

# *The Great Transformation from below? From ascriptions to self-conceptions within Viennese sharing, repairing, housing, and food initiatives*

## **Socioeconomic Research Seminar**

**Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2020, 16:00 – 18:00**

**Online on MS-Teams**

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**Chair:** Margaret Haderer, IGN, WU Vienna

**Presenters:** Karoline Kalke & Michael Deflorian, IGN, WU Vienna

**Discussant:** Viviana Asara, Institute for Multilevel Governance & Development, WU Vienna

Civil-society driven, sustainability initiatives that focus on sharing, repairing, eco-housing, local food production and distribution are commonly presented as promising drivers of a shift towards more sustainable nature-society relations. They are portrayed as promising “grassroots innovation movements” (Smith et al.); as “pioneers of change” (Schneidewind); as flourishing grounds for “new social imaginaries” (Asara et al.); as “concrete utopias” (Muraca); as “seeds of a Good Anthropocene” (Bennett et al.); as “new politics of sustainable materialism” (Schlosberg and Craven) and as “journey towards community resilience” (Hopkins). In this presentation, which builds on and synthesizes the findings of three different research projects conducted by research teams at the IGN, we take a step back from currently prominent framings of these initiatives and a step towards a reconstruction of *self-conceptions* on the ground. Bracketing debates on whether these initiatives are socio-ecologically transformative (Schlosberg, Asara) or whether they might in fact also have a stabilizing effect (Blühdorn), the research presented is driven by the more general question of why do “people do what they do” in given initiatives. We show that, at least in the Viennese context, the self-understandings on the ground differ considerably from the meaning and functions ascribed to them in politics, activism, and some strands of the sustainability and politics literature.

The presentation will be followed by an open discussion to which all students are encouraged to contribute.