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Moral premises of (social) sustainability in agriculture

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Background



Sustainability in agriculture

- The notion of sustainability contains both analytical and normative dimensions
(OMANN & SPANGENBERG 2002, HOLDEN et al. 2016)
- Rising key words 'sustainable agriculture' & 'agricultural sustainability'
(VELTEN et al. 2015, JANKER et al. 2018)
- 'Sustainable agriculture' often perceived as 'good agriculture'
(DE OLDE et al. 2016, JANKER & MANN 2018),
thus a normative ideal (SCHWINDENHAMMER et al. 2017, SLÄTMO et al. 2017)



Social sustainability in agriculture

- Previous research: Discrepancies in the understandings of political and scientific actors (JANKER ET AL. 2018)
 - social sustainability as rural development
(e.g. market access for small-scale farmers)
 - social sustainability as agroecological small-scale farming
(e.g. diversification & risk-reduction, resilience)
 - social sustainability as agricultural intensification
(e.g. adapting to market needs & technological innovation)

Research idea:

Grasp conflicting moral norms through conflict scenarios in agriculture



Approach



Step 1) Expert interviews & literature review

- Semi-structured problem-oriented interviews (MAYRING 2002) with five 'experts' in agricultural systems in Central Europe and in Latin America
- identify the most important stakeholders on and beyond the farms
- Scientific literature was reviewed on conflicts typically arising between these agricultural stakeholders (typifying content analysis, cf. MAYRING 2002)
- 2nd round of informal talks with four of the experts to review the importance of derived conflict scenarios and complement / add information

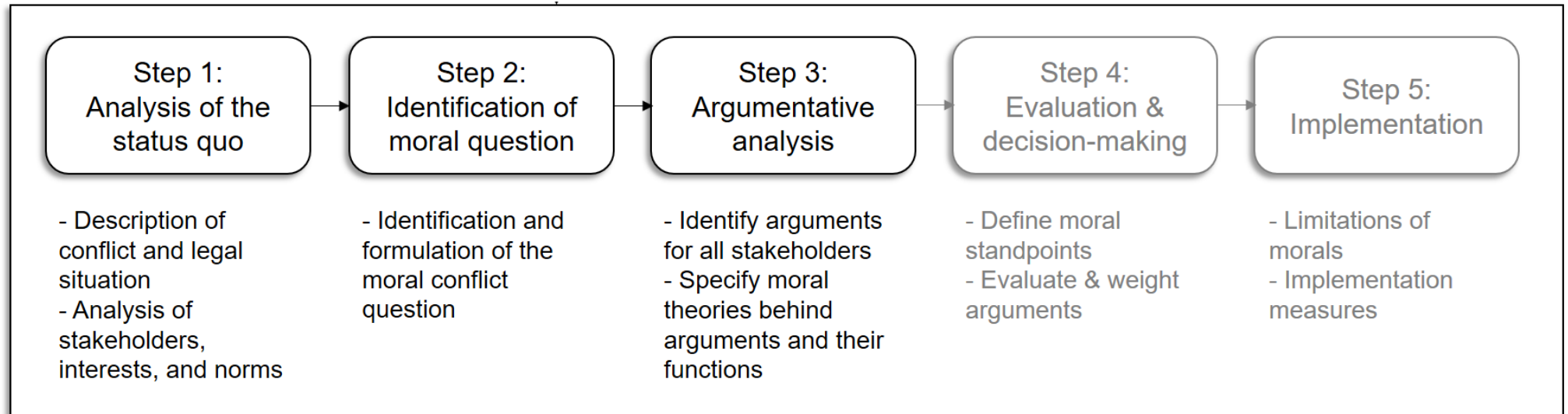


➤ **7 exemplary moral conflict scenarios between agricultural stakeholders**



Step 2) Ethical decision-making framework

- Apply ethical decision-making framework by BLEISCH & HUPPENBAUER (2011)
 - extract interests, moral arguments, and moral theories





Step 3) Moral premises in agriculture

- Extract reappearing moral arguments and their moral philosophical background

Scenario	Interest	Moral Argument	Moral School	
Work-Life Balance	High income for family	Responsibility for caring of family's basic needs	Deontology	} Premise 1
...	...	x_1	Consequentialism	
...	...	x_2	Consequentialism	} P2
...	...	y_1	Virtue ethics	
				} P3



Results



Conflicting moral argumentations

- **Deontological arguments** describe **minimum thresholds** to be fulfilled for all people (micro scale) to live adequately,
e.g. exercise free will, access to food, a minimum income, care for the farm family and children, care for any potential employees, while reinforcing their abilities to care for their families,
and that others must have the same **right to fulfil their lives**, precluding negative influences from the farm
- **Consequentialist arguments** support **food security**, based on macro-scale utility, through increased production, intensification, market access, better education, technologies and innovation, as well as the consideration of **future generations** needs
- **Virtue ethics** proposes **care arguments** on micro- and macro-level,
e.g. the good farmer and/or family member, responsible business and caring society



Moral premises of 'sustainable agriculture'

Recap:

- social sustainability as rural development
(e.g. market access for small-scale farmers)
- social sustainability as agricultural intensification
(e.g. adapting to market needs & technological innovation)
- social sustainability as agroecological small-scale farming
(e.g. diversification & risk-reduction, resilience)

Deontology:
basic rights for all

Consequentialism:
Food security today
and tomorrow

Virtue ethics:
Best practice,
focus on
environment

➤ **Conflicts in agriculture and sustainable agriculture
utilize conflicting moral argumentations and theories**



Summary



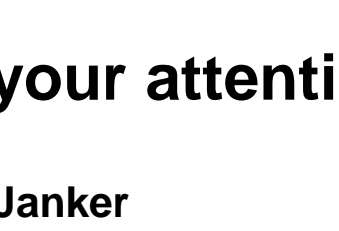
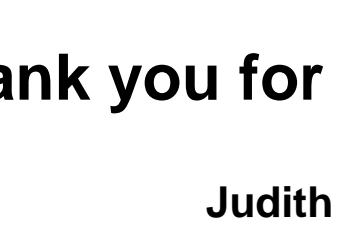
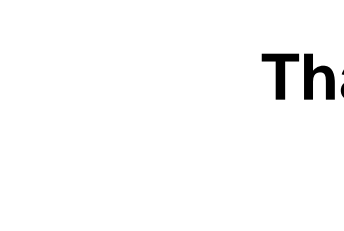
Summary

- Conflicting moral premises in agriculture can be detected in the (social) sustainable agriculture discourses where they are reproduced
- Central conflicts: basic rights for everyone today and consideration of future needs, as proposed by UN (WCED 1987)
- Core values that should be considered when speaking of 'sustainable agriculture':
 - Human rights and a decent life,
 - the fulfilment of future generations' needs,
 - and the responsibility of individuals towards society



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Thank you for your attention.

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