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„Tourism development in *Thethi*, northern Albania: A future scenario analysis from a community’s perspective”

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Index

1. Abstract	6
2. Introduction	8
2.1. Research Introduction	8
2.2. Objectives and Rational	10
2.3. Question of research	11
2.4. Assumptions	11
2.5. Timetable	11
3. Background Information	12
3.1. Ecotourism	12
3.1.1. Defining ecotourism	12
3.1.2. Defining sustainable development	13
3.1.3. Potentials and threats of ecotourism development	13
3.2. Albania	15
3.2.1. Historical and political background	16
3.2.2. Economic situation	20
3.2.3. Geographical Background and Environmental Situation	21
3.2.4. Tourism in Albania	23
3.2.5. Tourism Development in <i>Thethi</i>	25
4. Methodology	28
4.1. Scenario Analysis in Theory	28
4.2. Rapid Rural Appraisal in Theory	30
4.3. The Scenario Analysis for Ecotourism Development in <i>Thethi</i>	31

4.3.1.	Step 1: Case and Goal Definition.....	32
4.3.2.	Step 2: Impact Factor Development	32
4.3.3.	Step 3: Analysis of the current system state	33
4.3.4.	Step 4: Visualization of current system dynamics.....	36
4.3.4.1.	Impact Matrix.....	36
4.3.4.2.	System Grid and System Graph.....	36
4.3.5.	Step 5 - Development of characteristic future levels for each impact factor.....	37
4.3.6.	Step 6 - Leveling of impact factors.....	38
4.3.7.	Step 7 - Scenario elaboration and interpretation.....	38
5.	Results.....	39
5.1.	Step 1: Case and Goal Definition.....	39
5.2.	Step 2: Impact Factors	40
5.3.	Step 3: Analysis of the current state	41
5.3.1.	Assessment of Uses and Threats.....	42
5.3.2.	Current State of impact factors	45
5.3.2.1.	Environmental Quality.....	45
5.3.2.2.	Waste Management.....	46
5.3.2.3.	Energy Security.....	47
5.3.2.4.	Population Demography	47
5.3.2.5.	Economic/Technologic Development.....	48
5.3.2.6.	Tourism	48
5.3.2.7.	Food Security	48
5.3.2.8.	Resource Utilization.....	49
5.3.2.9.	Human Well-Being	49
5.3.2.10.	Governance	50

5.4.	Step 4: Visualization of System State	50
5.4.1.	Impact Matrix.....	51
5.4.2.	System Grid	52
5.4.3.	System Graph.....	53
5.5.	Step 5: Characteristic Future Levels	55
5.6.	Step 7: Scenarios of tourism development in <i>Thethi</i>	56
5.6.1.	Scenarios “involved in tourism”	57
5.6.2.	Scenarios “not involved in tourism”	60
6.	Discussion	63
6.1.	Discussion on the Scenario Analysis Process	63
6.1.1.	Step 1 – Case and Goal definition.....	63
6.1.2.	Step 2 – Impact factor development	63
6.1.3.	Step 3 – Analysis of the current state.....	64
6.1.3.1.	Analysis of Uses and Threats.....	64
6.1.3.2.	Current Impact Factor state.....	66
6.1.4.	Step 4 – Visualization of system state	66
6.1.5.	Step 5 – Elaboration of characteristic future levels	67
6.1.6.	Step 6 – Leveling of the characteristic future levels by the community of <i>Thethi</i>	68
6.1.7.	Step 7 – Scenario Elaboration.....	68
6.1.8.	Conclusion on the Method.....	68
6.2.	Discussion on the Scenarios of <i>Thethi</i> tourism development	69
6.3.	Discussion on the Research Question and Assumptions	71
7.	Conclusions.....	72
8.	Literature	75
9.	Curriculum Vitae	80

1. Abstract

Thethi ist eine weitläufige Streusiedlung im Tal des Shala Flusses in Nordalbanien, einer der ärmsten und abgelegensten Regionen Europas. Durch die kaum vorhandene Infrastruktur und die alpine Abgeschiedenheit bietet das Dorf keinerlei ökonomische Perspektiven. Die lokale Bevölkerung betreibt Subsistenzlandwirtschaft und lebt in ärmlichen Verhältnissen. In den letzten Jahren wird sanfter Ökotourismus mehr und mehr als Instrument zur Finanzierung von Naturschutz und zur Armutsbekämpfung gesehen. Theoretisch kann die lokale Bevölkerung durch eine nachhaltige Regionalentwicklung, verbesserte Infrastruktur und die Entstehung von Arbeitsplätzen von Ökotourismus profitieren. Gleichzeitig bietet der ökonomische Profit durch Ökotourismus ein Argument zum Schutz der Umwelt, ökologisch achtsames Verhalten wird gefördert und eine sensible Ressourcennutzung angestrebt.

Die albanische Regierung arbeitet an der Entwicklung von nachhaltigem Ökotourismus im bergigen Norden um die regionale Armut zu bekämpfen, die lokale Wirtschaft anzukurbeln und zugleich die nahezu unberührte Berglandschaft und den kulturellen Reichtum der Region zu schützen. Neben den wirtschaftlichen Vorteilen von Ökotourismus müssen allerdings viele potentiell negative Tourismuseinflüsse berücksichtigt werden um die Tourismusentwicklung nachhaltig zu gestalten. Erfolgreiche Tourismusprojekte führen oft zu einer erhöhten Anzahl an Touristen und somit steigen potentiell auch negative Einflüsse wie Umweltverschmutzung, Bodenerosion und Biodiversitätsverlust. Durch diese negativen Einflüsse wird die wichtigste Ressource des Ökotourismus, die Natur, bedroht. Verschiedene, möglicherweise negative, sozio-ökonomische Einflüsse auf die lokale Bevölkerung sind ebenso zu berücksichtigen.

Mehrere negative Tourismuseinflüsse gefährden derzeit die Entwicklung von nachhaltigem Ökotourismus in Thethi und dem umliegenden Nationalpark. Das Ziel dieser Masterarbeit ist es, mögliche Zukunftsentwicklungen des Dorfes durch die Durchführung einer Szenarioanalyse zu erarbeiten und ein holistisches Bild der momentanen Situation in Thethi darzustellen. Eine große Herausforderung der Nachhaltigkeitsforschung ist es, mögliche Zukunftsentwicklungen von komplexen sozio-ökologischen Systemen zu erarbeiten, wobei Unsicherheiten, Überraschungen und der menschliche Wille miteinbezogen werden müssen. Die Szenarioanalyse ist eine wissenschaftliche Methode zur Beschreibung von hypothetisch möglichen Zukunftszuständen eines Systems und zur

Erklärung der Entwicklungen und Dynamiken die zu diesen Zuständen führen. Da menschliche Akteure wichtige Faktoren einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung darstellen, bieten partizipative, transdisziplinäre Szenarioanalysen ein wichtiges Instrument zur Integration von menschlichen Werten und Vorstellungen in die Nachhaltigkeitsforschung. In dieser Studie wurden qualitative Zukunftsszenarien aus Sicht der Dorfbewohner von Thethi erarbeitet um deren Einstellung zum Tourismus, sowie deren Bewusstsein für negative Einflüsse zu untersuchen. Es wurde untersucht, ob die mit den Dorfbewohnern erarbeiteten Zukunftsszenarien Potential für nachhaltigen Ökotourismus zeigen.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie zeigen, dass die interviewten Dorfbewohner zuversichtlich sind, dass der Tourismus die ökonomische Situation der Bevölkerung verbessern wird. Die Dorfbewohner streben eine ökologisch achtsame Tourismusentwicklung an. Trotzdem sind finanzieller Profit und eine bessere Infrastruktur, auf Grund der extrem schwierigen wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse in der Region, die Priorität der Dorfbewohner. Das derzeitige Tourismusgeschäft im Nationalpark Thethi weist mehrere Probleme in allen Domänen der Nachhaltigkeit auf und verschiedene Schwierigkeiten erschweren eine nachhaltige Tourismusentwicklung. Umweltverschmutzung durch Abwässer und Festmüll sowie Bodenerosion und Veränderungen der Artenzusammensetzung bedrohen den Nationalpark, das Management dieser negativen Umwelteinflüsse ist unzureichend und ineffizient. Die Dorfgemeinschaft verliert durch fremde Reiseagenturen an Kontrolle über die Entwicklung in ihrem Dorf und ein großer Teil des Profits kommt nicht bei der lokalen Bevölkerung an. Die erarbeiteten Zukunftsszenarien zeigen, dass die interviewten Personen die vom Tourismus direkt profitieren eine positivere Einstellung haben als jene, die nicht vom Tourismus profitieren. Alle Interviewpartner waren sich gewisser negativer Einflüsse auf die Gemeinschaft und die Umwelt bewusst, allerdings wird die Gewichtigkeit der Auswirkungen durch einen Mangel an Wissen über Tourismus und Ökologie unterschätzt. Der Aufbau von entsprechenden Kompetenzen innerhalb der Dorfgemeinschaft, sowie besseres Management und Planung der Tourismusentwicklung ist dringend notwendig um negativen Auswirkungen des Tourismus auf die lokale Bevölkerung sowie auf die Umwelt entgegen zu wirken.

2. Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis provides an introduction in the field of research, the objectives of this work will be explained and the question of research will be defined. First assumptions about expected results will be done and a timetable of the entire process of this thesis is given.

2.1. Research Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1970s (Honey, 1999) nature-based ecotourism is a rapidly growing sector in tourism, one of the world's biggest industries (Panos 1997 cited by Scheyvens 1999). In comparison to mass tourism, ecotourism provides better sectoral linkages, create local employment and fosters sustainable development, particularly in developing countries (Belsky, 1999). In the past decade, ecotourism is more and more seen as a possible tool to support sustainable rural development and nature conservation, and to provide local economic benefits while maintaining ecosystem integrity through low-impact tourism and a sensible use of natural resources (Brandon, 1996; Stem, Lassoie, Lee, & Deshler, 2003a, 2003b).

Especially in post-communist transition countries like Albania with a very difficult economic situation for local people, sustainable tourism can, under ideal circumstances, help to generate foreign currency, local employment and income growth and to stimulate a regions infrastructural development (Hall, 2000a). Thus, the Albanian Government aims to develop sustainable ecotourism in order to promote regional economy and to counter rural depopulation, especially in the northern highlands of the country (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007; Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008). The village *Thethi* is located in the upper Shala valley in the mountainous north of Albania, one of the poorest and most remote areas in Europe (Betti et al. 2010). The pristine mountainous landscape is characterized by alpine pastures and meadows with beech and pine forests in the higher areas and hornbeam forests at lower levels. *Thethi* is the highest village in Shala valley (670 m above sea level) and is surrounded by *Thethi National Park*. Due to heavy snowfalls in winter and only two rough roads to the closest town *Shkoder*, the village is mostly isolated in winter. (Pieroni, 2008) After the fall of communism in 1991, most of the inhabitants moved to *Shkoder*, which is located about 78km away from *Thethi*, in order to find better economic possibilities or education. The village consists of 162 houses of which nowadays only approximately 60 are inhabited during the summer

season. In July 2007, only eighteen families were living in *Thethi* permanently. (Galaty et al., 2005) The economy of *Thethi* is mostly based on self-sufficiency. Each family holds a few animals; cows, pigs, goats or sheep. Potatoes and maize are the staple food, together with a few additional vegetables. Electricity supply in *Thethi* derives from a hydroelectric system established during the sixties by the Chinese government. In the last years tourism development in *Thethi* became an interesting economic activity during the summer period. (Pieroni, 2008) Tourism was first introduced to the village in 2005 by the GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) with the main objective of poverty reduction and since then tourist numbers increase every year and *Thethi* became one of the most famous ecotourism destinations in northern Albania (Kruja & Giyrezi, 2011). Beside some developmental and infrastructural improvements that came along with tourism development, negative impacts of tourism business are already visible in the village (Hara, 2009; Marchington, 2010).

The key motivation to choose this topic for a master thesis was my personal observation of tourism development in *Thethi*. When I first came to *Thethi* in 2008 as a hiking tourist, tourism business was still in the beginning of its development and no negative tourism impacts were visible yet. Three years later, I came back to the village and found a lot of changes, positive as well as negative ones. As I was interested in the future development of *Thethi*, I decided to do my masters' project on the tourism development in this village. Literature on ecotourism development is focused on identifying and assessing beneficial and detrimental tourism impacts after the development occurred instead of predicting possible impacts before they occur (Jordan 2000 cited by Marchington 2010). A scenario analysis was conducted in *Thethi* to investigate possible future developments of the village. A scenario describes a hypothetical future state of a system and provides information on its development up to this state. This is done by selecting a sufficient set of the most important "impact factors" that describe the current system state and highly influence its dynamics. A future scenario of the system can be predicted by linking these impact factors to a network and leveling their expected future development (Scholz & Tietje 2002). Based on the formative framework provided by Scholz and Tietje (2002) I designed the scenario analysis in a way that the local community was included in the scenario construction, allowing me to gain deeper insights into the community's perception on tourism business. As human volition and human needs are important driving forces for a regions development, I considered it highly important to involve the community of *Thethi* in my scenario analysis. Executing a scenario analysis enables to deeply analyze the current state of the system "tourism development in *Thethi*" and to establish possible future scenarios from the viewpoint of the villagers, thereby identifying their expectations, priorities or

possible worries about tourism in their village. The audience for this thesis is researchers from the field of ecotourism and sustainable rural development, academics studying northern Albania as well as national and international NGOs, especially those who operate in the region. This thesis can contribute to identify sustainability problems of the current tourism development and to investigate possible future developments especially focusing on the viewpoint of the villagers.

2.2. Objectives and Rational

The scenario analysis, conducted in this study aims to investigate how the village will develop from the community's point of view and how sustainable these future scenarios of *Thethi* tourism development are. As human actors play an important role in sustainable development, attitudes and perceptions of local stakeholders are crucial to address. Participatory approaches of scenario analysis are especially effective in addressing sustainability questions by incorporating values and preferences in the scenario analysis process itself (Swart et al. 2004). Thus, the scenarios of this study were constructed by the community of the village. Through the elaboration of future scenarios of *Thethi* tourism development, the economic, social and ecological potentials and threats of tourism development in *Thethi* can be estimated. The awareness of the community about negative tourism trade-offs will be mirrored in their future scenarios. As Moscardo (2008) postulates that one of the most important reasons for a socially unsustainable tourism development is a limited knowledge of tourism and a lack of awareness amongst the communities, it is important to involve the community in all the process of development and of course also in the research conducted in the region. In addition, scenario analyses are especially useful to determine leverage points of development and to change or modify the current development to a more sustainable way. As the literature is poor in research on how to predict and modify an on-going tourism development (Moscardo, 2008), this is one important goals of this thesis. By determining the most important driving forces of the system, leverage points of development can be identified. Another aim of this thesis is to investigate the development of *Thethi* in a holistic way for what scenario analyses can be especially useful. Still, the limited number of six interviewees for the scenario construction does not allow concluding on the entire community of *Thethi*.

2.3. Question of research

This study aims to elaborate future scenarios of *Thethi* development from a community's perspective in order to investigate how the village will develop from the villager's point of view, to find out if there is awareness about tourism impacts and to see if the community-built future scenarios show potential for environmentally responsible ecotourism.

How will the future of *Thethi* develop from a community's point of view in the next 10 years? Is there a difference between the scenarios built by different groups within the community (involved in tourism / not involved in tourism)? Are community members aware of negative tourism trade-offs and is environmental responsibility an issue for them? Do the community-built scenarios show potential for ecotourism?

2.4. Assumptions

It is assumed to find different future scenarios among different groups of villagers. Those who are involved in tourism will probably have a better perception on tourism development due to the economic advantages provided by tourism. Generally, it is assumed that there is a low awareness about negative environmental tourism trade-offs as the priorities of the community are set on economic advantages. Those who are not involved in tourism development might have a more skeptic vision of the future development of *Thethi*. Expectations on tourism development may probably vary between the two different villager groups but it is assumed to find a priority in economic development and infrastructural issues.

2.5. Timetable

The literature research for this thesis was an iterative process throughout the project. Still, the main work of literature review was done from April to May 2013. During that time, important stakeholders were identified and contacted. From June to July 2013 the methodological details were elaborated and prepared and the fieldwork on site was organized. The fieldwork was conducted in Albania during three weeks at the end of August to the beginning of September. The obtained data was mostly analyzed and processed immediately on site. The writing up of this thesis was done in October and November 2013.

3. Background Information

This literature review is thought to provide the reader of this thesis with the background necessary to fully capture this topics multidimensional facets'. The word 'ecotourism' will be explained and the current state of ecotourism research will be presented in this literature review chapter. Furthermore, some background information about Albania will be given to describe the case study area's characteristics.

3.1. Ecotourism

In this chapter a clear definition of the terms ecotourism and sustainable development will be provided, the current literature about ecotourism will be reviewed and potentials and pitfalls of ecotourism will be discussed.

3.1.1. Defining ecotourism

A wide range of definitions for ecotourism already exists in the literature. Ceballos-Lascurain (1983) (cited by Fennell, 2001) defines ecotourism as *“travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas”*. The Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as *“Responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people”* (cited by Western 1993:8). This definition is simple and applicable to nature, cultural or adventure tourism and it includes the ethical principal to support the welfare of local people. Edwards et al. (2000) suggested that very precise definitions are probably useless due to the complex demands and the varying circumstances of ecotourism ventures in different countries and regions. Wallace and Pierce (1996) provide 6 principles to describe the fundamental structure of ecotourism: They suggest that ecotourism minimises negative impacts on local people and environment, increases the awareness and understanding of an area's nature and culture, contributes to conservation, encourages the participation of local people in decision-making processes, brings direct economic benefits to local people and provides opportunities for local people to enjoy natural areas. There is consensus that ecotourism should minimize impacts to wildlife, soil, vegetation, water, and air quality, and emphasize respect for the cultural traditions and activities of local

people. (Fennell, 2001) Some writers suggest the term “community-based ecotourism” to describe tourism ventures characterized by a high degree of community control and community profit. Communities should be empowered in an economic, political, social and psychological way. (Scheyvens, 1999) As many tourism incentives are managed or initiated by outsiders, it is rare to find community-based ecotourism ventures in the literature (Belsky, 1999). As ecotourism definitions vary, there is high risk of the word ecotourism to be abused as a marketing tool for travels, which do not address ecotourism principals (Honey 1999). For this reason I will moreover use the word tourism instead of ecotourism in this thesis. In the discussion chapter of this work, it will be discussed if there is potential for ecotourism in *Thethi* according to the mentioned ecotourism principles.

3.1.2. Defining sustainable development

Before speaking about sustainable ecotourism development, the term “sustainable development” must be clarified. Brundtland (1987) gave the first and most frequently used definition of sustainable development: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Three domains of sustainable development represent the definition of Sustainability: Ecology, Economy and Society. This means that the three main goals of a sustainable development are the conservation of nature, a stable economy and societal fairness (Brundtland 1987). Although not all ecotourism incentives are really sustainable, the concept of sustainable development is mostly implied as a basic principle of ecotourism development.

3.1.3. Potentials and threats of ecotourism development

In the past decade, ecotourism is more and more seen as a possible tool to support sustainable rural development and nature conservation, and to provide local economic benefits while maintaining ecosystem integrity through low-impact behaviour and a sensible use of natural resources (Brandon, 1996; Stem et al., 2003a, 2003b). As the diversification of economic possibilities in rural areas is of high importance for rural economic development, nature-based tourism and agro-tourism can provide an additional source of income to local farmers and thereby foster rural development (Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008). In addition, ecotourism can offer the economic incentives to establish nature conservation areas and/or national parks and it can emphasize the importance of environmental

protection. By providing environmental education to tourists and locals, ecotourism ventures can also improve ecological awareness (Brandon, 1996). Conservationists hope that the economic incentives of nature-based tourism development can also help to justify cost-intensive nature protection from the economic viewpoint (Backes, 2003). The establishment of conservation areas often reduces access for local people to natural resources important for their livelihoods. This disadvantage may lead to a negative attitude towards conservation areas. Ecotourism could provide benefits for locals that counterbalance their costs for conservation area establishment. As the attitude towards nature conservation is based at least in one part on the costs and benefits provided by the conservation area, increasing benefits and alternative income generation through ecotourism could increase villager support. Attitudes depend considerably on the level of participation in decision-making. (Lindberg, Enriquez, & Sproule, 1996) A positive attitude to conservation among the local population is probably especially important when other mechanisms for influencing behaviour, such as regulations and laws, are inefficient or inappropriate. (Waylen, McGowan, & Milner-Gulland, 2009) This is definitely the case for ecotourism business in rural Albania as the legislative framework is implemented insufficiently. To make sure that ecotourism brings direct benefits to local people without compromising their specific livelihood needs and traditional customs, a community-based approach offering local residents a high degree of control over tourism activities is important to apply (Scheyvens, 1999; Stem et al., 2003b). The concept of “social capital” is an important part of sustainable ecotourism development. Social capital is described as collective knowledge and shared abilities within the community as well as the ability for an individual to access this knowledge based on relationships to other community members (Moscardo, 2008). Unsustainable tourism can erode social capital and a lack of social capital among the community will lead to an unsustainable form of tourism vice versa. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen community capacity within tourism incentives, ideally before tourism development starts (Moscardo, 2008). Despite of its benefits, many possible negative impacts of tourism need to be considered. The great paradox of ecotourism is that its success may lead to its failure on the long term. Successful ecotourism development increases the number of tourists which could lead to an intensification of negative visitor impacts, such as trail erosion, water pollution, solid waste generation and habitat disturbance, thus seriously threatening the recourses on which ecotourism depends. The Galapagos Islands offer a notable example of negative impacts of nature-based tourism. (Stem 2003, Jacobson and Robles 1992) Ecotourism also often fails to provide economic benefits to local development, bringing little or no revenues to local people (Jacobson & Robles, 1992; Lindberg et al., 1996). For example, Bookbinder et al. (1998) observed that only 6% of all the surveyed households

from the community of the Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal took direct or indirect financial benefit from ecotourism business (Bookbinder et al., 1998). In addition there is a risk to widen the social gap among the community when only a few members are able to involve themselves in tourism due to a lack of facilities and seed capital (Weaver, 1998). Even those who financially profit from tourism rely on a source of income sensible to economic and political events which is in addition subject to seasonal fluctuations (Jacobson & Robles, 1992). When business is the driving force behind tourism and the term *eco-* is only used as a marketing strategy, it is not surprising that those ventures rather harm local communities than bring benefit to them (Scheyvens, 1999). When tourism becomes the main economic activity of a region, it bears risks associated with a narrow economy, as there is no diversity left to shelter people in hard times. Especially when ecotourism plays the most important role in the local economy it may lead to unintended changes in community development. (Stem et al., 2003a, 2003b; Weaver, 1998) Another serious impact is the “commodification” of culture, where people and their traditions become marketable goods, leading to serious disturbance in cultural values and a loss of traditional knowledge. Although ecotourism per definition should have less negative effects on local people and the natural environment than mass tourism; the literature indicates that in practice there is little difference. (Brandon, 1996) Thus, it is crucial to consider ecotourism as a component of a larger developmental plan that addresses a sustainable development supporting the rural people and conservation (Stem et al., 2003a). In addition, it is important to avoid an idealization of the pristine nature and the rural idyll and to imply the social history of the local residents, often associated with exploitation and conflict (Belsky, 1999). This is especially the case for Albania as the area was completely isolated during the communist regime and also after independence in 1992 shattered by the rough socio-economic conditions and the unstable political situation.

3.2. Albania

For a deeper understanding of the case study, some general information on Albania and its historical background, recent economic development as well as geographical and environmental information will be given in this chapter. Furthermore, Albanian tourism development will be reviewed and existing literature on the case study will be discussed.

3.2.1. Historical and political background

The traces of the Albanian people go back to the antiquity, when Illyrian tribes settled in the western Balkans during the second or maybe even the third millennium BC. The Illyrians that time settled in the territory of present-day Albania, Kosovo, western Macedonia, Montenegro and north-western Greece (Epirus). Modern-day Albanians consider themselves as direct descendants of this Indo-European people who spoke a language called “Illyrian”. Thus, they claim to be the oldest indigenous people of the western Balkans. (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007) After the invasion of the Roman Empire in the Balkans, the Illyrians were converted to Christianity, which became the official religion in AD 313. After the fall of the Roman Empire the territory of Albania was part of the Byzantine Empire. When the Byzantine Empire collapsed in the beginning of the twelfth century, a feudal chiefdom system emerged and in the following years Albania was under foreign domination of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. By that time, the southern “Tosks” had mostly become Greek orthodox Christians, while the “Gheg” in the northern highlands remained Roman Catholic. Subsequently, the Albanians were, like the other Balkan Christian peoples, subjugated by the Ottoman Turks in a series of smashing assaults between 1385 and 1501. Despite the hard Albanian resistance led by Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeg from 1442 until his death in 1468, Albania could not beat the Turkish superiority; thus the Albanians were converted to Islam by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Although by 1800 most of the northern “Ghegs” and the southern “Tosks” were officially converted to Islam there is little evidence of forced conversions. Land grants and lower tax burdens provided incentives for conversion. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire increasingly lost control over the Balkan Peninsula due to the intern crisis of the Ottoman Empire. During that time, all the Balkan peoples basically lived in a chaotic anarchy based on violence and political troubles. First national movements and claims for an independent Albania started to arise. In 1912 the Balkan alliance of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece declared war on the Ottoman Empire and by 1913 the Ottoman power in the Balkans came to an end. To avoid further foreign domination by the Balkan Alliance, Albania proclaimed independence on 28 November 1912, which was internationally accepted in 1913. An international commission determined the boundaries of this new independent Albania. The mostly Albanian-inhabited terrains of Kosovo and western Macedonia were awarded to Serbia and the southern Epirus to Greece. Followed by political unrest and chaos the country collapsed into anarchy again by 1914. During the First World War, Greece, Serbia, Italy, Montenegro, Austria and France occupied various parts of Albania. Albanian Independence was reestablished in 1920 when Tirana became the capital city and Albania was admitted full membership of

the League of Nations. Albania's first parliamentary elections were dominated by corruption and manipulation and in 1923 Ahmed Zogu became prime minister. Subsequently he nominated himself as the president of Albania in 1925 with aid of Yugoslavia. Later on he dropped Yugoslavia and signed a wide-ranging economic contract with Fascist Italy. Soon, fascist Italy controlled the National Bank of Albania, the oil industry, the mining companies and the economic development of Albania in general. Considerable public infrastructural work was carried out. In 1928, Zogu crowned himself "Zog I, King of the Albanians" leading the country into a corrupt authoritarian regime. When Zogu broke his relations with Mussolini, fascist Italy invaded Albania in 1939. That time, Albania was the poorest and least-developed country in Europe. The average life expectancy was 39 years and about 80% of inhabitants were illiterate as the country provided only eighteen secondary schools. During the fascist regime, a "greater Albania" including Kosovo, northern Greece and western Macedonia was established. When Yugoslav communists came to Albania, several Marxist cells were formed followed by the establishment of the first communist party in Albania (CPA) in 1941 under Yugoslav tutelage. This party was renamed in "Party of Labour of Albania" (PLA) in 1943, led by Enver Hoxha. Fascist Italy capitulated to the Allies in 1943 and Germany invaded Albania. With indirect support of the Allies, the communist PLA partisans captured Tirana from the retreating Germans and installed a communist government under Enver Hoxha. The "anti-fascist" forces of Hoxha were celebrated throughout the country as the liberators of Albania. Nevertheless, Albania stood under Yugoslav dictation and economic exploitation. In 1945 a land reform eliminated the old landlord properties and assigned each household 12 acres of land. Buying and selling of land was prohibited. Due to the exploitative Yugoslav domination, Hoxha turned to Stalin for support and protection in 1948, which led to an even harder economic dependence and an even more oppressive tutelage by the Soviets during the 1950s. Thus, Hoxha broke with the Soviets in 1961, now turning to Mao Zedong for support. Subsequently, the Soviet Union blocked all diplomatic and trade relations with Albania. In 1967, Hoxha banned all religious practices and Albania became the world's first completely atheistic state. He stamped out all western influences and isolated the country more and more in order to avoid capitalist influences like inflation, unemployment and foreign debt. Thus, the Albanian society became increasingly segregated and was despotically governed by the communist regime while the living standards remained awfully low. Until the death of Enver Hoxha in 1985, Albania was controlled by the most repressive, xenophobic, puritanical and isolationist regime in the communist world. After his death, power passed to President Ramiz Alia of the PLA who ruled out several radical forms of liberalization and economic reform. First diplomatic relations with the neighboring Balkan countries were renewed. Albania was still

the poorest country in Europe. It is the only European country ever that was categorized by the UN as 'least-developed nation'. In 1990, further relaxation of political control and increasing public revolution for democracy led to the decriminalization of religious practices and a further opening of the country. Traveling and emigration started to be possible, albeit leaving the country still remained very hard. The violent police repression of popular unrests for democracy led to a mass exodus to Italy. First multicandidate elections took place in 1990, yet the communist PLA remained in power. The leader of the Democratic Party Sali Berisha was elected president of Albania in 1992 which initiated an extremely difficult transition from centrally-planned and isolated communist Albania to capitalist market economy. Albania became heavily dependent on remittances of emigrated workers and western developmental aid while the country was more and more lost in corruption, crime, economic stagnation and infrastructural decay. As the regulatory framework for Albania's financial institutions was inadequate and the government corrupt, illegal loan companies showed up who supported the governing party with campaign contributions. These criminal "pyramid scheme" companies declared bankruptcy in 1996 with the result that most of the Albanians lost their savings. Frustration about the failed transition and the corrupt government led to violent protests in Vlore and Tirana which could not anymore be controlled by the police. The escalating violence and growing anarchy further reinforced the economic misery of the country and worsened the international perception of Albania. The country was controlled by armed civil clans and organized criminal networks. An OSCE (Organization for security and co-operation in Europe) initiative could reestablish a somewhat peaceful state in Albania and in 1997, internationally supported free elections took place. The Socialist Party led by Fatos Nano gained power. With support of the EU, the economic situation of the country slowly bettered while the political situation still remained unstable. In August 2005, the leader of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha became the president of Albania. In 2006, Albania signed a "Stabilization and Association Agreement" with the EU which included several conditions like reducing organized crime and rebuild the state law coherent with EU law. (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007) In 2009, Albania achieved NATO membership and applied for EU candidate status (Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination, 2009). In summer 2013, the Socialist Edi Rama was elected as the new prime minister, after Sali Berisha from the Democratic Party, who dominated Albanian politics since more than twenty years (Die Frankfurter Allgemeine, 26.6.2013)

Since the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Albania is a predominantly Muslim country with 70% Muslims, 20% Orthodox Christians and 10% Catholics. It is notable, that although the country was shattered by

many instable periods and subjected to different regimes, religion has never been a cause of conflict in Albania (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007; Young, 1999). The publicist Pashko Vasa (1825-1892) expressed the famous phrase that “the religion of Albania is Albanianism” (cited by Young 1999: 6). Antonia Young (1999) suggests that it is religious faith itself, which is significant for Albania’s national character and not the particular denomination.

During all this chaotic times of different state regimes and authorities, the ancient traditional law of Albania, the *Kanun*, dominated the life of the Albanians since centuries, especially in the northern highlands. The customary law system dictates every aspect of life; conduct rules, marriage, hospitality, legacy, land rights as well as retribution in cases of murder or theft. The first written version of the originally orally transmitted law is called the *Kanun i Leke Dukagjini*. It is named after Leke Dukagjini (1410-1481) and remains a very mysterious and relatively unknown person. It is not known if he was the author of this *Kanun* version or only named it. It is assumed that the *Kanun* existed a long time before it was written down for the first time. It emerged in the northern highlands of Lezha, Shala, Mirdita and Nikaj-Merturi. (Elsie, 2001) The *kanun* was sternly practiced and always remained more respected than state law systems that were brought to the highlands by the various regimes. Even after the independance of Albania in 1912, the mountainous north was barely affected by the control of the central government. Due to the remoteness of the area, the rules of the *kanun* remained to be practiced in this region of the country. The notorious “blood feuds”, for which Albania got internationally famous in the early 1990s, are part of the complicated revenge killing system of the *kanun* in order to reestablish the honor of the victims. Even when the iron grip of the communist regime outlawed blood feuds and their numbers declined considerably during that time, not all the long-lasting family feuds could be eliminated. After the fall of communism many dormant blood feuds re-emerged and disputes over land and water rights further deteriorated the situation. There are efforts to resolve blood feuds by mediating between the feuded families and by changing attitudes concerning revenge killings. Although particular family feuds still exist nowadays, many feuds could be solved. Still in other aspects of life, the orally transmitted *kanun* is still an undistinguishable part of northern Albanian life leading to a sometimes antagonistic co-existence of state and customary law. (Mustafa & Young, 2008)

3.2.2. Economic situation

The shift from the communist-state to a market-orientated economy had far reaching consequences for the social and economic development of Albania (Sallaku, Jojiç, Tota, & Fortuzi, 2010). Post-communist Albania has experienced two collapses of the central government in 1991 and 1997, leading to a further dramatic fall of the GDP of about 40% (EBRD, 1999). Next to the severe poverty all over the country the provision of security especially in the north has been inadequate to absent. Since the demise of communism, formal institutions only poorly function. This partly led to a reversion to traditional law, corruption and crime. As the focus of economic development has been in central or southern Albania to the detriment of the northern part of the country, unemployment and poverty is significantly higher in the rural mountainous north of the country as compared to the economically more developed regions in the south. (Betti et al., 2010; Lawson & Saltmarshe, 2000) After the fall of communism where the free movement of people was severely restricted, massive migration from rural areas to urban centers occurred (Fortuzi, Tota, Sallaku, & Musbelliu, 1997). This sudden and uncontrolled urbanization from the northern highlands to the towns led to dramatic socio-economic problems in the poor and unhygienic shanty towns (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007). Health care is still a pertinent problem in Albania as there are not enough medical services provided by the state and medicine is very expensive to provide. Thus, the treatment of chronic illnesses mostly leads to an accumulation of debts and causes severe economic problems to the household. (Lawson, McGregor, & Saltmarshe, 2000) Infant mortality and mortality of children under five years are comparatively high and many children are under- or malnourished (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007).

The first new reform after the transition had been land privatization. From 1990 until 2004, 564000 ha of agricultural land was distributed and privatized and about 450000 small farms were created (World Bank, 2008). Albanian farms are predominantly low productive subsistence farms without market links. The agricultural structure consists of millions of micro-farms and only a few large competitive farms organized by the state, commercial companies or cooperatives. Although this small subsistence farms produce little or no products for the market, they often provide food security and food sovereignty to many rural people. (Fortuzi et al., 1997) More than 50% of the population lives in rural areas and about 70% of the working force is employed in agriculture or related activities. Although Albania is an agricultural country, the trade balance for agricultural products remains negative. The main reasons for this weak trading position are a lack of organization with traders, underdeveloped market chains and

problems in the quality control of agricultural products. Several uni- and multilateral trade agreements (the WTO agreement and Free Trade Agreements with the EU) are supposed to offer possibilities for exports. Currently, 66 percent of forests and pastures are state owned, the rest is owned by communities and individuals. Mismanagement, illegal logging and soil degradation endanger the forest area. Albania does not export timber but some processed wood products are exported to Italy. Although poverty has been declining in the last decade, it still affects 18,5% of all Albanians. Half of those are living in extreme poverty. Next to the above mentioned lack of appropriate health care, the main problems for the rural population are a lack in infrastructure and education. Infrastructure is poorly developed, the roads are in a poor condition and still, many areas are inaccessible during the winter period. Water supplies are insufficient and most rural areas lack an organized sanitation system. Illiteracy has increased since the fall of communism and education levels are very low. Manufacturing and services are poorly developed in the rural areas and thus there are hardly any other sources of livelihood than agriculture. Many families are dependent on emigrant remittances. Thus, the diversification of economic activities is one of the priorities of poverty reduction and rural development in Albania. (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007)

One of the main obstacles for a sustainable rural development in Albania is the extremely difficult economic situation of the population. As farmers struggle to make their living they are constrained to use cheap chemical fertilizers and pesticides and to overexploit the soil. Besides, due to the low level of education most farmers are not aware of the environmental impacts of their activities (Kullaj, 2005). Also at the governmental level, environmental sustainability is still not considered a priority in Albania. The high level of poverty leads decision makers to favor a fast economic development to the detriment of environmental protection. (World Bank, 2008) Since the crisis in Kosovo in 1999 the EU provides more and more developmental aid to support Albanian progress by improving the poor road network and modernizing the airport of Tirana. The World Bank is involved in the Albanian energy sector and further developmental aid is provided by the EBRD, the IMF and by several bilateral developmental aid agreements with Italy, Germany and Austria. (Zambaku, 2006)

3.2.3. Geographical Background and Environmental Situation

Albania is a small country with a population of 3, 1 millions of people and a size of about 28,000 km². Most of the population is living in the coastal areas of the Adriatic Sea, which covers 25% of the

country. Albania is a very mountainous country, 60% of the country are mountain area. Only 24% of the land is classified as arable land, 36% of Albanian territory is forest area and 15% are pastures and highland meadows. Albania has a mediterranean climate with mild and high precipitation winters and hot, dry summers. Albania is rich in habitat types; the main ecosystems and habitats are broadleaf and coniferous forests, sand dunes, alluvial forests, river deltas, mediterranean shrubs, coastal lakes, inland lagoons, alpine meadows as well as continental and glacier lakes. Due to its rich landscape diversity, Albania is rich in biological diversity that maintains about 3,200 species of vascular plants and 756 vertebrate species. In the remote mountain areas of the North, populations of large predators like wolves, bears and lynx are present. Albania's virgin forests contain a rich diversity of characteristic bird communities. More than 91 globally threatened species exist in Albania. (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007)

Despite this, the country now faces several environmental problems from an unsustainable increase of human activities. As the waste management is insufficient all over the country, pollution is a widespread problem. Around Elbasan and Shkodra, industrial pollution is severe. Due to deforestation and overgrazing pressures, there are increasing problems with soil erosion and flooding in the last decade. Soil fertility is decreasing since the soils have received little fertilizers and animal manure since 1991. Along with that the water retention capacity of many spoils worsened because of mismanagement and overuse and increased incidence of pests and diseases further hinder a productive but sustainable agriculture. About 6% of Albania's territory is considered as protected area, with the objective to follow the principles of the EU Natura 2000 network. There are plans to more than double the nature conservation areas in Albania but the implementation of this plan as well as the efficient management of protected areas is hampered by a lack of funding. (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007) The rapid changes in the Albanian economy led to several environmental problems whereas the aquatic ecosystems suffered the most. Water pollution is highly evident especially in the urban centres like Shkodra, Tirana, Durres or Fieri due to a lack in wastewater management in industrial and urban areas. Solid waste is often dumped on riverbanks, as waste facilities are insufficient nearly throughout the country. Albania's freshwater resources are more and more threatened by the increasing demand of household water, water for industrial use, hydroelectric power generation and irrigation. (Cullaj et al., 2005) At the moment, a national strategy on the sustainable use of water resources does not exist. Also the marine ecosystems are seriously threatened from pollution, unsustainable use and mismanagement. (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007)

Despite the social and economic problems Albania faces, efforts are taken to encounter environmental issues. In the constitution of 1998, the preservation of a healthy environment is mentioned as the basis for a sustainable development in Albania and in 2001, the Ministry of Environment was formed. The Law of Environmental Protection was amended in 1998 and now covers a broad spectrum of environmental policy. (Cullaj et al., 2005) But although an important issue, environmental protection is currently not considered the highest priority as the urgent need of poverty alleviation and economic development override conservation (World Bank, 2008).

3.2.4. Tourism in Albania

Tourism in Albania is rarely documented in the times before the Second World War. Only a few reports are available from western travelers in all of which Albania is romantically described as a country of amazing landscape beauty and a mysterious and fascinating culture. First small efforts to establish tourism in Albania were taken during the times of monarchy in Albania in the late 1920s but traveling was restricted to the rich elites of the country. In the mid-1950s, during the times of communism, domestic tourism for recreational purposes of the working force was developed and also some facilities for international tourists were established. The state-owned tourism agency “Albturist” was developed for domestic and international tourism but it was not aimed to establish tourism as an economic sector. A lack of infrastructure and management allowed only tourist accommodations with a very low standard and made the travels to Albania exhaustive and difficult. There were several restrictions for international tourists in Albania during the communist times. The procedure to receive a visa for Albania was very complicated and even impossible for some states with difficult diplomatic relations to Albania. It was only possible to travel in fixed groups who had to stick closely together during their entire sojourn in Albania. Any contact to the Albanian population was prohibited and strict dress codes had to be followed. Therefore and because it was strictly forbidden for Albanians to leave the country during the communist period, domestic beach tourism was more common than international tourism. (Zambaku, 2006) Since the fall of communism in the early 1990s, the situation of tourism in Albania changed. The Albanian government as well as western development consultants identified tourism as a tool for a sustainable economic development of the country. Following the example of the neighboring countries Greece, Italy and Croatia, where tourism is an important source of income, tourism was assumed to bring fast and easy money to the economy of Albania. (Hall, 1999) Albania is rich in resources for tourism. Along with its enormous landscape diversity and pristine natural beauty, the traditional hospitality of the people as well as the fascinating cultural heritage offer high potential for tourism

development. Taking advantage of the countries weak governmental control and its parlous economic situation, coastal mass tourism was established by commercial entrepreneurs from the Mediterranean neighbor countries or from the Gulf States, leading to serious environmental and social problems which are partly still persistent nowadays. To avoid further coastal mass tourism development like it is common in South-eastern Europe, the Albanian government aims to establish small-scale niche tourism to promote regional development and mitigate rural poverty with a focus on environmental ecotourism and cultural tourism. (Hall, 1998) With the help of the UNDP, a national action plan on sustainable tourism was established and several programs were conducted to support a sustainable tourism development in Albania. (UNDP, 2006, 2011) The main objectives of the Albanian tourism policies are the support of traditional accommodation structures, to improve infrastructural development in the remote rural areas and to increase the living conditions of the host communities in a sustainable way but several obstacles counteracts these efforts. There is a weak system of environmental protection and management, a difficult investment climate, a lack of infrastructure and a lack of political support for the implementation and monitoring of sustainable tourism plans. (Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008) As an example, the Butrint National Park is one of the most important sites for ecotourism and archeological tourism in Albania. Although environmentally friendly ecotourism development was aimed, there is an increasing pressure from illegal construction, pollution, unsustainable development of aquaculture, illegal hunting and overgrazing in all the Butrint National Park territory. (Bego & Malltezi, 2011) Also ecotourism at Prespa Lake faces similar problems like water pollution from effluences, a lack in management capacity, infrastructure and community cooperation as well as an insufficient environmental management (Grazhdani, 2010). Lushaj et al. (2012) report various aspects that threaten the entire region of Lalzi Bay, where coastal ecotourism was developed; unsustainable land use, soil and water pollution, uncontrolled human activity and coastal damage, to name only a few problems for the region of Lalzi Bay. Thus, even if there are many opportunities and resources for tourism in Albania, continuing post-socialist economic and political instabilities, a lack of administrative transparency and a lack of management capacity and planning continue to limit these potentials (Hall, 2004). To develop sustainable tourism in post-communist countries, the careful integration of tourism in the local and regional economy by linking tourism to local agricultural products, manufactures and locally owned accommodation and hospitality elements is of high importance. Such linkages can indirectly stimulate sustainable practices like organic farming and increase the quality of local products. (Hall, 2000b) In addition, it is crucial to promote local ownership and to control and support social capital and cooperation (Roberts 2004 cited by Hall 200b). To develop tourism in a sustainable way, Albania has to

improve the implementation efficiency of strategic plans, complete the legal framework on tourism, urgently increase waste management efficiency, develop land use plans for tourism areas, increase the financing for the conservation of natural and cultural assets, invest in human resources and capital and ensure effective monitoring (Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008).

3.2.5. Tourism Development in *Thethi*

Thethi offers high potential for nature tourism development. Beside the breathtaking landscape, traditional culture and the hospitality of local people provide a good environment for tourism business. The area suffers from depopulation due to poverty and a lack of infrastructure and thus, the main reason for tourism development in *Thethi* is poverty alleviation and rural development. It is also aimed to mitigate the massive rural to urban migration. (Kruja & Giyrezi, 2011) From the 249 registered families in the Shala valley in 1991, only about twelve families remained in the village during the winter of 2007 (Mustafa & Young, 2008). Tourism in *Thethi* was developed in small-scale, locally owned family businesses. Accommodation, dining and other hospitality elements take place in the traditional family-owned stone-houses (Fig. 1). This approach is important for the concept of authenticity and generates greater income for the communities. (Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008) In 2005, the GTZ (German Agency for Technical Cooperation) started a project to develop tourism in *Thethi*. Before this project tourism was not present in the area. The project was elaborated with the objectives of poverty reduction, income generation, reduction of emigration and establishing the conditions for sustainable and ecologically compatible ecotourism. After a feasibility study in 2006, seven families created tourist accommodation in their houses. The GIZ supported each of these families with 2000 Euro to provide the necessary equipment to run a guesthouse. In 2007, two more families participated in the project and set up tourist accommodations. Beside the establishment of guesthouses, hiking and climbing maps were developed and consultancy on various tourism topics like accommodation standards, quality of service and customer needs was offered by the GIZ. (Hara 2009) Numerous articles and broadcasts at the national and international level have made *Thethi* one of the best known mountain destinations in Albania within only two years. In 2008, 5000 Tourists visited *Thethi* and tourism spending was estimated over 100000 Euro. Since then, tourism numbers considerably increased due to further promotion of the region and numerous developmental efforts by UNDP and non-governmental organizations. (Kruja & Giyrezi, 2011) Unfortunately, signs of negative tourism impacts

were already visible in *Thethi* only a short time after tourism initiated. Hara (2009) and Marchington (2010) recorded serious problems with pollution in the village due to the enormous increase of waste generated from tourism. As an organized waste management is missing, the villagers are driven to bury the increasing amount of waste, drop it on the riverbank or in the forest area or to burn it. There were also cases of social competition and inequality observed by Hara (2009) as the capacity of good governance is missing and only some families were involved in the first tourism project. Other families do not have the facilities and seed money to involve in tourism. Third actors like tour agencies from Tirana or Shkodra with an inappropriate vertical cooperation with local people play an important role in the tourism development of *Thethi*. This leads to a loss of tourism profit to the local residents and reduces community control. (Hara, 2009) Although tourism was intended to reduce poverty and promote rural development, there is concern that the current form of tourism in *Thethi* is not sustainable. There are negative environmental impacts, which could damage the key resource of the village – the pristine and intact environment of the area. There is an increasing demand of natural resources and an increase of solid waste and wastewater generation, putting further pressure on the fact that management systems are not existent. (Marchington, 2010) A report from the United Nations Environmental Program indicates that human impact in the area has increased significantly over the past decade and several environmental problems can be listed: Insufficient treatment of effluences and a lack of solid waste management, uncontrolled land use changes, illegal logging, habitat loss and fragmentation, increased soil erosion and so on. They state that the local people have a low ecological awareness and local institutions lack capacity to mitigate negative impacts on the environment. (UNEP & ENVSEC, 2010) Another problem of tourism development in *Thethi* is the lack of efficient communication and coordination between the numerous stakeholders. Multiple projects were developed in the same time independently, with little or no coordination and planning and the role of organized formal institutions is minimal. Even if some of the projects were planned carefully with the goal of a sustainable development, the cooperation between the different projects is insufficient. (Marchington, 2010) Allover, there is no monitoring and evaluation of the tourism development in *Thethi*. Especially, a holistic view looking at the whole development is important. (Hara, 2009; Marchington, 2010) Achieving a holistic picture of the villages' development with its most important driving forces and their mutual impacts is one important goal of this scenario analysis.



Figure 1: Traditional stone-houses in the center of *Thethi*.

4. Methodology

In this chapter the methodology of this study will be explained first in theory and second in practice, showing how each step of the scenario analysis in this case study was conducted.

4.1. Scenario Analysis in Theory

To shed light on the potential future development of the village *Thethi*, a scenario analysis was conducted for this study. The scenario technique was first developed by Kahn and Wiener (1967) and since then it has been widely used in business, strategic planning, sustainability sciences and environmental sciences and it can be transferred easily to other fields (e.g. Gurung & Scholz, 2008; Loukopoulos & Scholz, 2004; Mazzorana, Hübl, & Fuchs, 2009; Shaw et al., 2009; Swart et al., 2004; Walz et al., 2007). A scenario describes a hypothetical future state of a system and provides information on its development up to this state. This is done by selecting a sufficient set of the most important “impact factors” that describe the current state of the investigated system and highly influence its dynamics. A detailed analysis of the current system state is of high importance for every scenario analysis. By linking these impact factor set to a network and leveling their expected future development, a future scenario of the system can be drawn. Thus, a scenario is formally defined by the combination of characteristic future levels of all impact factors. (Scholz & Tietje 2002) Scenario exercises offer a useful tool for investigating possible future developments of a system in a structured but yet creative and intuitive manner. By analyzing the systems dynamics and the complex mutual impact network of the most important driving forces, plausible future developments of the system can be assessed. Scenarios can be presented in many different forms like images, graphs, tables or narrative texts. Narrative or illustrated approaches showed up to be the most useful to bring the scenario result to a broader audience and to reduce complexity. It is important to mention that considering uncertainty and possible surprises in the investigated high-complex systems, scenarios are neither forecasts nor predictions. The end-state of a scenario results from the assumptions made on how crucial driving forces may evolve and interact. Still, the part of uncertainty and surprise is unknown. (Alcamo & Henrichs, 2008) As scenarios always imply speculation and human estimation to a certain degree, scenarios could be called “unscientific” from the viewpoint of traditional quantitative science, which might be correct but beside the point. Scenarios deal with future conditions that science cannot specify. Thus, scenario exercises are an

approach that seeks to make necessary future speculations more transparent, more disciplined and thus easier to integrate into science and decision-making processes. (Parson, 2008) Especially for highly complex socio-ecological systems, scenario exercises can be a valuable tool to integrate information from a variety of disciplines yet reducing the complexity in a way that makes the results useful for scientists, policy-makers and lay people (e.g. Kok, Biggs, and Zurek 2007). Although the systematic way of thinking about the future in structured scenarios has a long history, there is no strict methodological frame about how to conduct a scenario analysis. As the range of different aims and the complexity of the investigated systems demand flexibility, this ambiguity can be considered as a strength (Swart et al., 2004). It is important to stress that every scenario analysis needs to be tailor-made on the specific goal and scope of the study. Every scenario analysis must be set up in an appropriate way to reach the specific research goal. (Heinrichs et. al 2009) There are qualitative and quantitative approaches for conducting a scenario analysis, both bearing specific advantages and disadvantages (Alcamo & Heinrichs, 2008). Quantitative scenario analyses rely on mathematical models and algorithms and are often used for simulating well-understood systems where appropriate data is available, changes are known to be persistent and the mathematical algorithms can be created with sufficient accuracy for simulation. As complexity increases, current system state descriptions are uncertain, causal interactions are not fully understood and qualitative factors are significant for change, quantitative approaches are not feasible anymore. This is often the case for socio-ecological systems. Qualitative approaches offer the possibility to give voice to important qualitative drivers of change that influence development such as human values, behaviors and attitudes. (Swart et al., 2004) Combinations of quantitative and qualitative approaches attempt to combine the advantages of both approaches (e.g. Raskin et al. 1998).

In this study, a qualitative approach was chosen primarily because the aim of this study is to investigate the future development of *Thethi* from a community's perspective. As human volition and human needs are important driving forces for a regions development, qualitative values like personal interests or attitudes are an essential part of this scenario analysis. Furthermore, there is not enough reliable data available for this case to conduct a quantitative analysis. Sustainability science must deal with the complex interplay of social, economic and environmental systems. As human actors play an important role in sustainable development, attitudes and perceptions of local stakeholders are crucial to address. Participatory approaches of scenario analysis are especially effective in addressing sustainability questions by incorporating values and preferences in the scenario analysis process itself (Swart et al., 2004). Integrating key stakeholders in the scenario process can increase the legitimacy and usefulness of

the scenarios and thus, participatory approaches of scenario exercises can perform better in helping to adapt to changing conditions. In addition, integrating stakeholders in the scenario process can incorporate the creativity as well as the eminent expertise of local stakeholders who mostly have a deeper understanding of the case than the scenario team. This transdisciplinary approach offers access to insider knowledge and information that would not have been accessible otherwise. Furthermore, participative scenario processes provide a tool for tanking the unique uncertainty into account that is introduced when the future is subject of human choices that have not yet been made. (Alcamo & Henrichs, 2008; Kok et al., 2007) Transdisciplinary scenario processes result in a richer picture and a deeper systemic understanding of the case. In addition, transdisciplinary scenario analyses are especially useful to acknowledge region-specific problems that are perceived the most pressing by the local community. (Brand, Seidl, Le, Brändle, & Scholz, 2013) The scenario procedure in this study is based on the formative scenario analysis framework provided by Scholz & Tietje (2002). This framework offers a strictly systematic, impact factor based construction of possible future states of a system which is much more transparent and less intuitive than other approaches (Wiek, 2002). The Formative Scenario Analysis (Scholz & Tietje 2002) comprises nine analytical steps. These nine analytical steps were adapted according to the specific goals of this case study. Not all steps of the formative framework were elaborated in this study due to time and resource limitations as well as due to a different research goal. As only direct impacts were assessed in this study, it was not necessary to conduct a MIC-MAC Analysis to calculate the indirect impacts. Furthermore, the step of the Consistency Analysis was not done as the scenarios in this study are community-built scenarios. Thus, the goal is not to find the most likely and consistent scenario, but to see how the community sees the village in 10 years. Possible inconsistencies in the community-drawn scenarios will be discussed for each scenario later on in the chapter “Discussion”. As only qualitative data was used in this study, no software was used for the scenario analysis.

4.2. Rapid Rural Appraisal in Theory

A “Rapid Rural Appraisal” (RRA) was conducted to gain insight to the current situation in the village. The outcome of the RRA was used for analyzing threats on the village and for describing the current state of each impact factor (Step 4 of the Scenario Analysis).

The methods and approaches of RRA first came up in the late 1970s with the goal of using more cost-effective and time-efficient methods in rural research and developmental planning. The basic principles

of RRA methods are “optimal ignorance - knowing what it is not worth knowing – and proportionate accuracy – recognizing the degree of accuracy required” (Chambers, 1981:1). Thus, the RRA methods and techniques are less rigid and exhaustive than most traditional methods and yet provide a better balance between cost and use and result in high quality information. A silent methodological revolution was needed to shift traditional rural research from top-down to bottom-up; starting to recognize the fact that learning directly from rural peoples indigenous knowledge is more cost-effective and efficient than other conservative research methods like questionnaire surveys who proved to be highly time consuming, difficult to process and boring to use. When researchers started to use these quick and new techniques of RRA instead of conservative statistical methods, they first feared to lose their professional credibility, as they did not conform to standard research norms. But in the late 1980s, the RRA approaches were more and more accepted to bring out a broad range and high quality of information that would not have been accessible by using traditional methods. For many purposes, RRA showed to come out better whenever it was tested against traditional methods. (Chambers, 1990) Beside its transdisciplinarity, another important principle of RRA is to use multiple approaches to investigate the same question with different methods for cross-checking and fulfilling the picture. There is a long list of methods that can be used for RRA ranging from the use of secondary data and archive information to direct observation and personal participation in activities, conducting different kinds of interviews and group discussions, mapping, diagramming, ranking processes and many more (Chambers, 1990).

4.3. The Scenario Analysis for Ecotourism Development in *Thethi*

In the following, a detailed description of the 7 steps of this Scenario Analysis will be given (Fig. 2). The proceeding of the Scenario Snalysis in this study was adapted from Scholz & Tietje (2002).

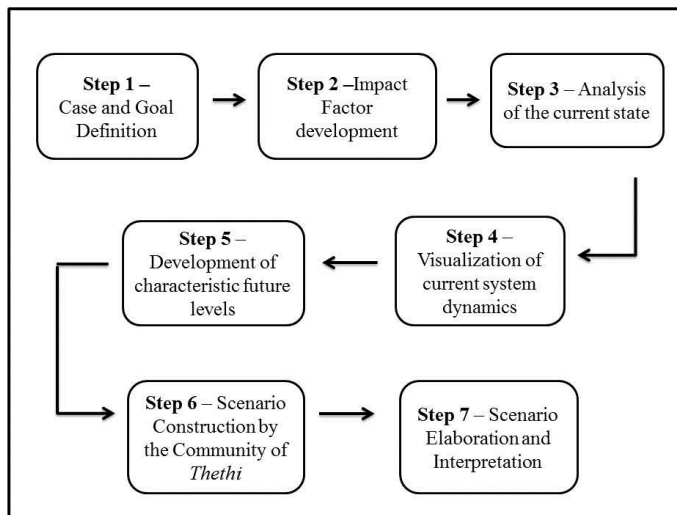


Figure 2: shows an overview of the 7 steps in the process of this Scenario Analysis. (Adapted from Scholz & Tietje 2002).

4.3.1. Step 1: Case and Goal Definition

First, it is very important to define the case with its time and space limitations and to provide a clear physical definition of the system. A concise case definition is indispensable to make sure that different people will interpret the case in the same way. The goal of the scenario analysis must be clearly defined from the very beginning.

4.3.2. Step 2: Impact Factor Development

In this step, the most important impact factors that describe the current system characteristics and influence its future development are defined. It is important to stress, that the set of impact factors should include a wide range of sustainability issues while their number must be as small as possible to avoid an information overload during the scenario construction phase later on. (Scholz & Tietje 2002) The impact factors for this study were developed in two steps. Previous to the fieldwork, I preselected 19 impact factors with the help of literature review, brainstorming and mind mapping. As I already was familiar with the village from two previous stays there, I had a slightly better picture of the situation than it would have been possible without knowing the village from previous visits. Trying to cover all important issues of sustainability, the pre-selection of impact factors was elaborated in the three domains of sustainability (Society, Economy and Ecology).

The final set of impact factors was developed after the analysis of the current situation on site (see Step 3) in a group discussion with a team of 4 experienced researchers and experts of the region (Mark Rupa,

Peter Hobson, Avni Hajdari and Evin Toromani). Out of the preselected 19 impact factors, the expert team identified the most important ones for sustainability issues in *Thethi* development and condensed them to the final set of 10 impact factors. The study team elaborated a clear definition of each impact factor to make sure that everybody has the same understanding of what the impact factors represent. The current state of these 10 impact factors was discussed according to the findings from the Rapid Rural Appraisal (see Step 3), specific knowledge of the experts and previous information from secondary sources. Information from the conducted interviews with locals was also integrated into the description of the current impact factor state.

4.3.3. Step 3: Analysis of the current system state

A detailed analysis of the current situation in the research area with its current system dynamics is the basis of every scenario analysis. This step enables the researcher to determine crucial driving forces, define the most important system components and get an insight in the systems complex impact network. Furthermore, the analysis of the current state is inevitable to define the final characteristic set of impact factors (see Step 2). The analysis of the current system state was conducted in cooperation with the project “Cooperative Transboundary Learning for Ecosystem Management” by the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (Ibisch, 2013). As the project team chose the village of *Thethi* for a case study in their study course and our research interests were partly coherent, I could cooperate with the project to analyze the current situation in *Thethi*. The project partners from South-East Europe were the Shkodra University “Luigj Gurakuqi” and the Agricultural University of Tirana (Albania), the University of Montenegro and the University of Prishtina (Kosovo). This cooperation offered me the chance of meeting several environmental and sustainability experts who were partly experts of the study region, as well as the essential support in translating from Albanian to English by the Albanian-speaking participants from Kosovo and Albania. In addition, a high number of Albanian-speaking junior researchers and the support of experienced scientists made it possible to conduct more interviews and analyze the current situation more detailed than I could have done on my own. In the following, the proceeding of the RRA to analyze the current system state in cooperation with the project “Cooperative Transboundary Learning for Ecosystem Management” is described.

- Desktop Study: First, secondary sources were analyzed like maps, satellite pictures, photographs and existing literature. In addition, experts of the region held talks about the regions special natural and cultural characteristics to start off with a high level of knowledge about the study region prior to the observation on site.
- Direct Observation: For observing the situation on site, the participants and professors of the project divided up in four groups to investigate the natural subsystems “river”, “forest”, “pasture” and “agriculture” of the village. The river system was analyzed with regard to its main characteristics and human impacts on the river system. Five sample points with a distance of about 50m between each other were investigated and a 200 m lateral transect of the river was elaborated to ensure that impacts that influence the river system from farer away are noted as well. Every visible impact on the river (natural or human) was discussed in the groups and the resulting information or arising questions were shared with the rest of the team later on. The lowland meadows of the village were analyzed in terms of use/overuse and/or abandonment of meadow areas. In the forest area, the groups analyzed the species composition of the shrub zone and the forest area, as well as the health state of the tree populations. Human impacts and possible threats on these systems were identified.
- Analysis of Uses and Threats: In a group-workshop after the direct observation, the participants of the project defined the most important ecosystem services for human-wellbeing of the natural subsystems “Forest”, “River”, “Agriculture” and “Pasture”. The previously investigated impacts that possibly threaten the sustainable use of these ecosystem services were discussed and defined (Fig. 3). The Analysis of Uses and Threats is useful to see which threats can possibly be related with tourism development and which threats were identified be the community.

THREATS	SERVICES / USES	BIODIVERSITY OBJECTS	INTERVIEWS	THREATS	SERVICES / USES
FOREST FIRE LOGGING PESTS AVALANCHES ILLEGAL HUNTING CLIMATE CHANGE LANDSLIDES	CONSTRUCTION / TIMBER RECREATION HUNTING CLEAN AIR CLEAN AIR SOIL PROTECTION MEDICINAL/AROMATIC PLANTS WATER QUALITY	FORESTS	X X X X X X X	FOREST FIRE LOGGING PESTS AVALANCHES ILLEGAL HUNTING CLIMATE CHANGE LANDSLIDES	
POLLUTION EFFLUENCE EXTRACTION OF STONES, GRAVEL DWELLINGS CLIMATE CHANGE INFRASTRUCTURE ILLEGAL FISHING	STONES / RAW MATERIALS ENERGY / HYDRO-PLANT WATER SUPPLY (DRINKING & IRRIGATION) FISHING RECREATION	RIVERS	X X X X X X X	POLLUTION EFFLUENCE (waste water) EXTRACTION OF STONES, GRAVEL DWELLINGS (Houses) CLIMATE CHANGE INFRASTRUCTURE ILLEGAL FISHING	
ARABLE LAND LOSS POPULATION / TOURIST GROWTH AGING FARMERS CLIMATE CHANGE PESTS MARKET PRESSURES BUILDINGS	FOOD INCOMES TOURISM FODDER FERTILIZER (ORGANIC)	AGRI-SYSTEMS	X X X X X X X		
OVERGRAZING DECREASING NUMBER OF CATTLE MEDICINAL & AROMATIC (ILLEGAL HARVESTING) POPULATION & TOURISM GROWTH BUILDINGS, NEW HOUSES INFRASTRUCTURE	FOOD (MEAT & DAIRY) GRAZING HONEY PROD FODDER INCOME MEDICINAL & AROMATICS AESTHETIC	PASTURES / MEADOWS	X X X X X X X		

Figure 3: Workshop-table of Uses and Threats of the Subsystems “forest”, “river”, “Agricultural System” and “Pasture/Meadow area” elaborated in a group workshop.

- Interviews with local community members: After the identification of different impacts and threats on the natural subsystems during the direct observation phase, six casual interviews with locals were conducted to collect further information about the current developmental state of the village, the use of natural resources by the local people and which threats on the natural sub-systems are the most severe in their point of view. Questions that came up previously during the direct observation phase were asked to the villagers to fulfill this knowledge gaps. The interviews were conducted casually and open; with only a few previously defined questions, by the Albanian-speaking participants of the project. The information was translated to the rest of the team after each interview. After the interviews, the previously defined threats were ranked according to the view of the villagers in a simple system of: x=low threat, xx= high threat, xxx= very high threat (Fig. 3). Some identified risks are direct threats for the ecosystem itself and only indirectly threaten the community, but some risks also directly endanger the community. For example, “infrastructure construction” is a threat for the river ecosystem but “floods” are a threat to the community coming from the river subsystem. The Analysis of these threats helps to find out which threats derive from tourism business or are connected with it. Including local community members helps to complete

the assessment of risks and enables to see if there is awareness about the relationship between the identified threats and tourism development.

- To collect, visualize and sum up all the gathered information, simple maps of the village were established showing all the identified impacts and threats on the system.

4.3.4. Step 4: Visualization of current system dynamics

The visualization of the current system dynamics is useful to get a holistic picture of the situation on site. The mutual influences of all impact factors and their strength is estimated and visualized.

4.3.4.1. Impact Matrix

The set of impact factors is listed within a two-dimensional table and the direct, current interactions between the factors (row on column) are assessed with a three-scaled rating. Like this, both-sided impacts of the factors and the impact factor strength can be described and visualized. The impact factor strength is rated by the following system:

0 = No direct impact

1 = Low direct impact

2 = Strong direct impact

The assessment of the impact factor strength was done after the personal observation of the current situation on site. After the matrix was fulfilled, the activity and the passivity scores of the impact factors were calculated. The sum of the rows corresponds to the activity and the sum of the columns corresponds to the passivity. Activity refers to the sum of direct impacts one impact factor has on all the other impact factors. Passivity is the sum of impacts that all other impact factors have on one impact factor. This description of the mutual impacts enables to further process and visualize the collected information about the systems dynamics.

4.3.4.2. System Grid and System Graph

The System Grid offers a visualization of the individual behavior of each impact factor. In a two-dimensional coordinate system where the x-axis stands for the passivity and the y-axis stands for the activity of the impact factors, the impact factors are presented according to their level of Passivity or

Activity, respectively. The mean value of the total activity and passivity divides the System Grid into four quadrants:

- Active impact factors with a high influence on other factors are presented in the upper left quadrant of the grid.
- Passive impact factors that are highly influenced by other factors are presented at the bottom of the grid in the right quadrant.
- Buffer factors are presented at the bottom of the grid in the left quadrant. These factors are neither very active, nor very passive.
- Factors that were rated above average for passivity and activity are placed in the upper right quadrant. These factors are ambivalent factors.

The System Graph is a structured visualization of the complex impact network of the system that shows how the factors are interlinked between each other. Direct influences are presented with arrows, the orientation of the arrows indicate the direction of influences. To avoid an information overload, only strong impacts are presented in the system graph. The numbers above each impact factor box show the Passivity (left) and the Activity (right) values of each impact factor. The graphs for this study were elaborated in Microsoft Excel or Microsoft Power Point.

4.3.5. Step 5 - Development of characteristic future levels for each impact factor

To create a scenario, characteristic future levels of the impact factors have to be established. The levels were defined appropriate for each particular impact factor. (For example: -1 = the impact factor will decrease, 0 = the impact factor will not change, 1 = the impact factor will increase) Not all impact factors have 3 levels, the future levels were elaborated according to the particular impact factor properties. In this study, there are between two and four levels developed, depending on the particular impact factor. Still, for each impact factor at least two quite antagonist future levels have to be defined (Wiek, 2002). As a scenario is a combination of characteristic levels of all impact factors (Scholz & Tietje 2002), the definition of each impact factors characteristic future level according to the villager's future descriptions (Step 6) will bring out different scenarios which describe a possible future state of the system.

4.3.6. Step 6 - Leveling of impact factors

In this study, the scenario development, thus the leveling of impact factors, was done by the community of *Thethi*. Different members of the community were chosen for interviews to see if there is a difference in their constructed scenarios. From the six conducted interviews, three interviewees are involved in tourism and three are not. Despite of this separation, it was intrinsically planned to also separate the sample group by sex but unfortunately in the field it showed up to be more difficult to find women for an interview. Thus, only one interview could be arranged with a woman, the other five interviews were done with male interviewees. One scenario was elaborated according to an interview with the head of the village. This key informant interview was also an important source of information despite of the scenario construction process itself. The names of the interviewees will not be mentioned in this thesis due to privacy reasons. Age and tourism involvement of the interviewees is written next to each scenario narrative in the results section.

The interviews were done in open, semi-structured interviews with the help of the Albanian-speaking students of the project “Cooperative Transboundary Learning for Ecosystem Management”. The first question was chosen very open to encourage the interviewees to freely imagine and speak about his or her personal future scenario of the village in the year 2023. This open initial question also had the goal to see what the personal priorities in question of the development of *Thethi* are, thus, which impact factors are mentioned first by the villagers. If an impact factor was mentioned in the narrative, the interviewer wrote down the chosen future level immediately. The interviews were done by groups of between two and four Albanian-speaking students, which made it possible that the interviewer could focus only on speaking while the others could listen and take notes. Depending on whether or not the interviewees mentioned the impact factors in their narrative, each impact factor was questioned particularly by the interviewer. During and after each interview, the author and the translators, according to the future vision of the interviewee, leveled the impact factors.

4.3.7. Step 7 - Scenario elaboration and interpretation

According to the future levels chosen by the villagers in the interviews, the scenarios were written by the author intuitively as a narrative. Possible inconsistencies in the community-drawn scenarios were not considered by the author as the scenarios should clearly show the communities perspective and should not be changed in order to reach sound coherence.

5. Results

5.1. Step 1: Case and Goal Definition

The goal of the study is to investigate the future development of the village *Thethi* from a community's viewpoint and to see if there is potential for ecotourism in the scenarios described by the villagers. The main focus lies on investigating the community's expectations from tourism development and to see what their priorities are as well as to find out if the community is aware of possible negative tourism trade-offs. The end-time of the scenario analysis was set for the year 2023. The scenario analysis is a useful tool to capture an area's development from a holistic point.



Figure 4: Location of *Thethi*. Northern Albania. Source: <http://www.thurgauerzeitung.ch/lebensart/reisen-freizeit/art119504,3439944> (07.10.2013)

Thethi National Park is located in the northern Albanian Alps near the border of Montenegro (Fig. 4). The physical boundaries for this scenario analysis are the borders of the National Park *Thethi*. The National Park *Thethi* officially exists since the 21st November 1966, covering an area of 2630 ha. The National Park contains the upper Shala valley including the source of the Shala River – the springs of

Okoli. The mountain peaks of Radohima, Arapi and Alise surround the glacier-shaped valley. The National Park area is mostly covered by forest (64% or 1680 ha), the rest of the area consists of pasture areas and alpine rocky areas. The administration of *Thethi* National Park works within the organizational structure of the Shkodra Directorate of the Forestry Service of Albania. *Thethi* National Park is neighbored by the National Park “*Lugina e Valbones*” established on 15 August 1996, which comprises 8000 ha. The personnel of both National Parks accounted only 8 people in 2010. (UNEP & ENVSEC, 2010) The village of *Thethi* is a dispersed settlement comprising the 10 neighborhoods of *Okol*, *Nik-Gjonaj*, *Gjecaj*, *Gjelaj*, *Nen Rreth*, *Gjecaj*, *Ndrejaj*, *Kolaj*, *Uljaj*, *Grunas*, and *Nderlysaj* (Fig.5). (Galaty et al., 2005)

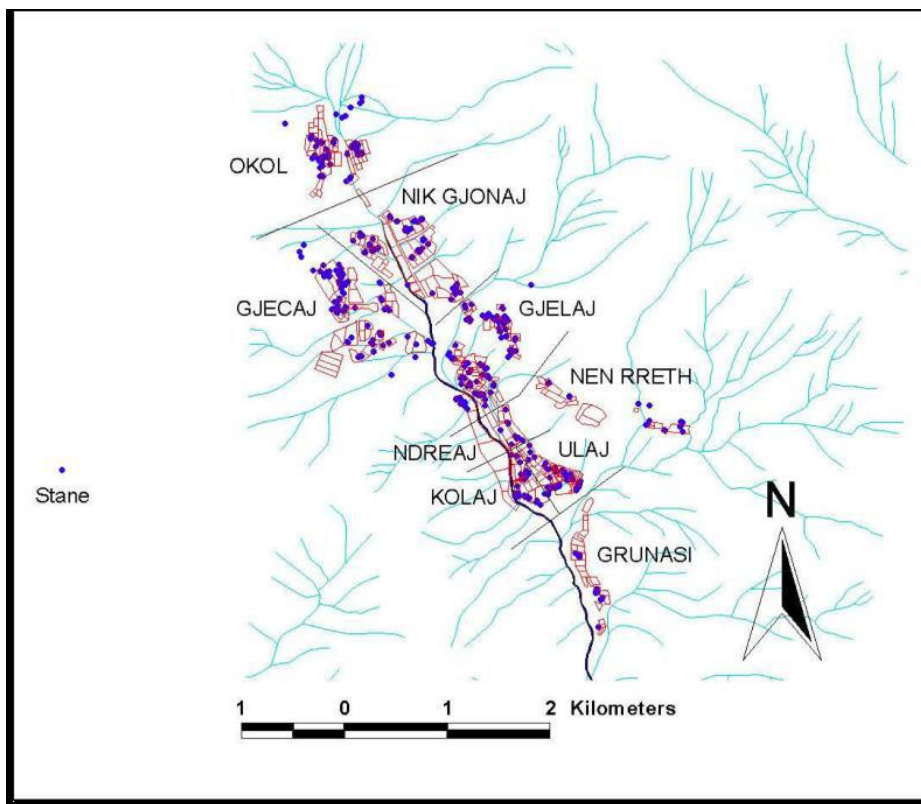


Figure 5: Map of the 10 neighborhoods of the village Thethi. The Shala River is indicated by the black line and the blue lines surrounding the village show the tributaries of Shala River. This research was conducted in the center (lower Gjelaj and Gjecaj) and in the northern part of Thethi. (Source: Galaty et al., 2005)

5.2. Step 2: Impact Factors

Table 1 shows the final set of ten impact factors listed in the three domains of sustainability; each impact factor is clearly defined. The environmental and the economic domain contain three impact factors each,

and the social domain contains four impact factors. This impact factors represent the most crucial driving forces for *Thethi* development.

Table 1: shows the set of ten final impact factors with their definitions.

Domain	Impact Factor	Definition
Environmental	Environmental Quality	ecosystem function and resilience, population maintenance and species sustainability, biodiversity protection efforts and individual conservation behavior
	Pollution Management	generation of solid waste and wastewater, pollution management, pollution effects on the community and the environment
	Ressource Utilisation	dependency on natural resources, availability of natural resources, way of resource utilization
Social	Human Well-Being	education level, health care, cultural and spiritual values, community and family cohesion, economic situation of the community, social equity
	Population Demography	emigration, birth/death rate, population growth, aging of community
	Food Security	land use change, decline in traditional/subsistence farming, livestock number, competition for land use, food sovereignty, food import
	Governance	implementation efficiency of laws/regulations of the national park, law enforcement, awareness of legislation among community
Economic	Tourism	way of accommodation, tourist number, benefits for locals, community empowerment and control, social capital
	Energy Security	energy sources, energy demand, energy reliability
	Economic/Technologic Development	new technologies, construction activities, developmental trends, investment (foreign/community)

5.3. Step 3: Analysis of the current state

During a Rapid Rural Appraisal, information about the current system state was collected. Assessing the services and uses of the four observed natural subsystems “Forest”, “River”, “Agriculture” and “Pasture” and possible threats on them enabled the research team to get an insight about the current environmental situation, how local people use the ecosystem services of the region and which threats on the natural subsystems they identify most severe for the community. Furthermore, the assessment of

uses and threats showed how disturbances of these nature subsystems would affect the local community directly or indirectly. As tourism impacts on the natural environment do not only affect pristine nature areas but also cultivated land, these four natural subsystems were chosen for investigation. Cultivated land is an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of a region and as cultivated land provides a habitat for many species, it is also ecologically highly valuable. A detailed description of the current impact factor state was possible after the analysis of the current situation in the village.

5.3.1. Assessment of Uses and Threats

Table 2 shows the result of the Assessment of Uses and Threats for the natural subsystems “Forest”, “River”, “Agriculture” and “Pasture”. The threats observed by the research team (Tab. 2) were then discussed with six local informants and ranked according to their severity in the view of the villagers (Tab. 3). Table 3 shows the most severe threats for each subsystem according to the opinion of the interviewees. The ranking in Table 3 reflects the severity of the threat.

Table 2: shows the uses and services provided by the natural sub-systems and threats that were observed during the personal observation phase of the RRA.

Risks/Threats	Services/Uses	Natural Sub-System
Logging Forest Fire Pests (<i>Thaumetapoea pinivora</i>) Hunting Avalanches Extreme Weather Landslides Pollution Species Change	Timber extraction Use of NTFP Air Quality Water Quality Erosion Protection Protection against Avalanches and Landslides Hunting Recreation Value Honey	Forest
Infrastructure Construction Floods Altered Riverbed Extraction of Gravel Pollution Effluences Eutrophication Extreme Weather Fishing Hydropower Plants	Water supply Extraction of construction material Energy supply Irrigation Fishing	River
Arable land loss Aging of farmers Land use change Extreme Weather Pests Market Pressure Loss of traditional farming	Food Income Fodder	Agriculture
Overgrazing in the lowland Abandonment of pasture areas in the highlands Decreasing cattle number Land use change Reduction of medicinal Plants	Food (Meat and Dairy) Honey Production Fodder Grazing Medicinal Plants Organic Fertilizer	Pasture

The community uses the “Forest” subsystem for many different purposes (Tab. 2). Timber extraction and the gathering of non-timber-forest-products (see also Pieroni 2008) as well as hunting are the main direct uses of the forest subsystem. The local community did not mention other essential ecosystem

services like air, water and soil quality protection. The value of the forest as a defense against avalanches and landslides is of high importance for the community of *Thethi*. Extreme weather, forest fires and intensive logging are identified as the biggest threats for the forest (Tab. 3). A loss of forest cover in the valley would increase the risk of avalanches and landslides for the community. As the community noted a longer and thicker snow cover in the last years (described by “extreme weather”), the risk of avalanches in winter is rising. Also the risk of flooding in spring is rising with the changing weather conditions. Protection against soil erosion thus is of high importance.

The river is used for water supply in the entire village and the agriculture, as well as for energy generation and the extraction of construction material (Tab. 2). Due to this high use, the river subsystem is getting more and more altered. This change of the river subsystem in combination with changing weather conditions increases the risk of flooding which is one of the biggest threats for the community. Beside the increasing risk of flooding, the biggest threat for the river according to the villagers is pollution from solid waste as well as pollution from effluences (Tab. 3). This is also reflected in the fact, that the local community does not anymore consider the river water potable.

For the agricultural system, the biggest identified threats according to the villagers were the aging of farmers and arable land loss due to land use changes and competition on land use (Tab. 3). As the younger generation of the community either leaves the village for finding better economic possibilities or tries to profit from tourism business, the agriculture of *Thethi* does not have enough follower farmers. This leads to a loss of traditional farming practices. Changes in land use due to the changing economic priorities in the village also threaten the agriculture by the loss of arable land although by this time only pasture areas and orchards were transformed for tourism business.

There is a decline in cattle number. The pasture areas in the village are overused whereas other pasture areas in the highlands are abandoned and developed shrub succession states (Tab. 2). There is a decline in the number of medicinal plants, which was noted as a high threat for the community (Tab. 3) as some villagers sell the medicinal plants as an additional source of income. Land use change in *Thethi* affects the pasture area and some pasture areas are already abandoned or used for other purposes like camping sites for tourism.

Table 3: shows a ranking of the most severe risks identified by the community for each nature sub-system. The ranking was done by the research team according to the opinion of the interviewees.

Forest	1) Avalanches and Landslides 2) Forest fire 3) Logging 4) Extreme Weather
River	1) Pollution 2) Floods 3) Infrastructure Construction 4) Gravel Extraction
Agriculture	1) Aging Farmers (loss of traditional farming practices) 2) Arable land loss / Land use change
Pasture	1) Reduction of medicinal plants 2) Overgrazing 3) Land use change

5.3.2. Current State of impact factors

In the following, a precise description of every impact factors current state is presented as a result of the analysis of the current state.

5.3.2.1. Environmental Quality

The Environmental Quality in *Thethi* and the surrounding National Park is currently very high and ecosystem functions are mostly intact. All the area is rich in biodiversity and the provided ecosystem services are inevitable for the local communities. Though, signs of ecosystem changes and pollution effects are visible as the current state of biodiversity protection efforts and efficiency in the area is rather low. Due to the extremely difficult economic situation of the community, priorities lie elsewhere. Nevertheless, local people traditionally highly respect natural values as the importance of preserving nature is already mentioned in *Kanun*, the ancient, orally transmitted common law of the region. Thus, even if environmental education per se is low among the community, traditional values provide the principle understanding for the importance of nature conservation. Changes in species composition are recently visible and noticed by the local community. There is a decline in some mammal species like Lynx, wolf, wild boar, brown bear and rabbit whereas other species increase like Fox, marten and chamois. The large predators as wolf and brown bear are still hunted as a trophy and increasing

anthropogenic disturbance as the fragmentation of landscape is likely to be a problem for these large mammal populations.

Also the flora shows changes in species composition, local people investigate some new species, and the number of traditional medicinal plants (mostly *Origanum vulgare*, *Thymus vulgaris*, *Hypericum maculatum*, *Agrimonia eupatoria*, and *Gentiana lutea*) is decreasing. The reasons for this change in species composition is not clear, local informants mentioned extreme weathers or changes in land use as possible reasons. In the pine forest area (mostly *Pinus heidrachii* and *Pinus nigra*) the caterpillar *Thaumetopoea pinivora* is causing high damage by feeding on the apical meristem of the trees and thus inhibiting growth. There are two approaches discussed to fight this pest. One is to introduce beetles of the species *Calosoma*. These beetles are known to feed on caterpillars but still, this approach was not yet tried in *Thethi*. The second approach is quite pragmatic: By smartly fixing a plastic foil on the trunk of the trees, the caterpillars are not anymore able to climb to the top of the trees as they are blocked by the plastic bag. This method is successfully used in the area. Artificially planted *Robinia pseudoacacia* on the river bank with the aim of mitigating erosion could be a problem in the future as the exotic, nitrogen-fixing *Robinia pseudoacacia* is considered to be an invasive species potentially threatening existing forest ecosystems by changing the nutrient dynamics of the systems (Malcolm, Bush, & Rice, 2008; Rice, Westerman, & Federici, 2004). However, the impact of this species in *Thethi* is not known. A governmental forest service planted other economic plants like *Juniperus sp.* and *Corylus avellana* in the shrub zone on the edge of the forest area as an additional source of income. The natural run of the river was strongly altered in the last years by building small bridges, dams and a road nearby and by trying to mitigate the problem of flooding, which constitutes a high risk every year for the buildings and agricultural lands near the river.

5.3.2.2. Waste Management

At the moment, the waste management in the village is insufficient to handle the increasing waste and sewage water generation due to tourism. Solid waste pollution is visible throughout the village, in the Shala River and in the forests surrounding the village. There are efforts of waste management like newly installed trash bins in the village and community incentives to collect and transport solid waste to Shkodra. Also the GIZ Albania had a program to collect and remove solid waste in *Thethi* every 10 days. Still, those efforts are inefficient and clearly insufficient to sustainably solve the problem of pollution in *Thethi*. The increasing generation of sewage water due to the rising tourist number is a

crucial problem in the village. Each house has a “septic tank” to collect the produced wastewater, but these tanks are not isolated from the environment. Basically these “septic tanks” are more or less a hole in the ground where sewage water is discharged. Consequently, this wastewater diffuses into the soil, in the groundwater and later on in the River. Signs of eutrophication in the River are partly visible, indicated by a higher amount of makrophytes in the river and more biofilm cover on the sediment.

Recently, the community declared the river water as not anymore drinkable. This change in water quality happened quite quickly compared to the situation in 2008, when the locals considered the water of the Shala River drinkable.

5.3.2.3. *Energy Security*

At the moment, the electricity for the entire village is derived from two rather ancient hydropower plants installed in the 60ties under Chinese government. Whereas during communism, electricity was reliable and sufficient, the energy security in *Thethi* decreased after the fall of communism and power blackouts were common due to the bad condition of the power supply lines. Electricity reliability is getting better now as there is community effort to repair the existing power supply lines. In addition, first solar panels were installed with support of the GIZ as the energy demand is rising due to tourism and renewable energy sources are aimed to provide sustainable energy sources.

5.3.2.4. *Population Demography*

The demography of *Thethi* is dominated by emigration and an aging of community. After the fall of communism in 1991, most of the inhabitants moved to *Shkoder*, which is about 78km from *Thethi*, in order to find better economic possibilities. The village consists of 162 houses of which nowadays only approximately 60 are inhabited during the summer season. In July 2007, only eighteen families were living in *Thethi* permanently as the village is absolutely isolated during the winter period (Galaty et al., 2005). Even if the road conditions bettered significantly since 2005, the village still remains inaccessible during most of the winter period. According to the head of the village, there are about 5 births per year in community of *Thethi* but most of the women go to *Shkodra* to give birth. He estimates a percentage of 30% young (<50 years) and 70% old (>50years) people at the moment. The current trend suggests that recent developments like tourism businesses, better road connection and more reliable electricity leads to less emigration or remigration and a higher amount of young people, at least during the summer season.

5.3.2.5. *Economic/Technologic Development*

The village *Thethi* is changing rapidly in terms of economic development and construction activities. There is a new cellphone connection, there are TVs in some houses and tourism business is increasing rapidly since the first tourism incentives in 2005. Many old, traditional stone houses are newly restored and transformed into guesthouses. Several new restaurants and cafes opened as a result of increasing tourism. Still, there is no internet connection in *Thethi*. Four computers were provided to the school of *Thethi* by UNDP. Although there were some new technological incentives in *Thethi* since the start of tourism, there is still a very low level of technology and economic possibilities are restricted to either tourism or traditional farming.

5.3.2.6. *Tourism*

Compared to 2008, when 10 families offered accommodation to tourists and about 5000 tourists visited the village, the number of tourists was increasing rapidly as in summer 2013 the tourist number is estimated by the head of the village to range between 10 000 – 12 000 and the number of guesthouses increased up to 30 houses. All guesthouses are locally-owned family businesses in the traditional stone houses of *Thethi*. At the moment, a big part of tourism money does not reach the local community directly as foreign tourism agencies from *Shkodra* or *Tirana* organize the stay in *Thethi*. This big role of third actors in the recent tourism development leads to a loss of tourism profit for the locals as well as a loss of control and decision making power. Another problem is the existing disparity between families who are involved in tourism and those who are not. Depending on the location of the family's houses, the ones who live in the center of *Thethi* are likely to profit more from tourism than those who live in the more remote areas of the village. This social imbalance can cause or is maybe already causing social problems of competition among the community. Negative tourism impacts on the environment are increasing with the increasing tourist numbers as environmental management and careful tourism planning is missing.

5.3.2.7. *Food Security*

Before the establishment of tourism in *Thethi*, the only economic activity was traditional agriculture and pastoralism. Each family holds a few animals; cows, pigs, goats or sheep, and each family owns some land for small-scale agriculture. Potatoes and maize are the staple food, together with a few additional vegetables and fruits. Dairy products like cheese and yoghurt are produced locally and built a basic food for local people. Vegetables are harvested in summer and conserved for the winter season by lacto-

fermentation. Due to the climatic conditions and the short summer season, the range of vegetables that can be cultivated in *Thethi* is limited. Wheaten to produce flour is imported from *Shkodra* or neighboring villages in the lowlands, as well as other products that cannot be grown in the valley. There is one greenhouse existing in the village, which enables the owners to grow vegetables that would not grow in the area without a greenhouse. Due to the alternative income source of tourism business, the number of cattle in *Thethi* is declining, which leads to the abandonment of pasture areas (visible in shrub succession dominated by *juniperus communis*) in the higher altitudes and an over-grazing of the lower meadows in the village. Food and drinks for tourist demands are imported from *Shkodra* as well. First signs of land use changes are visible. Orchards and meadows are abandoned in favor of camping sites for tourism. So far there is no visible loss in forest cover due to tourism and agricultural land is as well not abandoned in favor of tourism sites. The agriculture of *Thethi* is low productive but still provides the main livelihood for the residents.

5.3.2.8. *Resource Utilization*

Currently, people in *Thethi* make a high use of natural resources. They use wood from the forest for cooking and heating, water from the river and springs for drinking and household use. Stones from the riverbed are extracted for construction material. Non-timber forest products are collected for food and medicinal plants are used for traditional health care. There were 18 species of medicinal plants identified during an ethnobotanical study conducted in 2008. All together, the result of this study found 79 plant taxa which are used for food, medicine or handicraft purpose (Pieroni, 2008). As the water of the river is considered not anymore potable after only five years of tourism business in the village, each house individually uses the surrounding springs to provide drinking water for the family. Illegal logging is still a problem in *Thethi* National Park as law enforcement is inefficient. The use of natural resources is not regulated or monitored anyhow, so the danger of unsustainable use is present considering the increasing tourist number and thus the increasing resource demand.

5.3.2.9. *Human Well-Being*

The level of education in *Thethi* is very low at the moment. There are not enough children to develop education levels higher than elementary school. Many children do not go to school as they are supposed to help their families with the housework and to stay with and take care of the livestock during the day. Due to the long isolation and the remoteness of the area, the interest in education among children is rather low and they are not aware of the importance of education for their future life. In 2008, the

Balkan Peace Park has initiated a summer school project where the children of *Thethi*, as well as interested adults are offered English lessons and environmental education. Health care is completely missing in *Thethi*, except of a recently opened small ambulance with a nurse for tourists during the summer season. Local people have to travel to *Shkodra* to get medical support; the head of the village organizes the provision of regularly needed medication for the villagers. In cases of emergency, a helicopter from *Shkodra* picks up the patients to accelerate the access to medical help. As a result of the long isolation and the remoteness of the village, traditional and spiritual values are of high importance in *Thethi*. The community is catholic; no other religious minorities live in *Thethi*. Traditional customs are very important for the local identity of the community and people show to be very proud of their cultural heritage. The ancient, orally transmitted common law *kanun* is commonly used in the Shala region and represents an indistinguishable part of northern Albanian life, although conflicts exist between customary and modern state law. The economic situation of local people partly bettered due to an additional income source from tourism business and due to many developmental projects enhancing the infrastructure of *Thethi*. On the other hand, the problem of social and economic inequality is reinforced since tourism was introduced to the village. People who are not involved in tourism due to a lack of seed capital do not profit from the tourism development in the village. Due to the remote position, the lack of education, electricity and other infrastructure elements, many young people left the village in order to find better education or employment possibilities. This leads to a loss of family cohesion. Nearly all families of *Thethi* are separated due to the high emigration rate.

5.3.2.10. Governance

At the moment, governance in the area is missing or insufficient. There is only one forest ranger from the national park to enforce the national park legislation. There is awareness about the area being a national park but the exact laws are not known. The park administration is actually not present in the region. There is a general lack of data and no monitoring of neither biological nor social developments. Developmental initiatives by several organizations lack in long-term monitoring and long-term support. People are aware of the National Park status but the laws are only partly respected.

5.4. Step 4: Visualization of System State

After decomposing the case and precisely defining its single components, a visualization of the systems dynamics is possible to ease a proper understanding of the complex impact network of the case.

5.4.1. Impact Matrix

The impact matrix shows the mutual influences of all impact factors on each other (row on column) and the strength of these influences in a three-level rating. Only direct impacts are assessed. 0= no direct impact, 1= low direct impact, 2= strong direct impact.

	Direct Impact on											
Direct impact of	DIRECT IMPACT	Environmental Quality	Pollution Management	Energy Security	Population Demography	Economic/Technologic Development	Tourism	Food Security	Resource Utilization	Human Well-being	Governance	ACTIVITY
	Environmental Quality	-	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	0	9
	Pollution Management	2	-	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	0	9
	Energy Security	1	0	-	2	2	1	0	0	2	0	8
	Population Demography	0	1	0	-	2	0	2	1	1	0	7
	Economic/Technologic Development	2	2	2	2	-	0	2	0	2	0	12
	Tourism	2	2	2	2	2	-	2	1	2	0	15
	Food Security	1	0	0	0	0	0	-	1	2	0	4
	Resource Utilization	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	-	1	0	5
	Human Well-being	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	-	1	3
	Governance	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	-	6
	PASSIVITY	12	7	4	8	6	5	12	9	14	1	-

Figure 6: The Impact Matrix shows the direct mutual influences of the final impact factors (row on column). The assessment of the current impact factor strength is shown by a 3 level rating. 0= no direct impact, 1= low direct impact, 2= strong direct impact. The total Activity (= sum of the row) and Passivity (= sum of the column) of each impact factor shows how many impacts this factor receives and how many impacts he emits.

The total Activity (= sum of the row) and Passivity (= sum of the column) of each impact factor shows how many impacts this factor receives and how many impacts he emits. The impact matrix is essential for further assessing the systems dynamics and rating the complex mutual impact network. The overall most active factors are “Tourism” and “Economic/Technologic Development”. The most passive factors are “Human Well-being” and “Environmental Quality” (Fig. 6)

5.4.2. System Grid

The system grid is a visualization of the total activity and passivity of the impact factors. Thus, the system grid shows how much one factor influences the others or how much one factor is influenced by the others, respectively. Depending in which quadrant the impact factor is located, the factors can be determined as “Active”, “Passive”, “Ambivalent” or “Buffer” factors. Here, three impact factors, namely “Tourism”, “Pollution Management” and “Economic and Technologic Development” show a high activity in influencing the other impact factors. They are represented in the upper left quadrant of the grid (Fig. 7). The factor “Energy Security” shows a low passivity while its activity lies on the mean activity value. Thus, this factor will be treated as an active factor too. These active factors highly influence the system. The factor of “Environmental Quality” is the only clearly ambivalent or crucial factor, which means that both its Passivity and Activity values are above the mean value. This means that “Environmental Quality” is highly influenced by other factors while in the same time it highly influences other factors. The impact factor “Population Demography” has an Activity value that lies on the mean activity value whereas its Passivity value is slightly higher than the average. Thus, this factor is considered as an ambivalent factor too. The impact factors “Food Security”, “Resource Utilization” and “Human Well-Being” are passive factors that are influenced by the other factors to a great extent. Only the factor “Governance” is a buffer factor.

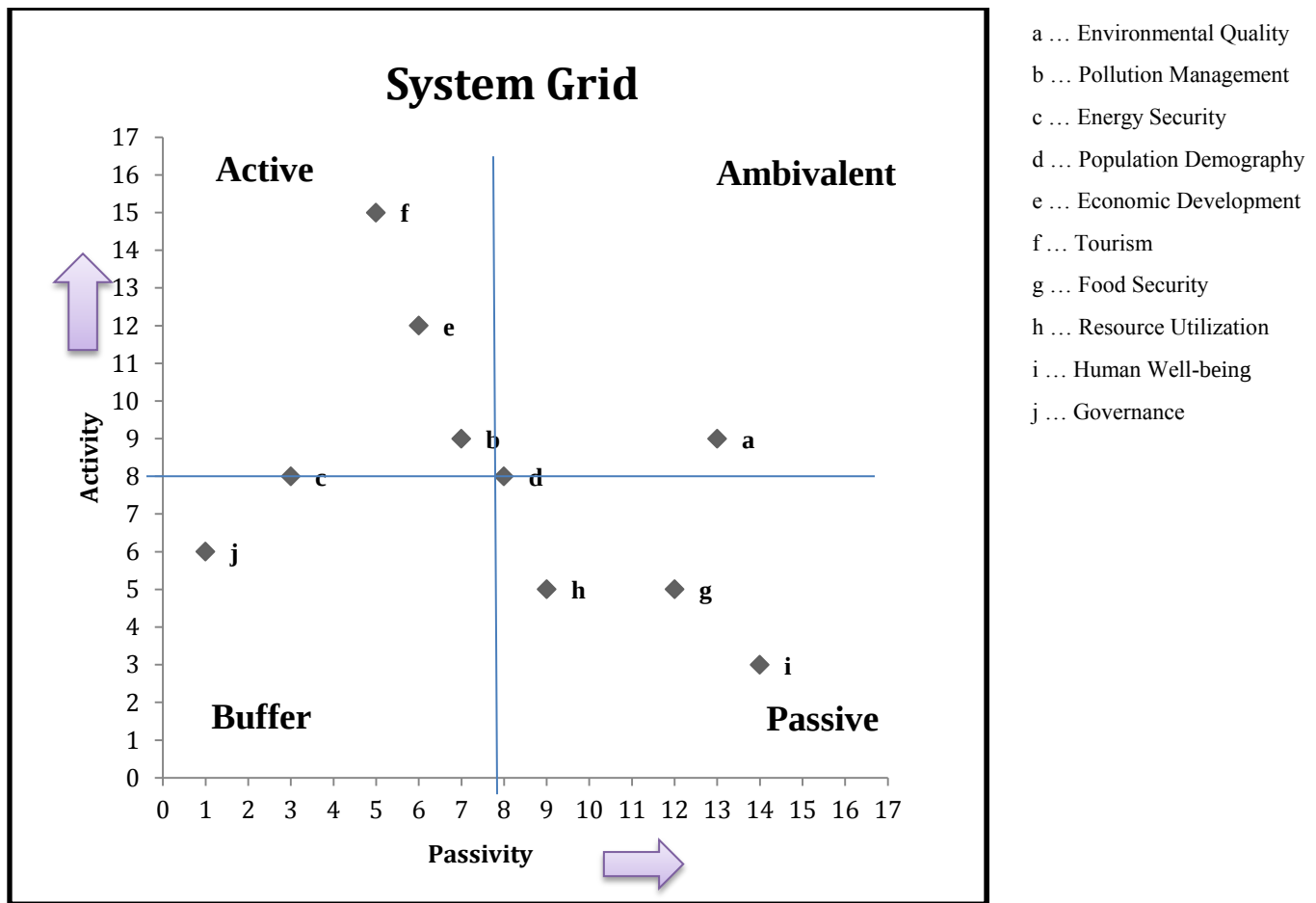


Figure 7: The System grid shows the Activity/Passivity of the ten impact factors. The mean activity (8,0) respectively passivity values (7,8) divide the grid into four quadrants. The left quadrant at the top shows the most active impact factors whereas the quadrant at the right bottom of the grid contains the most passive factors. The factors in the quadrant at the left bottom are called “Butter Factors”. These factors have a low impact on other impact factors but are also little influenced by other factors. In the right quadrant at the top, ambivalent or critical impact factors are represented.

5.4.3. System Graph

The system graph is a model of the system “*Thethi* Tourism Development”. Mutual influences of all impact factors are visualized. Only strong influences are represented to avoid an information overload and to provide as much clearness as possible in this high complex impact network. It is clearly visible which factors are more active ones emitting many arrows to other impact factors, and which factors are more passive, receiving many arrows from other impact factors. The degree of activity/passivity is indicated by different colors (red = active, blue = ambivalent or buffer, green = passive). The numbers above each impact factors show the exact passivity value on the left side and the exact activity value on

the right side, respectively. As already visible in the system grid, the system graph further shows the behavior of the particular impact factors and the impact factors mutual influences.

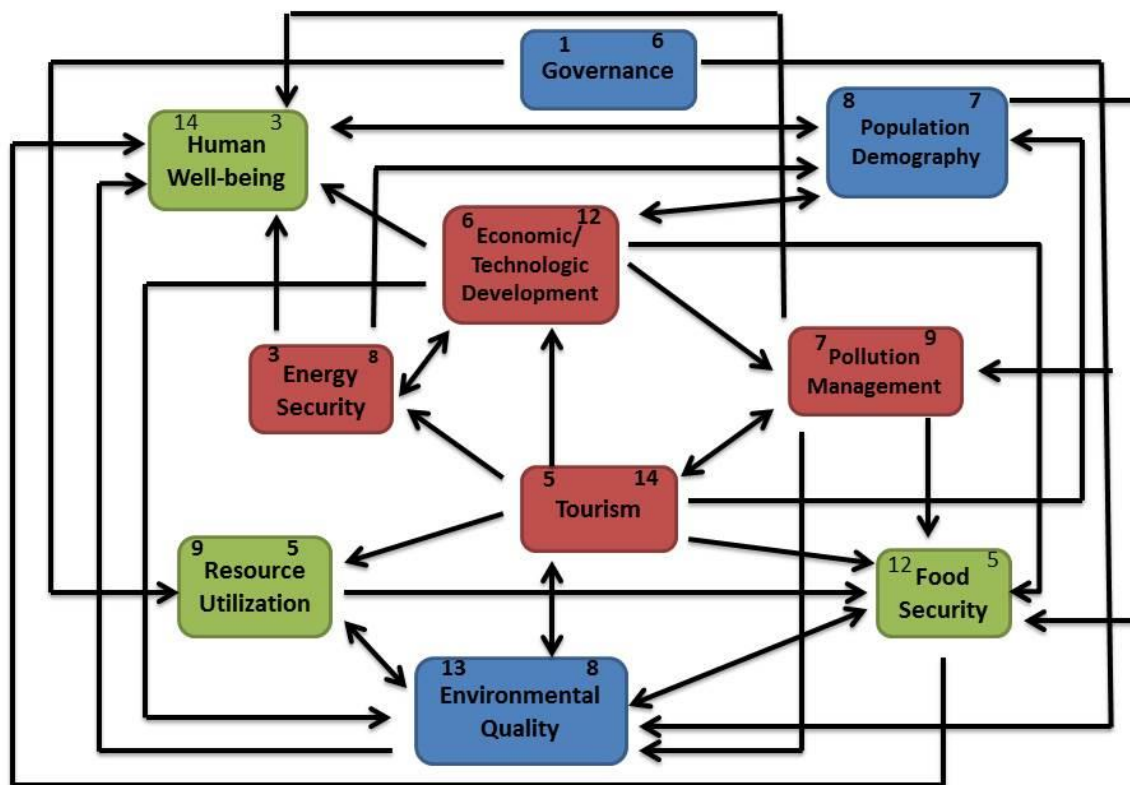


Figure 8: The System Graph visualizes the mutual influences of the impact factors indicated by arrows. Only strong influences were displayed to avoid an information overload. The numbers in the boxes represent the total passivity value (left) and activity value (right). The colors also indicate the Activity or Passivity. Green = passive factor, Red = active factor, blue = ambivalent or buffer factor.

5.5. Step 5: Characteristic Future Levels

For each impact factor, characteristic future levels were elaborated (table 4). Depending on the results of the interviews, the particular future level that suits to the interviewee's future vision was selected by the author and the translator to build the scenario narrative later on in Step 6. At least two antagonistic future levels were established for each impact factor but for some impact factors up to 4 levels were developed who represent different graduations of the two antagonistic levels.

Table 4: shows the characteristic future levels of all impact factors. At least two rather antagonistic levels were developed for each impact factor.

Impact Factor	Characteristic future level	
Environmental Quality	+1	Biodiversity protection increases in importance, people are aware of the importance of the Environmental Quality of the region and all members of the community contribute on preserving the Biodiversity of the region.
	-1	Biodiversity protection efforts do not change and the Environmental Quality of the region decreases.
Pollution Management	+2	High increase in Pollution management and efficiency. The problem of solid waste pollution as well as wastewater pollution can be solved.
	+1	Pollution management further increases. Efforts are made to avoid solid waste pollution and pollution from sewage water. Management is still not sufficient to avoid pollution in Thethi.
	0	Pollution management stays in the current, insufficient state. Pollution effects are strongly visible.
	-1	Pollution management decreases. The effects of pollution on the community are visible and threatening as Pollution generation highly increases and management is inefficient.
Resource Utilisation	+1	Due to a decline in dependency of natural resources as some resources are imported from outside the village, the local natural resources are available and used in a sustainable way
	-1	Overexploitation of local natural resources, strong decline of the availability of natural resources
Human Well-Being	+1	Improvement of human well-being, higher education, better health care for locals, improvement of family cohesion due to better economic possibilities and infrastructure, social equity as tourism income is distributed well among villagers
	0	No changes in human well-being
	-1	Decline of human well-being, no improvement of education for locals, health care only for tourists during summer season, loss of cultural values and local identity, competition amongst villagers and increase of social gap
Population Demography	+1	The birth rate of the village increases, Emigration in the village is balanced
	-1	The community is aging dramatically, Emigration increases, birth rate decreases
Food Security	+1	Increase in agriculture and livestock, increase in pasture areas, greenhouses provide the possibility of growing additional vegetables, forest is affected by land use change
	0	The food security stays at the same level, no significant change in land use and traditional farming practices, only non-arable land is used for tourism

	-1	there is a strong decline in traditional subsistence farming, food is imported from Shkoder, the livestock number decreases as pasture and agriculture areas are used for tourism, strong land use change
Governance	+1	High efficiency of law enforcement and implementation of environmental regulations, high awareness among the community about the laws of the national park Thethi
	0	No change in implementation efficiency and awareness
	-1	Decline in law enforcement, no awareness on legislation
Tourism	+2	The number of tourists increases rapidly, foreign hotels and guesthouses open to host the high number of tourists, the community is not anymore able to control the tourism development as the tourism business is run by tour agencies from outside of the village
	+1	Slow increase of tourist number, more local guesthouses, direct profit for locals due to a local tourism office
	0	Tourist number stagnates
	-1	Tourist number decreases
Energy Security	+1	Energy security increases due to new sources of energy supply. Energy supply is sufficient to cover the rising demand, renewable sources are implemented
	0	Energy security does not change
	-1	Energy security decreases due to a higher demand from tourism businesses and insufficient energy sources. Non-renewable sources of energy supply are implemented trying to cover the high increase in energy demand
Economic/Technologic Development	+2	Very high construction activity of new houses, hotels and infrastructure elements; many new technologies implemented, a lot of foreign investment in the village due to tourism business incentives
	+1	Economic and technological development of the village increases slightly, a few new houses are built, only community investment
	0	Economic and technological state does not change
	-1	Economic development decreases, there is no money to implement new technologies and existing infrastructure breaks down

5.6. Step 7: Scenarios of tourism development in *Thethi*

In the following section, the scenarios elaborated by the six community members of *Thethi* are presented in a narrative scenario story. All impact factors are mentioned in each scenario narrative. Three scenarios were drawn by people who are involved in tourism business while the other three scenarios represent the future vision of people who are not involved in tourism business. For each scenario narrative, some information about the interviewees' attitude as well as the interviewees' priorities or worries will be given.

5.6.1. Scenarios “involved in tourism”

Scenario 1 – 54 years old

Up to the year 2023, the number of tourists in Thethi increased tremendously. Tourists are accommodated in family-owned houses that were renovated and enlarged by the community or in newly built guesthouses. In addition, there are wooden bungalows for tourist accommodation. The quality and standards of tourist accommodation is a lot better; the standards of tourist rooms are now even higher than the living conditions for locals. Due to new technologic possibilities like internet and a reliable cellphone connection, the community is able to arrange tourism tours by themselves. This leads to a higher direct profit for the community without any loss on third actors like travel agencies. All community members are involved in tourism. There is absolutely no foreign investment in the village; all economic initiatives derive from local people with the help of remittances, tourism profit and developmental support from the government or non-governmental organizations. There is a cable car, a paved road and a tunnel to ease transport of goods and people. Due to the better infrastructure and better economic possibilities, 80% of all emigrants came back to the village. To handle the increased energy demand from tourism and the higher number of inhabitants, additional hydropower plants and solar panels are implemented, no fossil fuels are used. As people have more money to buy what they need, the dependency on natural resources declines and thus the natural resources of the valley are still sufficiently available. There is a common water pipeline for the entire village to supply drinking water from the springs around the village. The agriculture of Thethi did not change, as arable land is not used for construction activities. Local products are used as much as possible; those who cannot be produced locally are imported from Shkodra. The number of livestock as well as the land use did not change due to tourism. There is a higher awareness on the importance of education and more children of Thethi go to school. Due to a community initiative, there is a new hospital that provides health care during all the year. The economic situation of local people improved a lot and tourism income is distributed well among all the community. Community cohesion is very high and people work together in all issues. Cultural and traditional values of the region are well preserved. As tourism is built on the natural beauty of the region, biodiversity conservation increased in importance. Through governmental support, the problem of sewage water could be solved by installing a purification plant. Solid waste is better managed now. The community respects the laws of the National Park and people are aware of the legislation.

The Interviewee whose opinion this scenario reflects was overall optimistic about tourism as a tool for rural development in *Thethi*. He did see possible negative tourism impacts on the environment and on the cultural values of the village but he was very confident to being able to manage these negative impacts in the future with the help of the government, the community or NGOs. The interviewees' priorities lie in economic and infrastructural development but also environmental protection was mentioned as a priority. The preservation of the local character and traditional values was of high importance for him and thus he strictly refuses any foreign investment in *Thethi*. The empowerment and independence of the community was a very important issue. Worries were mentioned about a lack of financing and institutional support for achieving a desirable future development.

Scenario 2 - 64 years old

In 2023 the number of tourists in Thethi has highly increased and winter tourism like skiing brings a high profit to the local community, also during the winter season. A cable car eases the establishment of winter tourism. A tunnel as well as a paved road offer accessibility to the village all year round. The prices for tourists are a lot higher now. There are about 100 new houses in Thethi built for tourism accommodation but also for the returning emigrants who came back to the village due to tourism incentives. The rising energy demand is covered by 2 more hydropower plants as well as further solar panels in the village and a connection to the national electricity network. The houses are better isolated to ensure energy efficiency during the winter season and some houses have a central heating system. Due to the higher food demand, there is more livestock in the village. The pasture areas needed to be enlarged on forest area. Agricultural land is not used for construction activities. Changes in land use affected the forest area and the orchard land, which is used for building new houses. Greenhouses enable the community to grow crops, which need a longer growing season. As all families are involved in tourism business, the economic situation of the community has improved in the last 10 years and there is no competition amongst the community but mutual cooperation. There will be a small health care center in the village and more children will go to school. There are efforts to save traditional culture but in the young generation this values are partly lost. All community members pay a tax to the local government for waste management. Solid waste is collected all 3 days by governmental staff. A purification plant for the entire village was installed to solve the problem of sewage water pollution. Still, the river water is polluted. The demand on natural resources highly increased. The traditionally high spiritual valuation of the forest is lost in the younger generation which led to an overexploitation of

natural resources and a decline in forest area. Biodiversity protection efforts did not increase sufficiently and the environmental quality of the region decreases. The big predators (lynx, wolf and bear) disappeared. The laws of the national park are implemented but also the traditional Kanun laws are still practiced by the community.

The interviewee was confident that tourism development will bring economic benefits and infrastructural development to the village and will increase human well-being in some points. He was aware of negative tourism impacts on the environment as well as on some negative influences on the cultural values of the community. Still, he was ready to deal with this negative tourism trade-offs for a bettering of the local economy and infrastructure. His main worry was that the younger generation will lose the traditional respect for nature and overexploit the natural resources of the village for economic benefits.

Scenario 3 - 33 years old

Up to 2023, the tourist numbers of Thethi only slightly increased. Tourist accommodation is still in small-scale, locally-owned guesthouses. There is a high community control over tourism business and the direct profit for the local community is high. Internet and cellphone connection enables a direct booking without third actors. Despite of internet and cellphones there are not many new technologic developments as the focus of the village is to develop nature-based tourism. A paved road eases access to the village but still, there is no winter tourism. The population of Thethi was slightly growing and a few emigrants came back to the village due to the better living conditions. Energy is still derived from hydropower plants and people use wood from the forest for heating. The land use of the village did not change a lot; only non-arable land is used for the construction of a few new houses. Most of the needed food is produced locally, only some products are imported from Shkodra. The natural resources of the valley are used sustainably and are still sufficiently available for all the community. As there are more children in the village, the school can offer better education. The health care increased only for tourists during the summer season. Cultural and spiritual values are partly lost due to tourism influence and modernization in general. Community cohesion is high, all villagers try to support each other's business and there is no competition amongst people. Biodiversity protection increased in importance as the tourism business in Thethi is built on the natural beauty of the region. Pollution management highly increases and recycling and other management efforts can mitigate the problem of solid waste pollution.

The sewage water of the village will still be managed by septic tanks. The laws of the national park are respected. There is a “forest police” to enforce the laws of the national park.

The interviewee was aware of some negative tourism impacts but all over confident that the community will benefit from tourism in an economic way and optimistic about the management of negative impacts in general. This future vision of the interviewee implies only slow and stepwise changes that can be handled well by the community. Nature protection was mentioned as a priority together with the economic and infrastructural development. The self-organization of tourism by the community with the help of the internet was mentioned as a very important change in the future of tourism in *Thethi*. Worries were mentioned only for the problem of waste management.

5.6.2. Scenarios “not involved in tourism”

Scenario 4 – 31 years old

In 2023, Thethi is a highly touristic village. There are many new houses and hotels built for tourism accommodation and due to the easy access to the village many urban Albanian day-tourists visit Thethi. This leads to a very low community control over tourism business and a decrease in tourism profit for locals. The village panorama changed significantly, the formerly dispersed settlement became a dense village along the river. Due to the technologic modernization, the better infrastructure and the economic possibilities of tourism many emigrants came back to the village. People who did not originate in Thethi also settled down in the village. Due to the high construction activities and the change in economic activities, the land use of the valley changed dramatically. All food needs to be imported from Shkodra, as there is no more agriculture and no more livestock farming. All traditional farming practices are lost as the aging farmers could not find followers for their farms. Cultural and spiritual values lost their importance and traditional knowledge is lost. The traditional respect for the natural environment disappeared in the young generation. There is a high competition among the community and human well-being strongly declined. Natural resources are overexploited and not anymore sufficiently available to provide the villagers with their basic needs. Animal populations are overhunted and mostly disappeared. The waste management is not sufficient to handle the high waste generation, which leads to a serious pollution problem all over the village. Pollution effects on the community are visible as the elder people are still drinking the river water. The laws and regulations of the national park will not be

respected as corruption is high and economic profit is more important than environmental laws. The forest area strongly declined and the formerly high environmental quality of the region is lost.

Scenario 4 is an absolutely pessimistic scenario. It describes the worst-case scenario for the tourism development in *Thethi*. The interviewee was totally pessimistic about the future of the village he was born in. The biggest worries mentioned can be described as the erosion of the local identity and culture, a lack of ecological awareness among urban tourists resulting in environmental degradation and a loss of community control. The interviewee mentioned the traditional hospitality of the villagers and a lack of tourism knowledge as one main problem: “They think everybody who comes here is a friend but they know nothing about business” (Personal communication in Thethi, September 2013). The loss of the traditional respect for nature among the younger generation was also mentioned as a main threat for the village. In addition, the interviewee had the opinion that the transition to capitalist market economy will negatively influence nature conservation and increase corruption. The interviewee feared that food sovereignty will be completely lost and the village will be dependent on tourism income.

Scenario 5 – 50 years old

The tourism number in Thethi increased with slow steps up to the year 2023. Tourism is only possible during the summer season as the road is still not reliably accessible during the winter. All community members want to get involved in tourism but most of the tourists stay in the guesthouses near the center of the town. Some houses in the center have internet access. Construction activities are low and only out of community incentives. Energy is still derived from hydropower plants, generators or solar panels. The reliability of electricity is better as the community repaired the power supply lines of the village. The birth rate of the village slightly increased and some emigrants came back to the village because of the better economic situation. Local products with a high quality can cover most of the food demand. Traditional farming is still practiced and the area of agricultural land increased slightly. Greenhouses will enable farmers to grow crops that need a longer growing period. The resources of the valley will be used moderately but there is a decline in medicinal plants as people export medicinal plants as an additional source of income. The education level did not rise and there is still no health care available in the village. The profit from tourism is not distributed well among the village but as the community cohesion is very high and people mutually support each other, many families profit from tourism

indirectly. Biodiversity Protection raised in importance. There is a higher ecological awareness among villagers and the management of nature conservation and pollution is more efficient.

The interviewee's future vision shows a slow tourism development with not too many changes for the community. The priorities for the development lie in infrastructural and economic development but also environmental protection was an important issue. The main worries are inequality among the community and problems with the infrastructural facilities for tourism business. In general he was optimistic that tourism will bring benefits to the villagers and that negative impacts will be mitigated.

Scenario 6 – 51 years old

In 2023 the tourist number has highly increased since the paved road offers easy access from Shkodra. Due to the economic possibility of tourism business and a better infrastructure, the number of inhabitants is now three times higher than it was in 2013. Many people from the surrounding areas visit Thethi for day-tourism on the weekends. The village is connected to the national electricity system. Due to internet connection, the community has a higher control over tourism business and a higher profit. There is a higher level of education in Thethi and there is a health care center in Thethi. Due to modernization and the high tourism influence, cultural and spiritual values are mostly lost. The area of agricultural land was expanded and the number of cattle increased in proportion to the number of villagers. People use fewer natural resources and instead import resources like coal from Shkodra to meet their needs. Biodiversity Protection rises in importance as nature-based tourism offers economic incentives to conserve the natural environment. The laws of the national Park are implemented efficiently and people are aware of the legislation. Still, the problem of pollution could not be solved. Thus, the environmental quality of the region strongly declined and pollution is a widespread problem in the valley.

The interviewee had a quite ambivalent view for the future of *Thethi*. Even if he believes that biodiversity protection will rise in importance due to tourism business as an incentive for nature conservation, the natural environment suffers from the high number of tourists in this future scenario. In the opinion of the interviewee, a paved road would dramatically change the development of *Thethi*. The paved road brings many day-tourists from the urban areas, which leads to an accumulation of negative tourism impacts for the environment. Without this paved road his future vision would be a lot more optimistic.

6. Discussion

The following chapter contains a discussion about the work done in this study. The methodological proceeding of this study with its results will be discussed for each step of the scenario analysis. Furthermore, each elaborated scenario narratives will be discoursed and interpreted in terms of their attitudes, logical consistency, and their potentials for ecotourism and possible threats on the village. The research questions posed in this study will be discussed and answered in detail according to the results of the study. Finally, conclusions that can be taken from this study will be presented and recommendations about the future development of *Thethi* will be given.

6.1. Discussion on the Scenario Analysis Process

6.1.1. Step 1 – Case and Goal definition

The geographical boundaries of the National Park *Thethi* were chosen to investigate the influences of tourism on the inhabitants of the village *Thethi* as well as on the natural environment of the surrounding national park. As tourism is not only present in *Thethi*, but also in other areas and impacts from outside the chosen study borders can also influence the *Thethi* development indirectly, this space limitation bears the danger of neglecting other aspects that might influence the system from outside. Still, the focus on a specific research area is important to avoid an exploding degree of complexity and to keep the scenario analysis understandable and useful in practice. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that this scenario analysis concentrates only on the development of *Thethi*, but the approach of this study could potentially serve as an example for other studies. It could be adapted to other case studies in the region or to similar developmental processes in other parts of the world. The goal was to elaborate future scenarios from the view of different groups of the community, to find out the communities expectations from tourism development if there is potential for ecotourism. This goal could be reached.

6.1.2. Step 2 – Impact factor development

The impact factors were developed in two steps. In the first step, I selected 29 impact factors with the help of literature review and previous experience in the study region. In a second step after the analysis

of the current state (Step 3), a team of experienced experts identified the most important impact factors and condensed them to the final set of ten impact factors. It turned out, that the pre-selection of impact factors was already very broad and covered most of the developmental issues in *Thethi*. Thus, the expert team could focus on condensing this pre-selection to the final impact factor set and defining this final impact factors precisely. In addition, the current state of each impact factor was discussed in the team according to the new findings of the analysis of the current state (Step 3). As all members of the expert team were working in the field of sustainability, it was possible to cover all domains of sustainability with the final impact factor set although the opinions about their importance partly varied. The set of impact factors and the analysis of their mutual influences turned out to be very useful for achieving a holistic picture of the development in *Thethi*.

6.1.3. Step 3 – Analysis of the current state

The analysis of the current state was done in a Rapid Rural Appraisal in cooperation with the Project “Cooperative Transboundary Learning for Ecosystem Management”. This cooperation turned out to be a high benefit for me as a lot more information could be elaborated in this big team of junior researchers and experienced experts than I could have elaborated alone. The methods used in the RRA were very useful for analyzing current system characteristics.

6.1.3.1. Analysis of Uses and Threats

The Analysis of Uses and Threats (Table 2) shows that the community is highly dependent on the natural resources in and around the village. All four natural subsystems are highly required by the community and build the main asset of the village. Despite of the importance of the natural environment for ecotourism business, the natural resources of *Thethi* provide the basic source of livelihood for the villagers. Some of the identified threats on the natural subsystems can be correlated with tourism development: Pollution of solid waste as well as sewage water pollution threatens the entire village to a high extent. This can be clearly put into context with tourism development (see also Hara 2009; Marchington 2010). Pollution generation was considerably lower before the establishment of tourism as the community does not use as much imported food with a lot of packaging materials as tourists demand.

For the subsystem “Forest” the threat of increased logging can also be linked to tourism development. As the existing forest cover acts as a protection against avalanches and landslides, also the threat of avalanches/landslides can be indirectly brought into context with tourism due to the rising timber demand and higher soil erosion. According to the head of the village, the forest fires were natural forest fires that are not correlated to human activities. The change in species composition can be partly explained by artificially planted species but it might be also affected by changing climate conditions. The reason for the infestation of the pine forest by *Thaumetapoea pinivora* is not known but first efforts of managing this pest seem to be successful.

The “River” subsystem is highly affected by human activities in the village. As tourism triggers economic development and construction activities in the village, nearly all observed threats on the river system can be attributed to tourism business directly or indirectly. The flood risk is higher in the last years due to weather changes and the by now highly altered riverbed. Pollution from effluences highly threatens the river ecosystem, a problem that is accounted by the community of *Thethi* but at the moment there is no capacity to mitigate this problem.

The “Agriculture” subsystem is threatened by the aging of existing farmers and a lack of followers. This might lead to a loss of traditional farming practices and knowledge. This threat is partly caused by the high depopulation of *Thethi* as many young people leave the village. This effect might be reduced by the economic chances provided by tourism business but on the other hand young people could tend to rather engage themselves in tourism than to focus on farming. In addition the change of land use due to tourism could also affect agricultural land although at the moment only pasture areas and orchards were transformed into camping sites or new buildings. As the agriculture of *Thethi* provides the main source of income and food security for the villagers, a loss of agriculture would seriously affect the food sovereignty of the villagers.

Many pasture areas in the highlands of *Thethi* are abandoned due to the declining cattle number but the lowland meadows are overused. People do not anymore take the effort of bringing their cattle to the highlands for grazing, as pastoralism is not anymore one of the main sources of income. For the decline of medicinal plants, unsustainable collection to sell the medicinal plants is likely to be one important reason. In addition, the decline of extensive pasture areas might be another reason for this loss of medicinal plants as these plants grow well on moderately used meadow areas.

6.1.3.2. *Current Impact Factor state*

The Analysis of the current state enabled to describe the current situation of the chosen impact factor set. Due to time and resource limitations, not all impact factors could be fully understood and described in their complex entirety but it was possible to get a deep insight in the current situation on site. As the information about the current state was gathered with many different methods (personal observation with a research team, interviews with local villagers and expert group discussions) the outcome is more reliable than it would have been if only one source of information would have been used.

6.1.4. **Step 4 – Visualization of system state**

The process of filling up the impact matrix turned out to be very difficult. Due to time limitations of the expert team, I had to fulfill the matrix independently, which bears the danger of bias in the rating of the impact factor strength. Another difficulty was to fully understand the complex interlinks between all impact factors and to differentiate between direct, indirect and synergic effects. However, the impact matrix turned out to be very useful to reflect the impact factors dynamics and mutual interactions. As the System Grid and the System Graph are derived out of the Impact Matrix, the coherent result of both of them further shows the usefulness of the Impact Matrix.

The System Grid shows a very coherent picture of the Activity and the Passivity of each impact factor. Changes in development can be achieved best by varying the most active factors, namely “Economic/Technologic Development”, “Tourism” and “Pollution Management”. The factors “Energy Security” and “Population Demography” are counted as active factors although their activity value lies on the mean value of activity. Thus, these factors are influencing the system to some degree but they are not crucial for identifying mechanisms for change. Ambivalent factors are crucial for development. In this study, “Environmental Quality” is highly ambivalent, which shows that the environmental situation of the region is highly impacted by recent human activities and in the same time ecosystem integrity builds the main asset of the region and the basis of livelihood for the villagers. This further stresses the importance of better environmental protection and management in *Thethi*. Ambivalent factors and active factors are important for defining mechanisms for change and leverage points in the system. Passive factors are influencing the system only to a little degree but they represent points of vulnerability in the system that can easily be negatively influenced in case of an unsustainable development of the active factors. In this study, negative effects from tourism could be reported for all passive impact factors,

namely “Food Security”, “Resource Utilization” and “Human Well-being”. Special attention should be taken to mitigate negative impacts on the more passive elements of the system. The factor “Governance” was evaluated as the only buffer factor as in this study; “Governance” was mainly defined by the acceptance and implementation efficiency of the laws and regulations of the National Park *Thethi*. If “Governance” would imply any kind of management and planning in developmental issues and tourism, the impact factor would clearly rise in importance and could potentially selectively counteract the negative impacts tourism has on the ambivalent factor “Environmental Quality”. Governance and efficient implementation of laws and regulations in Albania is hampered by a fundamental lack of trust in formal institutions among the population, a low civic participation due to almost half a century of marginalization and isolation, and a lack of respect and enforcement capacity of laws and contracts. (Hall, 2000b; Marchington, 2010) In addition, official state laws are often antagonistic to the strictly practiced traditional laws of the *Kanun* (Mustafa & Young, 2008) although in this study all interviewees mentioned that environmental protection is mentioned and supported by the laws of *Kanun*. Thus, improving the governance towards a sustainable tourism development in *Thethi* will be a major challenge.

6.1.5. Step 5 – Elaboration of characteristic future levels

The Elaboration of characteristic future levels turned out to be challenging. As the scenario formulation was done intuitively according to the vision of the interviewees it was hard to formulate the future levels in a form that they can fit to the narrative vision of the interviewees later on in Step 6. In Addition, some impact factors included many subtopics, which made it hard to include all topics that were condensed in one impact factor in its characteristic future levels. Still, this sharp condensation was necessary to include all important issues of *Thethi* development in a very small set of impact factors. Thus, I tried to formulate the impact factor levels in a rather unspecific way and focused on building at least two antagonist levels for each impact factor. For some impact factors I added up to two more levels which represent graduation steps of the two antagonist states. The additional detail information given by the interviewees in Step 6 which could not be formulated in the future levels, was added intuitively to the Scenario narratives of Step 7.

6.1.6. Step 6 – Leveling of the characteristic future levels by the community of *Thethi*

Finding the right interview partners for my thesis was not that easy in the field. Most people who live in the “center” of the village are directly or indirectly involved in tourism development. Thus, it was hard to find villagers who are not involved in tourism development in the village. As the village consists of dispersed houses with long distances between each other, it was needed to wear good shoes and to spend some time hiking to find the villagers who live outside the center. Still, it was finally possible to find three interviewees who are not involved in tourism. All villagers welcomed the research team in their village and they were easily willing to give an interview. It was harder to find female interviewees than male. This could have been a coincidence or it could be explained by the patriarchal structure of the society in northern Albania where decision-making and the representation of the community is still a male issue (e.g. Mustafa and Young 2008; Elsie 2001).

6.1.7. Step 7 – Scenario Elaboration

The Scenario narratives were elaborated intuitively according to the vision of the villagers. Thus, possible inconsistencies or contradictions were ignored when writing the Scenario narratives. As the Scenarios should clearly reflect the villager’s perception, occurring inconsistencies can be seen as a part of the result since one goal of the scenario analysis was to find out to which extent people are aware of negative tourism impacts. The difficulty of elaborating the scenario narratives was to strictly stick with the villager’s descriptions and not to involve underlying personal assumptions.

6.1.8. Conclusion on the Method

For the purpose of this thesis, the scenario analysis provided a very good tool for investigating the research questions in a qualitative way. The analysis was useful for achieving a holistic picture of the situation in *Thethi* and the research questions could be answered. The transdisciplinary approach of both, the Scenario Analysis and the RRA for the analysis of the current state, provides a great tool to learn from the insider knowledge and experience of the rural population as well as from the scientific knowledge of the involved experts. Still, all the obtained information is qualitative and subjective, thus this Scenario Analysis cannot satisfy the need for quantitative data and monitoring.

6.2. Discussion on the Scenarios of *Thethi* tourism development

The scenarios involved in tourism are overall more optimistic about tourism development than those who are not involved in tourism. This supports the assumptions made in this thesis and indicates that economic benefits provided from tourism may overweight possible negative tourism impacts on the environment or on the community. Those who do not gain profit from tourism are more skeptical about tourism and are more worried about the management of the negative tourism impacts.

Scenario 1 describes drastic changes in the development of the village due to a very high increase in tourist numbers, economic development and construction. Although the interviewee was aware of negative environmental tourism impacts at the moment, in the future vision these negative impacts could be fully controlled. This optimistic attitude unfortunately seems to be unrealistic regarding the current state of management and environmental protection in the village. Even if the future scenario does not show negative tourism impacts on the environment, this is not consistent with the high construction activities and the tremendous rise of human activity. The preservation of local culture and traditions was of high importance for the interviewee and community empowerment was mentioned to be very important. In contradiction to that, he mentioned that the living standard for the tourists will be higher than that of the community, another inconsistency in the future scenario. Thus, this future scenario with its tremendous and fast increase of tourism development does not show potential for ecotourism development as from the analysis of the current system state it is likely that this fast development will lead to serious negative tourism trade-offs in the environmental domain as well as in the social domain of sustainability. Still, it was clearly visible, that the interviewee wanted to develop environmentally sound ecotourism that supports the well-being of all the community.

Scenario 2, similar to Scenario 1, also shows a high and fast increase in tourism and economic development. The interviewees' future vision describes a bettering of the economic situation of the village to the detriment of the natural environment. Thus, this scenario does not show potential for ecotourism as the economic and infrastructural development described in this scenario leads to environmental degradation and is therefore not sustainable. The interviewee would clearly prefer an environmentally friendly development but in his view environmental costs are inevitable if the economic situation should improve.

Scenario 3 does not show drastic changes in the future development of the village. Tourism will be further developed but slow steps allow the community to deal with the negative impacts on the environment in time. The only inconsistency of this scenario is the fact, that the pollution from effluences was not seen as a threat for the village. This can be explained with a lack of environmental education, leading to an underestimation of the complex consequences of a polluted river. This scenario could show potential for ecotourism development as community empowerment and environmental protection are of high importance and a careful integration of tourism in the local economy is described.

Scenario 4 is the most pessimistic scenario. All kinds of negative tourism impacts highly affect the community and the natural environment. Thus, this scenario is absolutely unsustainable regarding all domains of sustainability and does not show potential for ecotourism. The interviewee would like to stop any tourism development completely as in his view the current state of tourism development will inevitably lead to serious damage on the community and on the natural environment.

Scenario 5 shows only small changes for the village. Tourism is further developed but the tourist number only slightly increased and construction activities are low. This scenario shows problems in the social domain of sustainability as competition and social inequality were mentioned as the biggest problems for the interviewee. In contradiction to that, the interviewee mentioned a high community cohesion and mutual support. Despite of these possible problems in the social domain of sustainability, this scenario could show potential for ecotourism development as a slow development is described and environmental protection is of high importance.

Scenario 6 shows a tremendous increase in tourism since a paved road eases access to the village. Negative tourism impacts accumulate and thus, this scenario does not show potential for ecotourism. In the view of the interviewee, the paved road would change everything as too many people, especially day tourists from urban Albanian areas, will visit the National Park. According to the interviewee, the development would be more sustainable and environmentally friendly without a paved road. This points out the tension between development for the local population and nature conservation.

6.3. Discussion on the Research Question and Assumptions

The scenarios of tourism development in *Thethi* show that the villagers are aware of negative impacts on the environment and also social impacts are noticed by the community. But a lack of environmental education and knowledge about tourism impacts leads to an underestimation of the severity of negative impacts. All interviewees mentioned the importance of environmental protection and they were aware of the fact that a better conservation practice is needed. Still, the main priority for the development in *Thethi* is economic and infrastructural development for all interviewees, independent on whether they are involved in tourism or not. Five out of six community members were generally supporting the development of tourism in the village for economic and infrastructural reasons. Only the interviewee of Scenario 4 was all over pessimistic for the future of *Thethi* and wished to come back to the times before tourism was developed. From the elaborated scenarios it is clearly visible that the interviewees who are involved in tourism have a more optimistic attitude on tourism business. They are aware of some negative impacts but they are confident to being able to mitigate these negative impacts. The more skeptical and less optimistic view came from interviews with people who are not involved in tourism.

7. Conclusions

The results obtained from the analysis of the present state of tourism development on *Thethi* show the enormous influence of tourism on the village. Several tourism impacts could be observed in all domains of sustainability, negative as well as positive impacts. While the introduction of tourism in *Thethi* improved the economic situation of the village and triggered several infrastructural changes that ease the life of the villagers, several severe negative impacts on the community and on the natural environment were observed in this study. Thus, this research points out the tension between rural economic development on the one hand and the need for environmental and cultural preservation on the other hand.

While tourism in *Thethi* does basically support the local economy, third actors play an important role in the tourism development of *Thethi* (Hara 2009; Marchington 2010), considerably lowering the beneficial impact of tourism on local economy. At the moment a lot of tourism profit is lost to foreign tour agencies as the community is not able to organize the travels independently due to a lack of communication technologies like internet. This leads to a loss of tourism profit and control for the local community and thus threatens the goal of supporting the local economic situation and improving the living conditions of the local population (Jacobson & Robles, 1992; Lindberg et al., 1996). A loss of community control and participation in decision making on tourism development compromises the livelihood needs of the local community and hence does not support the principles of a community-based ecotourism (Scheyvens, 1999; Stem et al., 2003b). Thus, even if tourism in *Thethi* was developed in locally-owned family houses there is still a high risk for the community of losing control of tourism development and losing a high percentage of economic benefits to third actors. This may change in the future if internet is introduced and a tourism office can be established in the village, as the head of the village announced. It is crucial to further promote tourist accommodation in small-scale and family-owned guesthouses to reduce the leakage rate and to preserve the local character (Dibra, Dhora, & Dibra, 2012; Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008). For enabling the community to control tourism business, it is of enormous importance to strengthen tourism knowledge and to build social capacity among the community to provide them with the ability to effectively influence the development of tourism in *Thethi* to a more sustainable way (Moscardo, 2008). As Erin Marchington reported in 2010, the social capacity needed for a sustainable tourism development is low and

community empowerment and capacity building is required to change tourism to a more sustainable way. In line with this, also this thesis further stresses the need of community capacity building and community empowerment.

Another problem observed in this study is that only some community members were able to involve in tourism business while others were not. The reason for this is a lack of seed capital and facilities among the poorer families as well as the fact that tourism accumulates in the center of the village whereas other houses in the more periphery regions of the village do not get the chance to involve in tourism. This can raise the social gap among the community and lead to social inequity and competition (Weaver, 1998).

There is a visible trend of tourism becoming the main economic sector in *Thethi*. The young generation does not anymore engage in traditional agriculture as tourism business is thought to bring higher financial profits. If tourism business becomes the main economic activity of a region, this narrow economy does not bear any more flexibility to shelter people in hard times (Stem et al., 2003a).

Tourism also led to a competition in land use at pasture areas and orchards. In the future this pressure on land use may increase to the forest area or to agricultural land. A loss of the self-sufficiency of *Thethi* would increase the dependency on imports and thus threaten the food sovereignty of the village. As tourism provides only seasonal income which is in addition sensible to economic and political events (Jacobson & Robles, 1992), a loss of economic diversity and agricultural self-sufficiency bears a high risk for the community of *Thethi*. However, most of the interviewees mentioned that local products will be used for tourism demands and the local agriculture will be supported. It is crucial to carefully embed tourism in the local economy (Hall, 2000a), hence it is an important issue for the future sustainability of the village to support local agricultural products and handicrafts.

As previous research reported (Hara, 2009; Marchington, 2010; UNEP & ENVSEC, 2010), serious environmental problems were observed in this study and most of them could be related to tourism directly or indirectly. These environmental problems threaten the resources on which ecotourism development depends, the pristine natural environment of the region. In addition to that, the well-being of the local population is highly dependent on the natural resources of the valley. Thus, better environmental management and monitoring is urgently needed to pursue tourism development in a more sustainable way. In contradiction to previous research in the region (Kullaj, 2005; Marchington, 2010; UNEP & ENVSEC, 2010), this study does not support the assumption to find a low ecological awareness among villagers, even if the number of interviews taken for this study does not allow

conclusions on the entire community of *Thethi*. All interviewees mentioned the traditionally high respect for nature among the community and environmental protection was an important issue for them. The high spiritual value of nature as well as the importance of natural resources for the community was mentioned by all interviewees, which indicates that the community is very well aware of the importance of a healthy natural environment. Still, the extremely difficult economic situation leads the community to prioritize economic development. A lack of environmental education and knowledge about tourism impacts on the environment leads to an underestimation of the severity and degree of negative environmental trade-offs. Due to this lack of understanding of complex human-ecosystem interactions, people also underestimate the irreversibility of some negative tourism impacts on the environment. Thus, it is crucial to provide environmental education for the local community as well as capacity building on tourism development to enable the community to act as a principle stakeholder towards a more sustainable ecotourism in *Thethi*. In addition, also tourists should be educated about the environmental impacts they generate and how they can individually contribute to reduce negative impacts. This could be achieved by the NGOs working in the area or by governmental institutions.

Regarding recent developmental projects in *Thethi*, it seems that the development of tourism in *Thethi* was given priority in development while other projects would have been of higher importance for the local community like a health care center. Up to now, there is no health care center for locals but a health care center for tourists during the summer season. This indicates that the focus on the development seems to focus on development for tourists, not for locals. This was also noticed by Marchington (2010) and there is no evidence that this trend changed in the past three years. The National Strategy of Tourism Development as well as The Strategy for Rural Development (Ministry of Agriculture Food and Consumer Protection, 2007; Ministry of Tourism Culture Youth and Sports, 2008) seem to follow goals of sustainability but in practice the implementation of these strategies is failing due to poor institutional support and financial capacity. Overall, there is a lack of management and planning for all the tourism incentives in *Thethi* and the role of formal institutional support is minimal.

A common strategy is needed for tourism in *Thethi* to precisely tackle negative developments in the village and to mitigate tourism trade-offs. Ideally, this should have happened before tourism was introduced to the village as some impacts may be irreversible.

8. Literature

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9. Curriculum Vitae

Personal Information

Name: Laura Bischof

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Education

Master's Program "Ecology"

University of Vienna, since 2011

Bachelor's Program "Biology"

University of Vienna, 2006 – 2010

High School "BGRG VIII Albertgasse 18-22"

Vienna, 1998 – 2006

Research Experience

Master's project „Sustainable tourism development in *Thethi*, northern Albania: A future Scenario Analysis from a community's perspective", Mai 2013 – January 2014

Bachelor's project on X-ray 3D visualization of avian embryonic digits "Of baby birds and senior dinosaurs", 2010

Conferences and additional Education

Study course “Adaptive Conservation Management in the transboundary *Bjeshket e Nemuna/ Prokletije* Mountain Area”, implemented by the HNE Eberswalde

August - September 2013, Shkoder, Albania

103. Meeting of the German Zoological Society, Poster Presentation: “Of Baby Birds and Senior Dinosaurs” (Bachelors Project) - Hamburg, Germany 2010