

Institutional analysis of the socio-ecological system of the communal grazing areas of Thaba Nchu (South Africa)

The communal areas in South Africa are a creation of the Apartheid system. Formerly independent black smallholders were forced to live in the newly founded villages. Even after the end of Apartheid, most of the land belonging to these villages is – from a legal perspective – common tribal property. The common land is used almost exclusively as grazing ground for livestock. There are indications for resource degradation due to long-term overstocking of the common areas. The suggested master thesis should involve an institutional analysis according to the “institutional analysis and development” (IAD) framework (Ostrom 2005). Here, a focal point of analysis is the “action arena” which consists out of an action situation and the participants involved in that situation. The action arena is influenced by several other elements which have to be identified during the analysis:

1. Biophysical Conditions
2. Attributes of the community
3. Rules

A potential master thesis should involve the identification of those three external factors as well as the action situation and mental models of the participants. An application of the collected data would be to estimate the social optimum and potential equilibria of the common pool resource from a game-theoretical perspective of social dilemmas. In order to fulfil this task, the student will be involved in field observations and interviews with the stakeholders in South Africa.