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RURAL AREAS

**GOVERNING MOUNTAIN COMMONS: RESILIENCE AND RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT IN THE ÖTZTAL VALLEY**

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Natural or cultural resources such as water and grazing land are often shared by many people as so-called “commons.” Due to their high substitutability and the difficulty of excluding users, developing sustainable management strategies is challenging, a situation described as the “Tragedy of the Commons.” However, research has shown that resource users can self-organize to prevent overuse. Establishing effective local institutions that regulate access and harvesting practices is therefore essential for long-term resource use.

As part of the interdisciplinary project RESILIENT RULES, this research examines a case study to better understand the rules and norms agricultural communities use to govern shared resources. The project aims to analyze the spatial and temporal diversity of such governance systems and their contribution to long-term resilience under global change. Our study focuses on the agricultural community (Agrargemeinschaft) in the Ötztal valley, Austria, one of 52 global case studies within the project.

The research is guided by Elinor Ostrom's theoretical framework Governing the Commons, which identifies design principles ensuring fair rights and responsibilities in collective resource management. Governance is understood as a multi-level negotiation process among diverse actors.

In the Ötztal valley, a remote mountain region in southern Tyrol, we conducted six semi-structured interviews with farmers. The Agrargemeinschaft has historically governed shared agricultural land, including grazing areas and summer pastures (Almen). The transhumance system exemplifies how common land is still actively managed today. Using the analysis method of the "Taxonomy of Rules", this case study is analyzed regarding their adaptability, flexibility, and resilience in responding to dynamic environments. This research contributes to understanding historically evolved and continuously adapted commons governance systems that are crucial for sustainable resource management and resilience in fragile mountain communities.

Palavras-chave: commons governance; collective resource management; mountain farming.