

Themen für Bachelor- und Masterarbeiten

Unit Wirtschaftsgeographie

FS 2024 (Stand: 12. Februar 2024)

Diese Liste wird regelmässig aktualisiert und auf der [Webseite](#) der Unit veröffentlicht.

Immer wieder werden auch Themen mit externen Partnern (z.B. Stadt Thun, RW Oberwallis, Kramgass Leist, Regio Frauenfeld, etc.) ausgeschrieben. Diese werden auf der Webseite ausgeschrieben.

Themen und Fragestellungen für die BA- oder MA-Arbeit können auch gerne durch die Studierenden selbst entwickelt werden.

Die folgende Liste beinhaltet mögliche Themen/Fragestellungen und sie gibt Auskunft über die Literatur und es sind die Betreuenden aufgelistet.

Alle Themen können auf Deutsch und Englisch betreut werden.

Forschungsschwerpunkte:

Hubs in peripheral regions (SNF Project)

Women entrepreneurs (SNF Project)

Transformative enterprises

Agricultural transformation and diverse economies of food

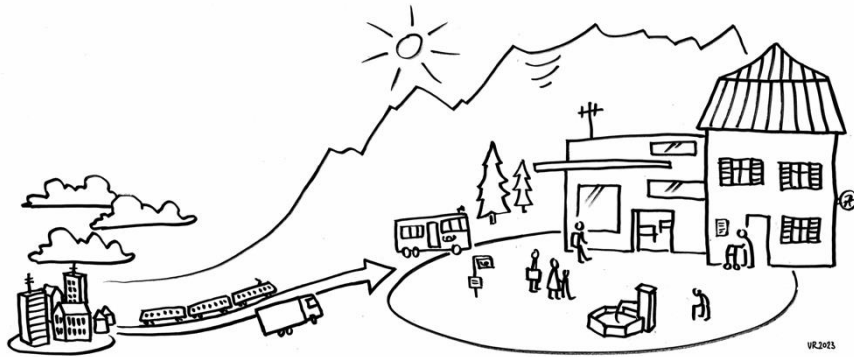
Local cultural and creative economies

Social innovation and the regional economy

Innovation in peripheral regions

Urban manufacturing and the sensory city

Urban economies and small towns



Picture: Valentin Rüegg 2023



Picture: Ellena Brandner 2023

Hubs in peripheral regions (SNF Project)

Peripheral areas give rise to hubs designed to facilitate connections among individuals, locations, and organizations. These hubs cater to various needs in rural areas, encompassing activities such as healthcare, technology, and environmental initiatives. Consequently, both physical and non-physical infrastructures emerge to consolidate local resources and communities, serving as a central hub for exchange (Bosworth & Saleminck 2021). This phenomenon is well researched in European rural areas but to date it is unclear how these hubs renegotiate peripheries.

The goal is to identify and to analyze a specific hub through the perspective of the core-periphery paradigm and network thinking. Currently, the various forms and construction of these hubs in peripheral regions remain unclear. Emphasis is placed on identifying non-visible hubs that perform hub functions without being explicitly labeled as such.

The overarching objective is to explore the mechanisms through which these hubs generate centrality and examine their effects on peripheral regions across various levels of observation. The research primarily centers on Switzerland, with a specific emphasis on mountainous and peripheral areas. Students are encouraged to propose alternative case studies as well as innovative research designs and methodologies.

Supervisor: Ellena Brandner

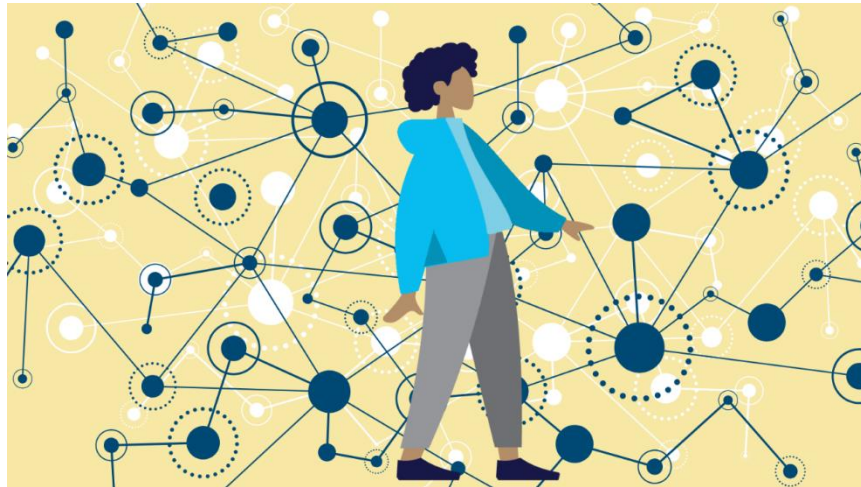
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Topics in this area

- Definition of hubs: What different forms of hubs exist, how do these differ, and which functions do they fulfill?
- Hubs as connector of urban and rural areas (e.g., digital hubs, food hubs, mobility hubs): How do they shape urban-rural linkages?
- Practices and hubs: Which practices result from the development of these hubs and how do they change over time (e.g., work-related)?
- Land-use conflicts: The negotiation of the right to space and power relationships (e.g., resources, second home ownership)
- Centrality within peripheries: How do hubs renegotiate peripheries and what socio-economic implications result? What forms of centrality do develop?
- The “invisible hub”: Which hubs already exist in peripheral regions and how do they act? Which networks do exist?
- Actors (Outsiders vs. Insiders in Hubs): Which actors are involved in hubs, what functions do they fulfill and which power-relationships exist? Who is responsible for the development of hubs? Are hubs inclusive places?
- Hubs from the perspective of different scales: On which levels do hubs act and which implications do they have?
- Networks: Which networks do develop through the emergence of hubs?

A Glance Into The Literature

- BOSWORTH, G., & SALEMINK, K. 2021. All hubs and no spokes? Exploring the potential of hubs to sustain rural and regional development. *Local Economy*, 36(7-8), 543-550.
- CEDERING, M., & WIHLBORG, E. 2020. Village schools as a hub in the community-A time-geographical analysis of the closing of two rural schools in southern Sweden. *Journal of rural studies*, 80, 606-617.
- EDER, J. 2019. Innovation in the periphery: A critical survey and research agenda. *International Regional Science Review*, 42(2), 119-146.
- GLÜCKLER, J., SHEARMUR, R., & MARTINUS, K. 2023. Liability or opportunity? Reconceptualizing the periphery and its role in innovation. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 23(1), 231-249.
- MERRELL, I., PHILLIPSON, J., GORTON, M., & COWIE, P. 2022. Enterprise hubs as a mechanism for local economic development in rural areas. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 93, 81-91.
- PUGH, R., & DUBOIS, A. 2021. Peripheries within economic geography: Four “problems” and the road ahead of us. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 87, 267-275.
- RUNDEL, C., & SALEMINK, K. 2021. Hubs, hopes and high stakes for a relatively disadvantaged low tech place. *Local economy*, 36(7-8), 650-668.



Picture: Co.Starters

Women entrepreneurs (SNF Project)

Today's turbulent times are characterized by multiple crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, armed conflict, or migration crises, all impacting the economy. These crises have a direct and severe impact on small business and entrepreneurs (Stephens et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship is a key dynamic in modern economies (Audretsch et al., 2006) and increasingly entrepreneurial ecosystems are understood as essential modes of spatial organizing (Spigel, 2020). However, there is a clear gender bias in entrepreneurship as there are significantly fewer women entrepreneurs in most countries (Levent et al., 2003; Stephens et al., 2021). Yet, if almost half of the population is disadvantaged or excluded from such ecosystems, we risk losing innovative potential.

With this project we seek to examine the ways in which women entrepreneurs in Switzerland and in Colombia have been affected by and have been able to recover from crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent economic distortions associated with the war in Ukraine and natural catastrophes. We want to analyze how intersectional identities such as family status, migration experience, race and ethnicity, or age and economic marginalization influence the entrepreneurial experience for women entrepreneurs, particularly regarding crises situations. We are also going to focus on the different coping and recovery mechanism women entrepreneurs developed during and after crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic and how they lead to innovation in business models.

Supervisor: Micaela Lois

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Topics in this area

- Integration vs fragmentation: to what extent are women integrated or disintegrated in local entrepreneurial ecosystems and how does that affect their entrepreneurial projects?
- Women and entrepreneurial ecosystems: What kind of strategies do women put in place to navigate and be successful in local entrepreneurial ecosystems?
- What are the influences of the entrepreneurial ecosystem's institutions, culture, and policies on women's entrepreneurship?
- Intersectional perspective on entrepreneurial ecosystems: How do intersectional identities such as family status, migration experience, race and ethnicity, or age and economic marginalization influence the entrepreneurial experience for women entrepreneurs, particularly regarding crises situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic? How does this compare to male entrepreneurs?
- Do entrepreneurial ecosystems reproduce gendered, spatial and/or other segregation patterns in entrepreneurship?
- Crises and entrepreneurial ecosystems: how do large scale crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic affect entrepreneurial ecosystems? And how do they affect women entrepreneurs?
- In what ways did the entrepreneurial ecosystems support or hinder female and male entrepreneurs during and after crisis?

A Glance Into The Literature

- AUDRETSCH, D. B., KEILBACH, M. C., & LEHMANN, E. E. 2006. *Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth*. Oxford University Press.
- BRUSH, C., EDELMAN, L. F., MANOLOVA, T., & WELTER, F. 2019. A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 393–408.
- LEVENT, T. B., MASUREL, E., & NIJKAMP, P. 2003. Diversity in entrepreneurship: Ethnic and female roles in urban economic life. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 30(11), 1131–1161.
- MANOLOVA, T. S., BRUSH, C. G., EDELMAN, L. F., & ELAM, A. 2020. Pivoting to stay the course: How women entrepreneurs take advantage of opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 38(6), 481–491.
- OZKAZANC-PAN, B., & CLARK MUNTEAN, Su. 2021. Intersectional Analysis: Gender, Race, and Immigrant Status in Entrepreneurial Ecosystems. In *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: A Gender Perspective* (pp. 184–218). Cambridge University Press.
- SPIGEL, B. 2020. *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Theory, Practice and Futures*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- STAM, E., & SPIGEL, B. 2018. Entrepreneurial ecosystems. In R. BLACKBURN, D. de CLERCQ, & H. HEINONEN (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Small Business and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 407–422). Sage.
- STEPHENS, S., CUNNINGHAM, I., & KABIR, Y. 2021. Female entrepreneurs in a time of crisis: Evidence from Ireland. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 13(2), 106–120.



Pictures: Miriam Hug

Transformative enterprises

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often overlooked as drivers of transformative change, and even more so if they are located in peripheries. *Transformative SMEs* that act as socio-ecological pioneers striving for fundamental changes towards sustainability can, however, play a key role in tackling grand challenges such as climate change, aging societies or out-migration.

This research project explores transformative SMEs in the wood-processing sector – an important pillar of peripheral economies – where grand challenges manifest as pest infestations, lack of skilled workforce, pressures to digitize production or slumps in demand because of economic crises. It investigates the practices and strategies of transformative SMEs in the Canton of Bern (CH) and the Vorarlberg region (AUT) and asks in what ways they could contribute to new industrial path development in peripheries. Hence the question about the role of transformative SMEs in regional economic development is also addressed.

Supervisor: Miriam Hug

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Topics in this area

- Alternative Wirtschaftspraktiken und nachhaltigkeitsorientierte Unternehmen (in Peripherien; Fallstudien)
- Alternative Wirtschaftspraktiken (in Peripherien) und deren Potenziale zur Förderung neuer (zukunftsweisender) Wirtschaftszweige.
- Treiber und Inhibitoren transformativer Praktiken (individuell, politisch, institutionell, kulturell)
- Unternehmen, die sich für eine sozial-ökologische Transformation einsetzen (Überschneidung mit dem Projekt zur Sozialen Innovationen und Postwachstum)
- Analyse der Regionalentwicklungspolitik hinsichtlich der Rolle von KMU
- Untersuchung der Dimensionen der territorialen Disparitäten und der Peripherisierung in der Schweiz
- Politikanalyse in Hinblick auf einen sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Übergang/Transformation

A Glance Into The Literature

- BOCK, B. 2016. Emptiness and space. On population decline and quality of life in the north of the Netherlands. 1–12.
- GEBAUER, J. & SABEBIEL, J. 2015. Wie wichtig ist Wachstum für KMU? Berlin, 68 pp.
- GRABHER, G. 2018. Marginality as strategy: Leveraging peripherality for creativity. *Environment and Planning A*, 50, 1785–1794, 10.1177/0308518X18784021.
- JACKSON, T. 2017. Prosperity without growth: foundations for the economy of tomorrow. Second Edi. London and New York: Routledge, 310 pp.
- KÜHN, M. 2015. Peripheralization: Theoretical Concepts Explaining Socio-Spatial Inequalities. *European Planning Studies*, 23, 367–378, 10.1080/09654313.2013.862518.
- NORTH, P. 2016. The business of the Anthropocene? Substantivist and diverse economies perspectives on SME engagement in local low carbon transitions. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40, 437–454, 10.1177/0309132515585049.
- POSSE, D. 2015. *Zukunftsfähige Unternehmen in einer Postwachstumsgesellschaft*. Vereinigung für Ökologische Ökonomie e.V.
- Schneidewind, U., Palzkill, A. & Scheck, H. 2012. Der Beitrag von Unternehmen zur großen Transformation. In Hahn, R., Janzen, H. & Matten, D., eds. Die gesellschaftliche Verantwortung des Unternehmens: Hintergründe, Schwerpunkte und Zukunftsperspektiven. Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel, 497–528.
- VIAZZO, P.P. & ZANINI, R.C. 2014. 'Taking advantage of emptiness? *Revue de géographie alpine*, 0–11, 10.4000/rga.2478.



Agricultural transformation and diverse economies of food

Agri-food systems organize how we produce, process, trade, consume and dispose of food. The increasing global articulation of value chains, environmental challenges and consumer awareness are profoundly transforming agri-food systems worldwide. Farmers are often caught in between the pressure of decreasing prices, governmental environmental requirements, consumer quality demands, large retailers' requirements as well as the devaluing of their societal role. Consumers, on their hand, struggle to find a balance between tasty, healthy, sustainable and affordable (financially but also in terms of time) food while governments need to juggle between internal policies, international agreements, agri-business lobbies and land use pressure.



In this context, it is interesting to investigate how different actors adapt to or actively promote the transformation of agri-food systems and the consequences of these processes on their practices and identities. This transformation might entail innovation in existing agricultural enterprises as well as new forms of agricultural enterprises involving consumers more actively (community-supported agriculture, prosumer cooperatives). Practices of food provisioning beyond the market – such as gardening, foraging, gifting or exchanging – play an often neglected role in this transformation and deserve attentive investigation too.

Supervisor: Ottavia Cima, Flavian Pichonnat

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Pictures: ticonews.ch; cdt.ch

Topics in this area

- Focus on farmers/producers:
 - o How farmers enact innovation in their agricultural practices: for instance, innovation in farming methods, enterprise organisation, or marketing
 - o How transformation in farming practices and agri-food systems shape farmers' identities and values
 - o How farmers' everyday practices change and adapt to broader changes in agricultural policies and agri-food systems
 - o How and why farmers resist changes in agri-food systems
- Focus on "prosumers":
 - o Emergence of alternative forms of agricultural organisations, such as community-supported agriculture and prosumers cooperatives
 - o Firm structure, working conditions and financing strategy of alternative farming enterprises
- Diverse economies of food:
 - o Mapping of diverse economies of food in a specific location (urban, rural, or comparison)
 - o Analysis of a selected more-than-market practice of food provisioning (e.g. gardening, foraging, gleaning, gifting)
 - o Impact of COVID-19 on diverse economies of food

A Glance Into The Literature

- BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN, V. and MIES M. (1997) Eine Kuh für Hillary. Die Subsistenzperspektive, München.
- BURTON, R., FORNEY, J., STOCK, P. and SUTHERLAND, L-A. (2020) The good farmer: culture and identity in food and agriculture. Routledge.
- DIXON, J. (2011) Diverse food economies, multivariant capitalism, and the community dynamic shaping contemporary food systems. *Community Development Journal*, 46, 1, i20–i35
- FORNEY, F. (2021) Farmers' empowerment and learning processes in accountability practices: An assemblage perspective. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 86, 673-683.
- NEMES, G. et al. (2021) The impact of COVID-19 on alternative and local food systems and the potential for the sustainability transition: insights from 13 countries. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 28, 591-599.
- ROSOL, M. and STRÜVER, A. (2018) (Wirtschafts-)Geographien des Essens: transformatives Wirtschaften und alternative Ernährungspraktiken. *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie*, 62, 3-4, 169-173.
- ROSOL, M. (2018) Alternative Ernährungsnetzwerke als Alternative Ökonomien. *Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie*, 62, 3-4, 174-186.
- SARMIENTO, E.R. (2017) Synergies in alternative food network research: embodiment, diverse economies, and more-than-human food geographies. *Agriculture and Human Values* 34, 485–497.



Pictures: GrenzDörffer; Tanzfest Bern

Local cultural and creative economies

When we think about markets and economic actors, we often associate them with companies, production processes and good exchanges. Maybe we imagine somebody sitting in front of a PC, or somebody standing at an assembly line. Perhaps, we think of our last (online) shopping experience or the visit at the local market. We might think of the goods we need on a daily basis, or a big infrastructures and construction sites. Yet, immaterial cultural goods like art, music, entries for a visit at the museum, or tickets for concerts and dance performances are often less in the focus of our attention. At the same time, economic practices and structures are more diverse than we think and contain a multitude of interactions, forms of (re)production and organisation, as for example highlighted by the diverse economy approach from Gibson-Graham (2008).

With the aim to „read for spaces of possibility“ (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski, 2020), this topic area invites you to explore already existing local sites of economic diversity and transformation in the creative and cultural sector. Emphasis is placed on cultural spaces as liminal spaces between civil, economic and political actors as well as on the (transformative) agency of cultural producers, consumers and workers. Furthermore, the focus is on the impact of the cultural and creative sector on local and regional economic development.

Supervisor: Sinje GrenzDörffer

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Topics in this area

- Cultural & creative spaces as lived spaces of collective everyday economic interactions: How do cultural and economic practices interact and are (continually) produced and reproduced? (case study)
- Cultural & creative spaces as economic spaces entangled in current market dynamics: What are drivers and barriers for the local cultural and creative sector within the current market dynamics? (case study)
- Cultural & creative workers as potential transformative agents: What are the potentials and limits of labour agency for cultural and creative workers in their local contexts?
- The potential of cultural and creative economies for the regional development: how does the cultural and creative sector contribute to the local/regional economic development of the region of Bern?
- Thinking beyond capitalism: what are examples of more-than-capitalist economic practices in the local cultural and creative sector?
- The role of cultural consumers: what is the agency of consumers to create, maintain or transform local cultural and creative economies?
- Between policy, economy and the public: what role do political actors and (public) institutions play in the creation, maintenance or transformation of local cultural and creative economies?

A Glance Into The Literature:

ALACOVSKA, A. (2022). The Wageless Life of Creative Workers: Alternative Economic Practices, Commoning and Consumption Work in Cultural Labour. *Sociology*, 56(4), 673-692. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385211056011>

FINKEL, R., & PLATT, L. (2020). Cultural festivals and the city. *Geography Compass*, 14(9), e12498

GIBSON-GRAHAM, J. K. (2008). Diverse economies: performative practices for other worlds'. *Progress in human geography*, 32(5), 613-632

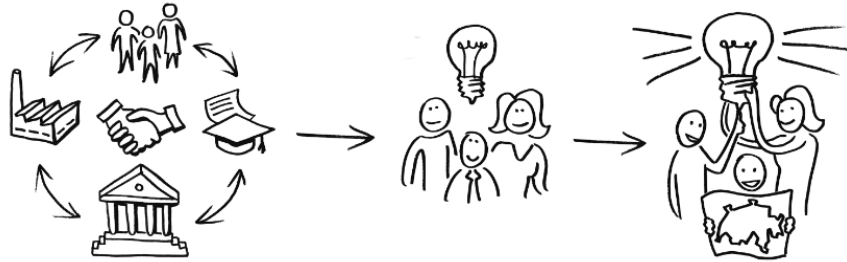
GIBSON-GRAHAM, J. K., & DOMBROSKI, K. (eds.). (2020). *The Handbook of Diverse Economies*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

GRENZDÖRFFER, S. M. (2022). 'We're messing up capitalism through collaboration': transformative labour agency in German worker-led companies. *Work in the Global Economy*, 2(2), 199-225.

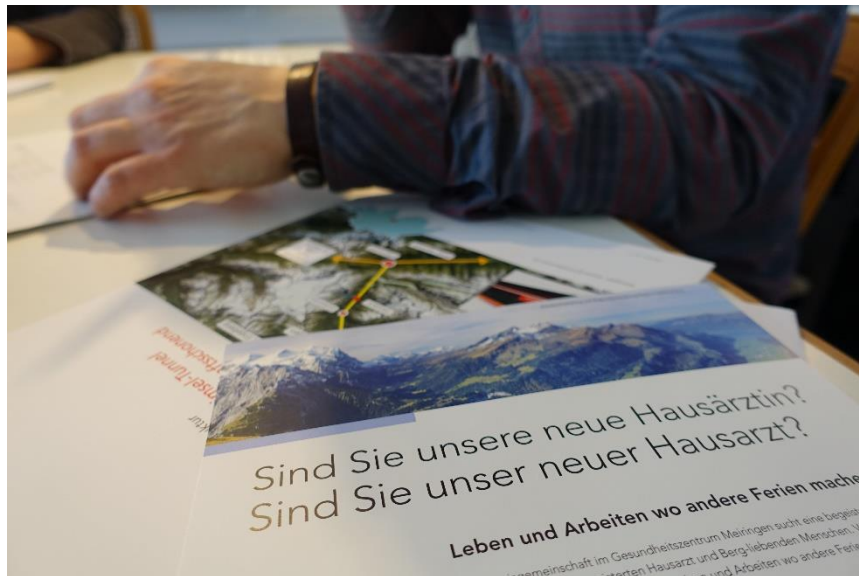
MACRÌ, E., MOREA, V., & TRIMARCHI, M. (2020). Cultural Commons and Urban Dynamics. *A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Cham: Springer.

SCHMID, B. (2019). Degrowth and postcapitalism: Transformative geographies beyond accumulation and growth. *Geography Compass*, 13(11), e12470.

WITTMAYER, J., & HOLSCHEER, K. (2017). *Transformationsforschung: Definitionen, Ansätze, Methoden*. Umweltbundesamt.



Grafik: Valentin Rüegg 2020



Picture: Heike Mayer

Social Innovation and the regional economy

Social innovations are increasingly considered as novel solutions to local and regional challenges. Social innovations refer to new solutions to societal problems that ultimately aim to improve the welfare and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Specific examples of social innovations in the context of Swiss regions range from novel ways to provide health care services in mountain regions to collaborations between farmers, food producers, supermarkets and hotels around local agricultural products.

Research to date examined social innovations in the context of urban and rural region. There is a wealth of knowledge about why social innovations emerge, how they are promoted and what kind of success factors are at play. Little, however, is known about the socioeconomic implications and the consequences of social innovations. In what ways do social innovations help solve grand societal challenges? How could they make our economic less dependent on quantitative economic growth?

In addition, social innovations are not yet supported by the New Regional Policy in Switzerland. Yet, for the new funding period (2024+) there is the possibility to get financial support for this kind of innovation. We explore social innovations in our research from a broad perspective, applying the concept to urban and rural regions in Switzerland.

Supervisor: Heike Mayer

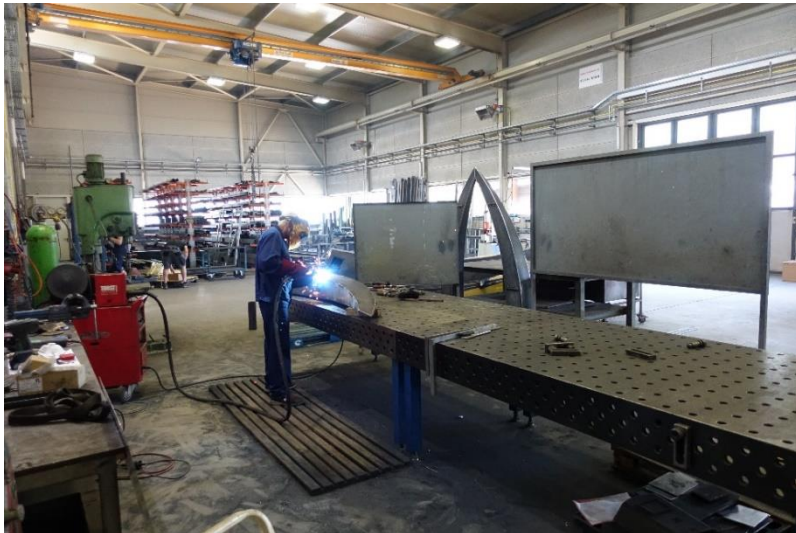
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Topics in this area

- Die Rolle der sozialen Innovation in der Postwachstums-Ökonomie
- (Sozial-)innovative Lösungen für ländliche Herausforderungen wie z.B. mangelnde Gesundheitsversorgung oder älter werdende Bevölkerung
- Soziale Innovationen im städtischen und ländlichen Kontext
- Regionalentwicklung und soziale Innovationen
- Neue Regionalpolitik: Wie soll sie soziale Innovationen fördern?
- Bewegungen wie Slow Cities, Slow Food, Transition Towns, freiwillige Suffizienz, Selbstversorgung usw.
- Die Rolle von Agency in sozialen Innovationen

A Glance Into The Literature

- AYOB, N., TEASDALE, S. & FAGAN, K. 2016. How social innovation “Came to Be”: Tracing the evolution of a contested concept. *Journal of Social Policy*, 45, 635–653, 10.1017/S004727941600009X.
- BOCK, B.B. 2016. Rural Marginalisation and the Role of Social Innovation; A Turn Towards Nexogenous Development and Rural Reconnection. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 56, 552–573, 10.1111/soru.12119.
- KAUFFELD-MONZ, M., KREIBICH, M. & HUBER, M. 2019. Soziale Innovationen in der Sozial- und Gesundheitswirtschaft. In Becher, B. & Hastedt, I., eds. *Innovative Unternehmen der Sozial- und Gesundheitswirtschaft*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 209–250., 10.1007/978-3-658-19504-5_9.
- NEUMEIER, S. 2012. Why do Social Innovations in Rural Development Matter and Should They be Considered More Seriously in Rural Development Research? - Proposal for a Stronger Focus on Social Innovations in Rural Development Research. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 52, 48–69, 10.1111/j.1467-9523.2011.00553.x.
- TSCHUMI, P., WINIGER, A., WIRTH, S., MAYER, H., & SEIDL, I. 2020. Wachstumsunabhängigkeit durch Soziale Innovationen? Eine Analyse potenzieller Wachstumswirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen im Schweizer Berggebiet. In B. Lange, M. Hülz, B. Schmid, & C. Schulz, eds. *Postwachstumsgeographien. Raumbezüge diverser und alternativer Ökonomien*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 117-137.



Pictures: Heike Mayer

Innovation in peripheral regions

Innovation processes are often conceptualized with an urban bias and are therefore theorized solely considering the perspective of the urban environment (e.g. close face-to-face contacts, dense urban milieus, fast interactions between a multitude and diverse actors, etc.). As a result, innovation theories do not sufficiently consider the context of the periphery and how this context – or even different types of peripheries – may foster or hinder the development of innovative products, technologies and services. Economic geographers started to conceptualize innovation processes in peripheral locations as ‘slow innovation’ (Shearmur, 2015, 2017; Shearmur & Doloreux, 2016), but they have neither developed clear typologies nor differentiations between different forms of innovation (social, technological, product, process, etc.).

We are currently engaged in a research project that examines these innovation processes in peripheral regions in the European Alps (Italy: Valle Maira, Valle Po; Austria: Osttirol; Switzerland: Haslital/Meiringen, Goms). The research is funded by the Regional Studies Association.

We are also interested in innovative practices to maintain the viability and livability of peripheral regions. Some mountain communities have started to pay money to new residents to entice to move there (e.g. Albinen, Quinten, Grossdietwil, etc.). It would be interesting to examine such practices to see if they work.

Supervisor: Heike Mayer

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Topics in this area

- Innovationsdynamiken in unterschiedlichen Industrien in den Schweizer Bergregionen (Goms, Hasliberg, etc.)
- Innovation in schrumpfenden Regionen
- Innovation in städtischen Randgebieten (z.B. benachteiligte Stadtteile, Enklaven usw.)
- Die Rolle der «Leere» oder auch «Marginalität» in Innovation und Kreativität
- Das Konzept der "Slow Innovation" und seine Bedeutung für die Schweizer Randregionen
- Kritische Diskussion der "Peripherie" im Schweizer Kontext
- Das Konzept des regionalen Innovationssystems und seine Anwendung im peripheren, ländlichen Raum
- Zwischen Tradition und Innovation: Innovationsprozesse von Firmen in peripheren Räumen
- Die Innovationsquellen von Unternehmen im ländlichen Raum im Vergleich
- Wissensquellen von Unternehmen im ländlichen Raum: regionale vs. ausserregionale Quellen (sowohl qualitativ, als auch quantitativ, z.B. durch Netzwerkanalyse untersuchbar)
- Forschungseinrichtungen als Innovationsquellen für Unternehmen im ländlichen Raum. Welche Bedeutung haben sie für unterschiedliche Industrien (z.B. Tourismus)?
- What strategies do peripheral regions use to compete with non-peripheral regions in developing and generating innovation? (z.B. how do Ticino/Bern/Basel make up for not having institutions like ETH/EPFL?)

A Glance Into The Literature

- EDER, J. 2018. Innovation in the Periphery. *International Regional Science Review*, 016001761876427, 10.1177/0160017618764279.
- EDER, J. & TRIPPL, M. 2019. Innovation in the periphery: Compensation and exploitation strategies. *Growth and Change*, 1–21, 10.1111/grow.12328.
- GRABHER, G. 2018. Marginality as strategy: Leveraging peripherality for creativity. *Environment and Planning A*, 0, 1–10, 10.1177/0308518X18784021.
- MEILI, R. & SHEARMUR, R. 2019. Diverse diversities—Open innovation in small towns and rural areas. *Growth and Change*, 50, 492–514, 10.1111/grow.12291.
- SHEARMUR, R. 2017. Urban Bias in Innovation Studies. In Shearmur, R., Bathelt, H., Cohendet, P., Henn, S. & Simon, L., eds. *The Elgar Companion to Innovation and Knowledge Creation: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 440–456.



Pictures: Punto 301; O. Cima

Urban manufacturing and the sensory city

The last months of tragic global events – from the Covid-pandemic to the war in Ukraine, through the tension between the US and China on Taiwan – have at least the merit of laying bare the fragility of global supply chain and, with them, of globalized capitalism. The idea that states and communities might be better off if they are able to retain or attract back industrial production at a local scale is getting ample attention from governments, activists and the media.

Industrial activities in cities, however, can have a considerable impact on urban population and environment. They occupy urban space, transforming its shape along with its sensory landscapes: sounds, smells, textures, tastes, feelings. If industrial production is to stay in, or come back to, cities, what kind of activities are citizens ready to tolerate – or even embrace – in their cities? Is the shift to industry 4.0 a welcome relief for city-dwellers in comparison to the cumbersome spatial and sensory impact of more traditional industrial activities? Or does the dematerialization it bolsters constitute an impoverishment of sensory urban landscapes and experience? With what consequences for the ethics of industrial and urban politics?

Supervisor: Ottavia Cima

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Topics in this area

- Conspicuous production (Baker 2017) in cities:
 - o Inventory of industrial activities in cities
 - o Impact of industrial activities on urban sensory landscapes
- Urban manufacturing, reindustrialisation, deglobalisation: implications for urban sensory landscapes
 - o Analysis of local private and public initiatives (e.g. Made in Zürich, Industrienacht, St.Galler Haus)
- Citizen perception of industrial sensory landscapes through different methodologies (e.g. sensory walks, visual methodologies)
- Peculiarities of sensory landscapes in small and medium-sized towns (SMSTs): mix / tension between urban and rural
- Sensory landscapes of industry 4.0:
 - o Consequences of dematerialisation on the experiential dimension of industry 4.0
 - o Experiential dimension of industry 4.0 in cities
- Methodological experimentations with sensory urban industry
 - o Creative methods to explore the experiential dimension of industry in cities
 - o Exploration of sensory landscapes (visual, smells, sounds, textures, emotions, etc.)

A Glance Into The Literature

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Pictures: Heike Mayer

Urban economies and small towns

Urban economies are changing in terms of their structure and function. Regarding traditional urban sectors such as retail and services, urban economies are experiencing an unprecedented structural change as consumer habits are moving towards more online shopping. In response, retailers are engaging in the experience economy, which also draws on urban amenities. Industries such as software, banking, public sector, etc. are benefitting from agglomeration economies. More in general, industrial transformation impacts cities and the urban space. Work practices change as more and more employees engage in flexible work arrangements such as home office, part-time work, mobile work, etc. Neighborhoods become sites of entrepreneurial activities, which are shaped by intersectional experiences of, for instance, being a migrant, a woman, a person of second generation, etcetera.

Research in this area can focus on the transformation of urban economies under different perspectives. We encourage in particular a focus on the role of small towns in local economies, including the specific challenges and opportunities of smallness. .

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Topics in this area

- Specialisation of urban economies. For instance: Bern as federal capital; Thun as regional centre.
- Impact on urban economies and space of changing working habits (e.g. smart working, homeoffice, part-time), consumption habits (e.g. online shopping, local goods), sale habits (e.g. pop-up stores and bars)
- Neighborhood economies and entrepreneurship
- Role of regional policies and institutions in the socio-economic transformation of small towns
- Citizen initiatives claiming/ promoting/ enacting alternative development paths for their towns

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