

NEXA AWARD 2025

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Käse Syndikat



NEXA | Next Generation Sustainability Award HGK Basel 2025 (Bewerbung / Application max. 6 pages)

Projektbeschreibung / Project Description

How can commoning practices bridge rural and urban realities while fostering shared responsibility between them?

This question underpins *Käse Syndikat*, an artistic and practical exploration of community-led economies inspired by the farming traditions of Guttannen, a Swiss Alpine village.

At its core, the project emerges from our participation in communal labor after leasing a cow, Winja, from a farmer in Guttannen. In exchange for our contribution, we receive 150kg of alp cheese each year. While this presents the practical challenge of distributing such a large quantity, it also offers the opportunity to explore a community led approach for the distribution of cheese. By developing a platform for the cheese's distribution, based on the principles of commoning—collaboration, shared responsibility, and co-creation—we aim to foster cross regional engagement as well as collective agency in the supply chain of a product that spans across urban and rural places. The cheese becomes a shared resource that structures social relations, fostering engagement and participation across its entire lifecycle – from its acquisition in the Alps, through transportation and storage, to its distribution.

Käse Syndikat asks: How can we sustain shared resources, not as commodities, but as catalysts for relational world-building?

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Bilder und weiteres Material / Images and Further Materials

Accompanying this initiative is our ethnographic documentary, *How to Lease a Cow*, which offers insight into Guttannen's 500-year-old farming traditions and the socio-economic transformations brought by the hydropower industry. The film highlights the resilience of communal labor, even as modern infrastructure disrupts traditional ways of life. It serves as an entry point to reflect on rural-urban dynamics, trust-building, and the challenges of sustaining commons today.



Bilder und weiteres Material / Images and Further Materials



Presented as a cheese stand, the project *Käse Syndikat* serves as a platform for cultural and social exchange. Using the medium of cheese, we invite to imagine future possibilities that emerge from the dialogue between rural and urban spaces. Joining the cheese syndicat serves as a platform for participants to reflect on their own agency and explore the potential for building a network of exchange.

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This publication arranges themes as interconnected rather than following a chronological sequence, reflecting the complexity of life in Guttannen. Observations and stories shared by the community are presented in a way that helps readers draw connections between them. The work includes photography, interview excerpts, and written contributions. Our ethnographic journey highlights the invisible borders between rural communities and urban populations, as well as the challenges of overcoming it.

