

*LIFE IN
A VILLAGE COMMUNITY*

Modern societies are shaped by globalization. Yet the further this progresses, the deeper the rifts within society seem to become. Why is that? How do people who live in the same city, even the same village, become alienated from one another? What dictates who belongs and who is an outsider?

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The project “Alpine Histories of Global Change,” based at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, is tackling these questions using the example of four villages in the German-speaking alpine region. The researchers are working in Austria, Italy (Alto Adige / South Tirol), Germany, and Switzerland. On the one hand, the regions they are studying are characterized by long traditions of cross-border exchange. On the other hand, they are also centers of historically anchored, widespread support for anti-liberal, right-wing movements. One of these places is Obermillstatt in the Carinthian Nockberge mountains. The rural village, with a current population of just under 600, is located above Lake Millstatt on an old Roman trade route – the village has a tourist tradition stretching back to the late 19th century.

Outsiders, such as political leaders in the cities, tend to regard people who live in the countryside as old-fashioned and traditionalist. In the villages, meanwhile, there is huge distrust of politics, and official information is viewed with skepticism.

This historically entrenched divide between town and country was revealed to the researchers during the Coronavirus pandemic as well. Conspiracy theories quickly caught on in the villages, and resistance to orders from “the ones at the top” was seen as necessary and legitimate. Here, the inhabitants of the mountain villages see themselves as proud, independent advocates of “common sense,” which they consciously understand as a counterpart to the scientifically based findings of the liberal elites in the cities.



ON LOCATION



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