**Prerequisits for successful regional cooperation**

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As for all other parts of this platform, the following applies here in particular: we do not claim to establish scientifically sound or universally valid rules, but only want to provide suggestions. Please, don't let them discourage you from taking the initiative, even if the conditions don't seem optimal. Because certainly just as, or even more, important for success is the social skill, ability and commitment of the people on site.

Clear Intent

If you look at the larger cooperatives Landwege in Lübeck, VG Dresden, Odin in Holland and Oikopolis in Luxembourg, which were founded about 35 years ago and are still developing very dynamically today, you can see that they have a very clear profile: preferring to market regional organic foods in partnership with producers and consumers with a high degree of transparency in the region. To be able to be a full supplier, the range of regional suppliers was supplemented by supra-regional suppliers. Partnership with the regional food trade was also important. The projects were also designed from the outset to be of a certain size in order to enable a wide range of products to be offered. Developing a clear profile right from the start, as these pioneering projects did, is of great importance.

Size and "identity space" of a region

 In the above-mentioned projects, a relatively clearly delineated area that also represents an identification space for the inhabitants probably had a favorable effect. This is most evident in the case of Oikopolis in Luxembourg (approx. 600,000 inhabitants) as a separate state. Odin is now active in almost all of the Netherlands, but started in the Amsterdam/Utrecht metropolitan area. And the Netherlands, with an area between the size of Baden-Württemberg and Lower Saxony, is still a manageable size in which they can manage quite easily. And as a smaller country, it offers a lot of "we-feeling."

Dresden has about 550,000 inhabitants, Lübeck 216,000, so both cities, together with their surrounding areas, had and have a certain size and a lot of potential for a regional cooperation project with a clear identification area.

The newly launched cooperative "Xäls eG" in Baden-Württemberg has 700,000 inhabitants in its region "Neckar-Alb" and as a region also offers a certain identification space, but it does not have such a clear center as the two previous city projects. Instead, with Reutlingen, Tübingen and Balingen, it has several potentially competing cities, which could be challenging. And it challenges us to work especially hard on the opportunities that arise when the entire region works together.

In the case of Tagwerk eG, the regional demarcation is somewhat less well defined; the core region is defined as 50 km around Erding, and on the edge of this area is the large city of Munich, which to my knowledge has always been important for sales. For the people of Munich, this area might seem rather theoretical, because there are no "natural" borders or a clear identity space. It would possibly make sense and be conclusive here to add Munich with its surrounding area to the core region (i.e., the oval 50 km around Munich and Erding, for example).

Existing structures on which to build

Connected with the above-mentioned point about the size of the region is a diverse range of products from farms and artisanal food processors.

It may make it more difficult to build regional cooperatives in the future if organic bakers and butchers disappear from the region because organic bakery factories offer these products more cheaply. Or the other way around: it is necessary to become active as soon as possible in order to preserve or even increase the number of food artisans and versatile organic farms.

Favorable time for new cooperatives

 his point is also worth considering, because it is noticeable that for a long time quite little happened after the first "founding wave" in the years after Chernobyl. While at that time the focus was on building a broader supply of organic food (because there wasn't much yet) this issue is less relevant now. Today's impetus ties more to the issues of regional partnership cooperation and the preservation of regionally oriented diverse organic farms, food artisans and traders. Stronger consumer involvement, with the resulting possible strengthening of nutrition education and transparent pricing, is also a theme that has greatly increased in importance (see the rapidly expanding Solawi movement). The topic of regional partnerships thus ties back very much to the original cooperative impulse to create something together that an individual or a single entrepreneur cannot achieve alone.

Because this seems to fit well, several cooperatives are currently being established as value chain partnerships (e.g. www.xäls.de, the Fairbio cooperative, the Füllhorn cooperative in Karlsruhe, etc).

The time seems ripe for more regional cooperatives (e.g. as cooperative projects).