

Seeds of Solidarity: Growing Resilience Through Sustainable Food Networks

Behaviour in Crisis Lab 2026 Annual Conference | Solidarity as a Social Response to an Era of Crisis

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THE CHALLENGE

Urban communities face climate instability economic uncertainty, and instability. Grassroots food initiatives act as a source of solidarity, where people share resources, learn, and support each other.

THE BIG QUESTION

How do sustainable food networks in Krakow build solidarity and resilience in times of crisis?

OUR RESEARCH

This poster draws on in-depth interviews conducted in 2024-2025 with representatives of 10 selected initiatives, as part of a broader comparative study involving stakeholder Living Labs and interventions.

Food cooperative
Farmers' market
Urban farm
Two community gardens
Food bank & social kitchen
Zero-waste retail
Municipal greenspace authority

The data were analyzed using framework analysis, combining deductive scaling categories with inductive themes emerging from the material.

SURFIT – Scaling Urban Regenerative Food Systems in Transition – examines short food supply chains and sustainability-oriented urban food transitions across selected European contexts, including Krakow, Maastricht, Malmö, and Trento.



Scaling out - Spreading practices horizontally across people, places, and initiatives.

Scaling deep - Changing values, habits, skills, and everyday practices.

Scaling up - Increasing reach, visibility, and operational capacity.

Scaling through - Embedding initiatives in institutions, partnerships, and governance arrangements.

We use these scaling types to examine how local food initiatives grow, adapt, and become embedded across social, spatial, and institutional contexts.

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

1. Solidarity is everyday and embodied (gardening, volunteering, food sharing)
2. Food networks build social cohesion
3. Resilience depends on infrastructure (spaces, kitchens, logistics)
4. Institutional support is uneven (regulatory misfit, resource precarity)

WHY FOOD NETWORKS MATTER

Solidarity grows when people connect, share, and care. Strong food networks create stronger, more resilient communities.

What Makes Solidarity Work? Catalysts and Constraints Across Scaling Pathways

	Catalysts / Enablers	Constraints / Limits
Scaling out	Network connectivity and peer diffusion: exchange with similar initiatives; informal learning across the city. Public visibility and outreach: events, open days, workshops. Low-threshold participation formats: easy entry for new participants.	Volunteer capacity limits and burnout risk. Time scarcity for outreach and coordination. Space constraints: insufficient sites for replication or expansion. Organizational fragility: dependence on a few highly active individuals.
Scaling deep	Learning infrastructures: education, workshops, everyday practice-based learning. Stable access to space: gardens and farms as sustained learning sites. Participatory governance: member engagement and shared responsibility. Dignity-oriented social practices: inclusive routines shaping norms.	Emotional and care burden, especially in care and aid settings. Time intensity of education and participation. Limits of small teams: staffing constraints and reliance on informal labor. Tensions between inclusivity and organizational sustainability.
Scaling up	Public visibility and audience expansion: events, outreach, increased participation. Material infrastructures enabling operational expansion: facilities, storage, transport, equipment.	Limited financial and organizational capacity. Administrative burden and procedural slowdown. Regulatory environments favoring large-scale actors. Fragility of infrastructure-dependent operations.
Scaling through	Institutionalized partnerships and coordination infrastructures: cross-sector cooperation, working groups, mediated access to public resources. Access to public land or premises. Institutional recognition and governance access: consultations, invitations to policy processes. Brokerage across departments and sectors.	Regulatory misfit: rules designed for large actors. Professionalization tensions: stability versus grassroots autonomy and values. Financial precarity of infrastructure-dependent operations. Dependence on volunteer labor for routine operation.

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Sustainable food networks in Krakow contribute to crisis response not only by providing food or promoting sustainability, but by building everyday infrastructures of solidarity: shared spaces, food redistribution, collective decision-making, education, trust-based networks, and institutional brokerage.

Yet their transformative potential remains uneven. Many initiatives face financial precarity, dependence on volunteer labour, limited access to space, regulatory barriers, and selective institutional recognition. Solidarity in urban food systems is therefore both practical and political: it is produced through everyday cooperation, but its durability depends on infrastructure, legitimacy, and institutional support.