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Dissertation Project – Dipl.-Soz. Jana Türk

Sustainability and Socio-ecological Change — a Grounded Theory Study in Rural Alpine Villages (working title)

Rural alpine villages currently experience several entangled dynamics of socio-ecological change: socio-economic change, demographic change, ecological changes related to climate change (the Alps are considered as especially vulnerable regarding its consequences) and developments in the course of the energy transition.

The dissertation project at hand examines two alpine villages in Bavaria, Germany and South Tyrol, Italy by means of a qualitative study design. The core question of the analysis is how change is being perceived and described, which patterns of cooperation and conflict can be encountered and which role these patterns are playing for the communal coping with socio-ecological change. I reconstruct processes of collective, thus joint actions which are related to the development of the communities. The analysis of these local development processes follows the principles of the grounded theory methodology and aims at clarifying which actors or groups of actors are influential, which values and aspects they resort to locally (e.g. sustainability, common welfare, or completely different ones) and how they manage to initiate change – or how they fail to do so.

The aim of my study is to carve out conflicts and solution methods that come along with transformation(s) towards sustainability. The systematic comparison of two communities in different nation states and with different historic and socio-cultural backgrounds shall help to achieve this. These patterns of conflict and cooperation may help to better understand collective forms of accomplishing local and regional development in rural alpine villages in general.

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