



## *Cooperation in Landscape Management in the Eastern Part of the Bernese Oberland*

### **A case study of cooperation between the Regional Planning Committee and conservation organisations in the development process of a Regional Landscape Development Concept**

This Licentiate paper is a contribution to the KILA project (Cooperation in Landscape Management) which is part of the National Research Project 48 (NRP 48), “Landscape and Habitats of the Alps”, of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The KILA project promotes the exchange of experience and knowledge among scientists and practitioners involved in regional landscape development of the eastern part of the Bernese Oberland. Since the tourism-based *Berner Oberland-Ost* region depends on an attractive landscape, touristic, private-sector, agricultural, ecological as well as aesthetic aspects are crucial. They increasingly require collective patterns of action and institutional cooperation. By drawing up a concept for regional landscape development (R-LEK), the Regional Planning Committee *Berner Oberland-Ost* have tried to accomplish the manifold tasks in the area of landscape management in an innovative and cooperative way.

The study investigates the (lack in) cooperation between the Regional Planning Committee and conservation organisations of the *Berner Oberland-Ost* region in the development process of R-LEK. It is based on qualitative research methods and involves five interdependent methodological steps: formulating research questions and hypotheses, sampling process, collection of data, data processing, interpretation and evaluation and the presentation of the research findings. A number of research questions concerning the conservation organisations’ involvement in the R-LEK process are answered; moreover, the study aims at verifying the following hypotheses:

- The institutions’ different views about landscape management affect the (lack in) cooperation in landscape management.
- During the development process of R-LEK power played an inherent role in the cooperation between the Regional Planning Committee and conservation organisations.

The sampling process brought forth five institutions which are the actors in this study, i.e. the Regional Planning Committee and four conservation organisations active in the *Berner Oberland-Ost* region. Data collection for this study consisted of the analysis of documents, semi-structured interviews and of one instance of participating observation. After transcription the data were thematically coded by means of a digital coding programme.

Theoretical frameworks dealing with different views, *thought collectives* and *styles* concerning landscape management support the first hypothesis that the institutions’ different views about landscape management affected the (lack in) cooperation during the R-LEK development process. The theoretical frameworks of power and *political discourse* support the second hypothesis that power played an inherent role in the cooperation between the Regional Planning Committee and conservation organisations. The present study confirms that there was a lack in cooperation between the Regional Planning Committee and conservation organisations in the development process of R-LEK.