

M.Sc. Topic: Review of Rural Development Research Projects in the EU



Background and aim

Many rural development research activities have gathered knowledge on intersectional issues related to agriculture, forestry, food, policies, rural exodus, employment and concentration of agricultural land in the EU. Based on these findings, policy recommendations have been developed. Still, rural areas across the EU face numerous challenges.

In this M.Sc. thesis, a comprehensive review of the goals, approaches and methods of EU-funded rural development research projects will be carried out to describe the current state of knowledge and research needs. A special emphasis will be on the role of land use related issues (forestry, agriculture).



Approach and methods

- Review of the Database of the Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) for research projects on rural development
- Also other databases may be included
- Conceptualisation of the different approaches and research activities applied in the projects
- If applicable, interviews with selected actors can be carried out to analyse perception of the impacts of the research projects, and to develop approaches for feeding the results of future project activities into policy processes

Expected outcomes and impacts

The thesis will summarize the current state of knowledge about the scope and main topics covered in EU-funded rural development research. The thesis will improve the understanding of the relative importance that is attributed to agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, and other land uses for rural development. Findings will be of great value for planned and ongoing projects at the Chair of Silviculture.

Prerequisites

- Strong interest in concepts and theories related to rural development and knowledge management
- Fluency in English
- Experience and/or strong interest in qualitative research approaches and literature reviews
- Experience and/or strong interest in the EU Common Agricultural Policy and its instruments for rural development

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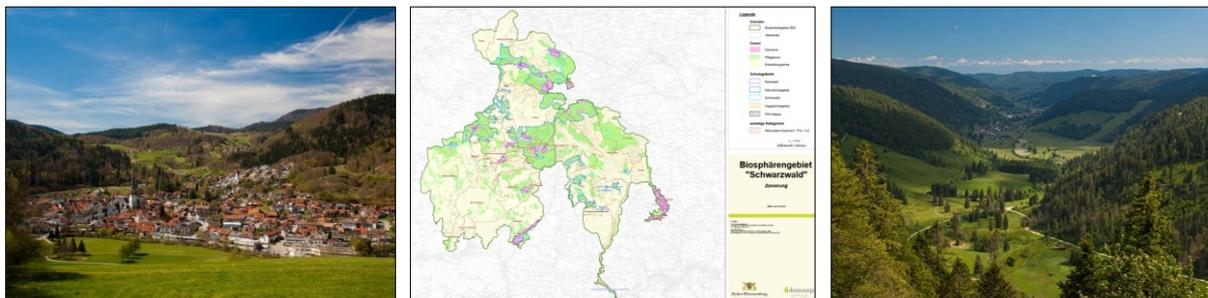
M.Sc. Topic: Mapping sustainability action in rural areas: the case of the Black Forest Biosphere Reserve



Background and aim

Rural areas across Europe face various challenges like rural exodus, concentration of agricultural land, pressures from urban areas and restricted access to infrastructure and services. Rural development policies in the EU are guided to a large extent by the Common Agricultural Policy, and forestry, livestock farming and agriculture, as well as their downstream sectors (e.g. processing, tourism) are considered important for the creation of jobs and rejuvenation processes in rural areas.

This M.Sc. topic contributes to the evaluation of the potential of land use based activities by identifying innovative business models, sustainability initiatives and other actions related to the improvement of value chains – or quality of life in general – in rural areas. Based on a comparative approach, characteristics and necessary preconditions for establishing promising actions are analysed. Based on these analyses, current policy approaches can be evaluated and potential policy options can be discussed.



Approach and methods

- Identification of sustainability initiatives and innovative actors in the Biosphere Reserve (e.g. through interviews with local administration units, NGOs, farmer's associations etc.)
- Quantitative or qualitative descriptions and analyses of the actions (using questionnaires or interview guidelines, potentially also GIS based methods)
- Survey of economic and demographic developments in the research area (e.g., population dynamics, job availability and value added from land use based activities)

Expected outcomes and impacts

The thesis can be written in German or English language. It is expected that the outcomes contribute to an increased understanding of the role of agriculture and forestry in rural development. In addition, potential, perspectives and necessary preconditions for promising rural development activities in the Black Forest Biosphere Reserve will be discussed. Findings will be of great value for planned and ongoing projects at the Chair of Silviculture and the Biosphere Reserve Black Forest.

Prerequisites

- Strong interest in rural development theories and practice
- Fluency in German
- Drivers' licence, ideally: access to a car

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