

## Publication

## Empowering People - Democratising the Food System? Exploring the Democratic Potential of Food-Related Empowerment Forms

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The current food system, characterised by considerable concentrations of economic and political power, is widely regarded as undemocratic and in many respects unsustainable in its outcomes. To address the democratic deficits in the food system, empowerment has become a central claim and point of reference for actors seeking to transform the system. In fact, numerous venues and practices have emerged in recent years to develop people's capacities to engage with food issues. These range from local food initiatives and health-food movements to food policy councils and government education policies. This article takes a closer look at the theory and practice of democratic empowerment in the food system. It explores whether and how different forms of food-related empowerment have the potential to improve the democratic quality of the food system. Based on a broad analytical understanding of empowerment that is combined with a notion of power-based complex democracy, it is argued that different forms of food-related empowerment promote the development of different types of power, which in turn are constitutive for different functions of the democratic process. From this perspective, the challenge of democratising the food system lies in linking different complementary empowerment practices into functioning configurations of complex democratic governance.

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