smith 2021).

PRACTICES-AS-ENTITIES

- Materials and infrastructures
 - Actors of practices
 - The application
 - Food (products)
 - Unsold food for the magic bags
- Competences
 - Know-how
 - Routines
- Meanings
 - Motivation
 - Feelings
 - Awareness

PRACTICES-AS-PERFORMANCES

- Breaking routines
 - Change of everyday processes and establishment of alternative practices
- Being in common
 - Involvement in "communities of practice" creates group dynamic and increased self-efficacy
- Evoking transformative potential
 - Establishment of alternative markets and operational structures
 - Perception of the own reach
- Negotiating alterity
 - Motivation: personal affair of the heart vs. moneymaking and canvassing
 - Criticism of TGTG as supposed social impact company due to its capitalistic orientated approach

"I am happy to notice that we now throw away significantly less food in our company."

"I'd rather get organic sausages from a local farmer than the measly two euros TGTG pays for each bag. I am on the verge of dropping out."

"Of course the bags should look nice and tasty because we want to attract new customers. In contrast to before, I get four euros per bag and have at the same time free marketing for my business."

"Nobody gives a shit about sustainability!"

The heterogeneity of the involved actors creates practices of inspiring and negotiating diverse economies which could contribute to a change of the food system.

CONCLUSION

It is quite unsure if TGTG can arouse an overall transformation of our food system and – as they claim – build up a global movement against food waste, as long as they see their economic growth as the principal of addressing surplus food. However, with respect to the everyday practices of food rescue TGTG did initiate important changes in participating enterprises and households.



TO GOOD TO GO INTRODUCTION

- Over 17.000 partner businesses and around 9 million users in Germany
- Offering an application to sell still enjoyable but no longer saleable food
- Customers order so-called magic bags from restaurants or food supply stores via the app

We understand TGTG as ...

- ... commercial start-up company
- ... application for selling/buying surplus food
- ... set of alternative practices to deal with food waste
- ... network of the main company, partner businesses, and app users

TGTG speaks of a „win-win-win situation“ as ...

- ... users receive food at favourable prices
- ... businesses generate income for surpluses
- ... it contributes to environmental protection

METHODS

Aim:

Following the actors and their performance, adaption and transformation of practices in partner businesses of TGTG and experiencing the practices through own involvement

- document analysis (website, social media)
- 16 qualitative (Go-along) interviews
- 7 participant observations & ethnographic fieldwork



Figure 1: Sites of the visited and/or interviewed TGTG partner businesses

REFERENCES

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