

My featured space – detailed project description

Research objective

The research project "My featured space 2025" focusses on life quality in rural regions in the future. Together with researchers, teachers and stakeholders pupils from the Alps Adriatic region develop scenarios for rural living spaces in 2025. The main question is, what pupils will need in the future to live and work in attractive rural regions.

Students as researchers

The main intention of the program "sparkling science" of the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research is to interest young persons in research. To achieve this aim in the project "My featured space 2025", which is mainly promoted by "sparkling science", students at the age of 16 to 19 years are working as researchers on the rural region. From different schools in Austria (3), Slovenia (2) and Italy (1) students participate in this project. There are about 5 students from each school. They are from the same or from different classes of their school. The students are working in the project my featured space for the whole project period, which lasts from November 2009 to May 2011.

In Austria the pupils are writing a scholarly paper over the period of the project as a part of their Matura. In Slovenia the research work of the students in "My featured space 2025" is charged as a school project, for which the students get points.

Project phases

The project is treated in an introduction phase and 4 main project phases. Each project phase starts and ends with a workshop. During this workshops researchers convey knowledge of scientific methods to the students. Stakeholders introduce their practical experience and know-how. Students present the interim results of their research work in the different groups to the plenum and discuss this results with the researchers and stakeholders. Finally in each workshop the next workings steps are reviewed and fixed together.

→ Introduction phase

To get to know the project, teachers are presenting the project to their pupils based on the project description. To get into the theme the students are asked to work on two exercises:

- first exercise: "What do I appreciate mostly in my rural living space today?"

For this exercise each student is asked to answer this questions by taking one or two photos to characterise this special space and to argue in one or two phrases, why this area is so important to him or her. The results of this first exercise should be ready until the first project meeting on the 6th November 2009 in Klagenfurt.

- Second exercise: Propose a project logo:

The students of each school are asked to present one or two proposals for a project logo to be used on the project homepage and for project presentations at the first homepage. In the first workshop each group presents one or two proposals. In a ranking by the whole project group at the first workshop the the top three will be selected.

→ 1st project phase

Main research questions:

- How do young persons, living in rural areas, experience their living space today?
- What affects their spatial perception (family history, type and place of school, TV, Internet, cultural backgrounds, personal interests etc.)?
- What parameters for quality of life in rural regions do they describe as important for today and for the future. And why are these parameters important?

Research methods

In short videos each student group documents their living space. To work this out the students have to write a script using methods of empirical social research like interview guideline, qualitative opinion survey etc. Based on this script the students interview and film each other in their rural living spaces. This video-documentation delivers insights into the actual living spaces of the students. By creating these videos it is important to respect and protect the privacy of each student. By analysing the videos the students generate and describe important parameters for quality of life in their living space.

Workshop 1 (two days) – Kick-off

In the 1st workshop the whole project group comes together for the first time. So this is the common start of the project. In the first workshop the following issues will be treated:

- very short introduction of the total research group
- presentation of the project (content, timetable, project structure etc.) by the project management; time for questions concerning the project presentation;
- presentation of the proposal for the project logos by each student group, ranking of the proposals;
- presentation of the project homepage by the project management
- lecture about methods of empirical social research by Mag. Hipfl
- group work: video script writing using the described methods by the pupils accompanied by researchers, stakeholders and teachers
- lecture about tips and tricks how to shoot a video by Willi Haslitzer
- group work: shooting short videos
- discussion about experiences by the shooting, fixing further working steps

Research work

After the 1st workshop the students are elaborating the following issues accompanied by their teachers, their stakeholder and a researcher:

- writing detailed video scripts based on methods of empirical social research
- video shootings
- analysing the videos applying the selected methods; detecting and describing important parameters for quality of life in the system of the rural regions
- cutting and producing the videos for various presentations (at the 2nd workshop, in the school, at an event in the region etc.)

Results

The video cuts and the detected parameters to describe the quality of life in the system of the rural region are presented by each student group at the 2nd workshop.

After the 2nd workshop the students are presenting their videos at their schools and at events in the regions.

→ 2nd project phase

Main research questions:

- How do the described parameters for quality of life do effect each other in the system of rural regions?
- How can the rural region as a interconnected system be simulated based on the Sensitivity Model by F. Vester ?

Research methods

The students start to work with the “Sensitivity Model” by F. Vester finding out how interactive systems are working. They check the defined parameters for relevance and completeness and investigate how the parameters affect each other. Then the intensity and the direction (positive or negative) of the impact of one parameter to another is classified by the students.

Workshop 2 (two days)

At this workshop the the 2nd project phase starts with an methodical input and an agreement about further working steps:

- lecture: The “Art of Interconnected Thinking” and the “Sensitivity Model” by Prof. Vester

- group work: the students start to check if the listed and described parameters are complete and test how the parameters effect each other directly
- lecture: Sensitivity Matrix – how to draw it and how it works
- group work: the students are designing the Sensitivity Matrix and try out to work with it
- discussion about experiences by trying out the Sensitivity Matrix, fixing further working steps

Research work

The students elaborate the Sensitivity Matrix for the rural system accompanied by their teachers, their stakeholder and a researcher:

- testing all parameters on their mutual effects
- describing the intensity and the direction of the effect of each parameter on another,
- reasoning this effects
- collecting ideas how to visualise the defined parameters

Results

Based on the “Sensitivity Model” by F. Vester a matrix of the rural region as a living space is presented by each student group at the 2nd workshop. In the workshop an overall matrix is designed.

→ 3rd project phase

Main research questions:

- Are rural regions attractive to young persons as a living space in the future?
- What measures would students take to realise their favoured rural living space?

Research methods

By selecting active parameters the interconnected data base of the Sensitivity Model allows to run through various scenarios. Thereby the students get to know, what measures must be taken to realise their favoured rural living space.

Workshop 3

At this workshop the the 3rd project phase starts with an methodical input and an agreement about further working steps:

- lecture: how to develop different scenarios by using a data based model.
- lecture: concept for a computer game to visualise the scenarios by graduand(s).
- group work: choosing active parameters and testing the data based model by developing a scenario
- discussion: experiences by trying out to develop scenarios; brainstorming how to visualise this scenarios in a computer game; fixing further working steps

Research work

After the 3rd workshop the students are working with the data based model to develop their scenarios of the rural living space. Thereby they are going on to collect ideas how to visualise this scenarios.

Results

At the workshop the 3rd project phase ends with the presentation and discussion of the results:

Each student group presents their scenario for a rural living space for the future and ideas how to visualise it in a computer game at workshop 4.

→ 4th project phase

In this project phase the students and researchers complete missing issues and work out their reports and final presentations. Meanwhile the computer game is finished by the graduand(s).

Workshop 5 – final workshop

At this workshop the results of the projects are presented and discussed:

- scholarly papers/school project report and presentations
- computer game “my featured space 2025” (part of diploma thesis)
- final research report (partly)
- homepage with downloads
- preparation for presentations at official events (Alliance in the Alps, regional events)

My featured space – PR and Media

For the spread of the various results of the project an active work in public relations is necessary. The students are asked to present their working results to the public

- on the project homepage
- at their school
- at partner schools
- at regional events for example hold by the regional management of Carinthia or the Carinthian Gemeindebund or the municipality of Jesenice in Slovenia
- a conference of Alliance in the Alps

As the ORF is a project partner there will be reports in different TV and radio shows for example “Servus, Srečno, Ciao”.