2.2.1. The „Armament of the Village“: Agricultural Restructuring in Mountainous Areas in Nazi Germany

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In this study rural planning for mountainous areas in Nazi Germany is explored as a case of ‘high modernism’ (James Scott), i.e. large-scale social engineering driven by a modernist ideology and put into practice by an authoritarian state. In 1940, the Nazi agrarian apparatus launched an action called ‘community construction in upland areas’ which was administered by a newly established sub-department of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. This project was implemented in a limited number of Alpine communes as experimental stations for the overall technological modernisation of the German countryside after the war. The planned measures encompassed technical restructuring such as the construction of roads, cable cars and power lines, the enrichment of the average farm area, the adoption of labour- and land-saving technology, the rationalisation, specialisation and commercialisation of farm production as well as institutional restructuring such as the organisation of individual farmers by local cooperatives, the transfer of expert knowledge into everyday decision-making and the substitution of the subsistence ethic by a more ‘productive’ attitude towards farming. In sum, the low-input low-output farming system oriented towards own breeding should be transformed into a high-input high-output farming system oriented towards the marketing of dairy products. Even though this magaloparous project failed due to external and internal contradictions, the vision of Nazi modernism anticipated the pathway of Alpine agricultural development in the post-war decades.

2.2.2. Dealing with Mechanization: Perspectives and Strategies of Farmers and Local Institutions in the Central Alps of Switzerland

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The widespread use of fuel driven machines in mountain agriculture started after World War II. On the one hand, it was important for the farmers in these regions to take part in the process of mechanization in order to keep up with current modes of production. On the other hand, there were several aspects of mountain farming that limited the use of machines and vehicles or made their use partly desirless. This paper shows how different kinds of farmers participated in mechanization during the second half of the 20th century, taking as an example a region in the central Alps of Switzerland. It also investigates the role and strategies of local institutions that helped finance this process. Finally, it asks how these actors have perceived mechanization and its effects over the course of the past decades.

2.2.3. From „Nightingale“ and „Helvetia“ to Single-Axle-Machines. The Adaption of Agricultural Machinery to Steep Slopes

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Cutting the grass with motorized machines in Swiss alpine regions had its take off in the 1930s. It was in these years that the machine factory Aebi in Burgdorf (Switzerland) started to manufacture machines that were more and more adapted to mowing steep slopes. What circumstances did Aebi and other machine factories react to? And how did Aebi advertise its inventions? In this paper I propose from the thesis “Mechanization is an agent” (Stefan Giordano). I argue that the study of very different aspects — such as relief, work force, politics, economic development, investment opportunities etc. — is necessary to understand the process of mechanization and motorization in agriculture which is especially significant for mountain regions. Throughout my paper I consider two aspects of the machine development from the end of the 19th century to the 1970ies: On the one hand, I will outline the changing metaphorical potential of different model names. On the other hand, I focus on the social construction of a market for these products by looking at how their advantages were promoted and how their deficiencies were addressed by producers (e.g. Aebi), experts and, users over time.