

Transformation by Community?

Community-based initiatives have pervaded the discourse on sustainability in recent years. They are regarded as actors paving the way towards a more viable future. Likewise, groups linked to the concept of sustainability often identify themselves as communities. Our interdisciplinary project aims to elucidate this imaginary of communities as powerful actors and its attractiveness for policy makers, academia and the public.

General Outline

The interdisciplinary project *“Transformation by Community – Processes of Collective Subjectivation in the Context of Sustainable Development”* adopts a perspective on communities that is inspired by discourse and practice theory and informed by empirical work (Taylor Aiken et al. 2017) in order to elucidate why communities are often perceived as powerful actors by policy makers, academia and the public. We examine three empirical examples of community-based initiatives in northern Germany and scrutinize their (ascribed) potential for innovation and societal change. To this end, we focus on the following questions: How do sustainable communities, understood as collective subjectivities, come into being in discourses, everyday practices, and senses of belonging? What are the relational ties between people, artefacts and technologies within communities? What intended and unintended effects does the formation of community have – on the community itself and on society?

Sub-projects and Researchers

Community projects as modernity’s places of longing
Prof. Dr. Thomas Etzemüller, Dr. Johanna Rakebrand

Between liberation and subjugation, escapism and pioneering spirit
Prof. Dr. Thorsten Raabe, Dr. Steffen Hamborg

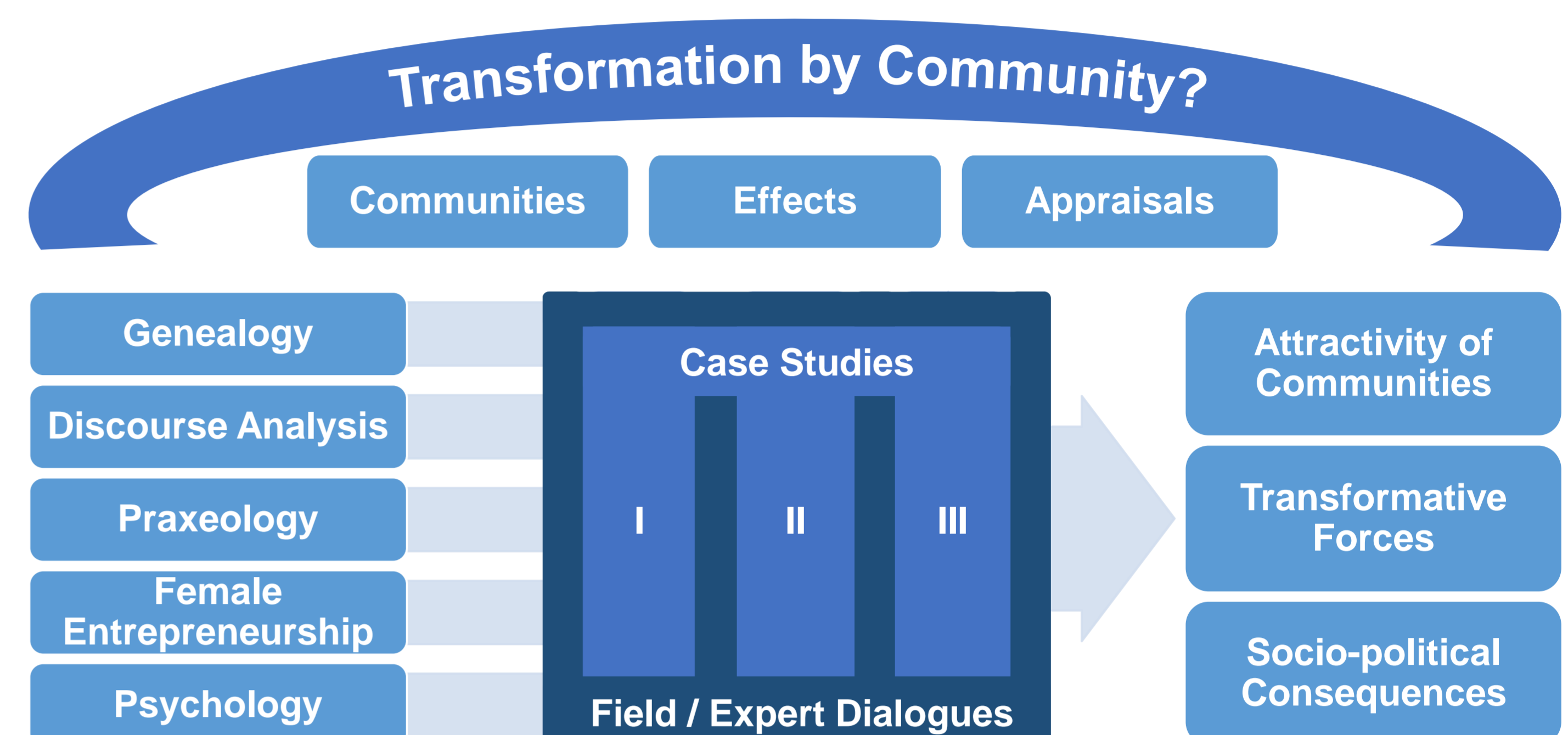
Reflexive production of an alternative normality
Prof. Dr. Thomas Alkemeyer, Dr. Jędrzej Sulmowski

Doing community – doing sustainability (?)
Prof. Dr. Stephanie Birkner, Juliane Friedrich

Individuals and sustainable communities
Prof. Dr. Karsten Müller, Lena Schmeiduch

Science Communication: *Jonas Schulz*

Associated Researchers: *Dr. Nikolaus Buschmann
Dr. Lars Hochmann*



Discourse and Subjectivation Analysis

Nowadays, communities appear as promising approaches for handling the crisis-laden conditions of growth societies in many respects. They raise hopes, for instance, for a liberation from economic restraints, for a reduction or nullification of social and ecological destructivity, for opportunities of direct participation, and for closeness and connectedness in unmediated social relations. At the same time, the participation in ‘eco-communities’ inevitably comes with the subjugation under particular ways of doing, saying, and being. Against this backdrop, our sub-project (Raabe/Hamborg) asks, to what extent invocations of ‘communities’ enable or restrain individual and collective movements of liberation in the reference frame of societal relations to nature.



Prof. Dr. Thorsten Raabe

Dr. Steffen Hamborg, Dr. Lars Hochmann,
Dr. Sören Sundermann, Jonas Schulz,
Gerrit Sundermann

Research Topics

- Critical and Cultural Approaches to Sustainability
- Influencer Marketing; Wholesale Marketing; Macromarketing
- Science and Public(s)

Courses

Introduction to Marketing (wir070); Strategic and International Marketing (wir400); Sectoral, Functional, and Institutional Approaches to Marketing (wir826); Trends in Marketing Research (wir829); Marketing Research (pb323); Practical Course in Market Research (pb284); Research Workshop Sustainability (wir913)

References

Taylor Aiken, Gerald / Middlemiss, Lucie / Sallu, Susannah / Hauxwell-Baldwin, Richard (2017): Researching climate change and community in neoliberal contexts: an emerging critical approach. In: Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 8/4, S. 1-14.