Hello everyone and welcome to this week's episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet. Yesterday I attended an information meeting about joining the recent cooperative supermarket in Paris: La Louve.

The idea behind food coops is to reverse current supermarket trends and here, the food coop buys food for its members, instead of selling it to them. In this case, the supermarket is managed by coop members, a handful of them as full-time employees, and the vast majority as volunteers who work a few hours a month. This allows the coop to sell high quality products at a much lower price. In regular supermarkets, products are sold with varying rates of margins, depending on the marketing strategy. In food coops, margin rates are usually fixed to around 20%, meaning that some products are about the same price as in regular supermarkets, but others can be up to 80% cheaper.

The most famous cooperative supermarket today is the Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn, New-York. The project was initiated in 1973 and is one of the oldest and largest, active food coops in the world. Today it has 17,000 members for the over 1,000-square metre store.

At the Park Slope Food Coop, there are so many members to run the coop that the extra manpower has allowed for extra services around the store. For example: there are on-site childcare services for workers and shoppers. There is also a regular newspaper, a recycling initiative, an environmental committee, and so on.

Today, in Paris, La Louve food coop has over 4,500 members and expects to reach a saturation point at 10,000 to 12,000. In order to join the coop, you must attend an obligatory information meeting, buy one or ten shares, which cost 10 or 100 euros, and subscribe to a 3-hour work shift that will take place every four weeks.

Beyond the fact that the food coop allows access to quality food at lower prices, the monthly work shifts, decision-making during the general assemblies and extra services are strong social bond initiators. Watching interviews during a documentary about the Park Slope Food Coop, those short and long-term social bonds seemed to be an important part of the coop experience for members.

There are about 20 similar projects in France and neighbouring countries, most of them are still in the preparation phase and haven’t yet launched. Investors are closely following La Louve’s opening in order to release funds for future projects.
There is still a lot of room for new members at La Louve so go check out their website and subscribe for an information session! And if you’re not a Parisian, look for SuperCoop in Bordeaux, SuperQuinquin in Lille, Scopéli in Nantes, Beescoop in Brussels, and many other great projects.

Bye everyone, I’m off for my first cooperative shopping experience! See you next week for a new episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet.