

WANTED

„Sonderforschungsbereich“

Socio-ecological Diversity, as basis for sustainable development. An interdisciplinary and comparative study by the University of Freiburg to understand the status, role and potential of socio-ecological diversity in a constantly changing world.



YOU !
Health Studies

**Socio-
Ecological
Diversity**

**Development
Pathways**

Prof. A. Mehler,
Arnold-Bergstraesser-
Institut*

**Functions of
Biodiversity**

*Prof. J. Bauhus
Silviculture*

Land Uses

*Prof. D. Schmidt-
Vogt
Geography*

**Tolerating
Ambiguity**

*Prof. B. Spielberg
Pastoral Theology*

**Hegemonic
Forces**

*Prof S. Destradi
Political Sciences*

**Role of
Technology**

Tbd
Sustainability
Centre Freiburg*

**Societal
Practices**

*Prof. N. Degele
Sociology*

**Income and
Equity**

*Prof. B.
Neumärker
Economy*

**Ethnic
Diversity**

*Dr. P. Schröder,
Ethnology*

**Language
Diversity**

*Prof. U. Reinöhl,
Linguistics*

More details on next page...

Interested? Talk to us!

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Gesucht werden Beiträge aus den ‚Health Studies‘ zu unten benannter Initiative.

The role of socio-ecological diversity for sustainable development: a global comparative study

Vorschlag für einen DFG Sonderforschungsbereich als Initiative des Potenzialfeldes Comparative Area Studies

Initiatoren: Prof. Dr. Benno Pokorny, Prof. Dr. Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt, Dr. Sabine Reinecke

It is commonly agreed that biodiversity is an essential planetary boundary component that guarantees the basis for human living on earth. This view implies the existence of mutual linkages between social and natural environments. Some authors even go as far as declaring any distinction between natural and social domains is artificial, and, accordingly, recommend comprehensive conceptualizations such as *socionatures* or *socio-ecological systems*. In such systems, diversity is a characteristic not only of the natural domain in the sense of biodiversity, but of other domains as well, e.g. agro-diversity, institutional diversity etc. Particularly, the huge range of traditional cultures, societies and natural resource management schemes developed over many generations represents a high degree of socio-ecological diversity. There is a widely shared, though largely untested, belief that social-ecological diversity is conducive to or even a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Nowadays, the world is experiencing forceful global processes which blur diversity and replace it with more homogeneous and largely standardized production, economic and social systems. While this dynamic has long been understood as necessary to comply with the demands of a growing population for food and wealth, there is strong evidence that it has provoked environmental degradation and social marginalization all over the world. In view of these negative developments and in the light of frequent and serious political, economic, climate and health crises, the importance of socio-ecological diversity and its possible potential to mitigate or even avoid the negative consequences of prevailing development dynamics is increasingly recognized. In response, in both economically less and more developed countries, new initiatives are emerging which builds on the idea of a development grounded in the local social and environmental specificities.

However, while expectations of socio-ecological diversity have been well conceptualized, there is lack of empirical evidence for its actual potential and its limitations. Even the status quo of socio-ecological diversity and the acting forces remain rather unclear despite some well elaborated studies about thematically and geographically specific facets. To better understand the role and potential of socio-ecological diversity to achieve a more sustainable development, we propose the setting up of a DFG-Sonderforschungsbereich that systematically explores socio-ecological diversity from three perspectives: Descriptive (what is the situation?), Functional (what is the role?), and Intentional (what should be done?). These three perspectives will be elaborated in WPs that represent specific relevant features, such as for example: land use practices, markets, religion, language, music, interventions, policies, gender, societies, etc. Each WP will explore data in selected case study regions in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas that will serve for comparative analysis at a disciplinary and interdisciplinary level.

To gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of socio-ecological diversity as basis to draw relevant conclusions for academic and practical purposes, interdisciplinary comparative research is needed. We also see the potential of the proposed topic to actively engage in this initiative a large number of relevant faculties, chairs and researchers with their specific expertise and interests. Thereby, the proposed DFG-Sonderforschungsbereich could be a unique option to operationalize, strengthen and institutionalize the Potenzialfeld “Comparative Area Studies” as one of the future areas of excellence at the University of Freiburg.