



BOOK OF
ABSTRACTS



Institute for
Social-Ecological
Research



regulate



Znanstveni centar izvrsnosti
za integrativnu bioetiku

SECURAL scientific seminar: Social ecology in theory and practice

Zagreb, 8 – 10 / 11 / 2023





Organized by

the Installation research project “Socio-ecological challenges to rural development: Objective and subjective indicators of resilience of Croatian rural social-ecological systems – SECRRURAL”, UIP-2019-04-5257, 2020-2024, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation, at the Unit for Social Ecology, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb,

in cooperation with

ISOE - Institute for Social-Ecological Research, Frankfurt, Germany & Junior Research Group *regulate*,

and

the University Centre for Integrative Bioethics, University of Zagreb & Croatian Centre of Excellence for Integrative Bioethics

Organization and Programme Board:


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About SECRURAL

Research project “Socio-ecological challenges to rural development: objective and subjective indicators of resilience of Croatian rural social-ecological systems – SECRURAL” is a five-year project (2020-2024) funded by the Croatian Science Foundation under the Installation research projects grant UIP-2019-04-5257. The project is led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tijana Trako Poljak at the Unit of Social Ecology, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb.

The main goal of the project is to determine the current state of development of Croatian rural areas and their capacity for resilience against social-ecological challenges. Globalization processes, further aggravated by global ecological crisis, exert exogenous pressures on all parts of the world and Croatian rural areas are no exception. Post-socialist legacy, wartime destruction, transition to democratic liberal system, and accession to the European Union are just some of the endogenous challenges to the perspectives of rural development. However, while rural areas are regaining principal position in international developmental policies, there is a lack of systematic scientific research in Croatia that could inform national rural development strategies, which must be adapted to the local context. Furthermore, such strategies can only be successful if rural areas and their population are seen as active participants. In our research we, therefore, rely on new theoretical and methodological approaches, which define rural areas as dynamic social-ecological systems (RSEs) with the capacity for adaptation and resilience. We especially rely on those authors who emphasize not only objective indicators of resilience but also focus on frequently neglected subjective dimension (social, cultural and human capital).

In our research we use mixed methodology: 1) desk research, to determine objective indicators of resilience of Croatian RSEs; 2) survey research, to examine objective and subjective indicators of resilience of Croatian RSEs on a representative national sample of Croatian rural population; and 3) cca. 100 deep semi-structured interviews with local population and relevant actors in rural areas across all Croatian regions, for an in-depth analysis of the subjective perception of the quality of life as well as resilience resources and strategies in their everyday lives. The overall result of the project will be a constructed and analyzed model for researching the quality of life and measuring resilience of the population of Croatian rural areas, comprised of objective and subjective indicators.



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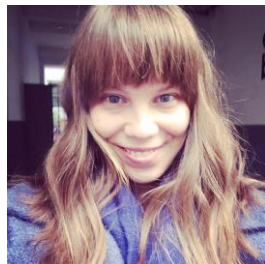
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About ISOE &
regulate

The ISOE – Institute for Social-Ecological Research, based in Frankfurt am Main/Germany, is a leading non-commercial and extra-university institute for transdisciplinary sustainability research. For more than 30 years, the Institute has been developing social-ecological concepts, thus providing support for sound decision-making processes by policy makers, civil society and industry. In this way, ISOE contributes to sustainable development and provides the impetus for critical and sustainable science. Our clients and sponsors include national and international public institutions and corporations.

www.isoe.de/en

“regulate – regulation of groundwater in telecoupled, social-ecological systems” is a junior research group which investigates current challenges to Europe’s groundwater management against the background of acute drought conditions, ongoing pollution, increasing conflicts and complex institutional settings. The team of researchers from natural and social sciences develops strategies for sustainable management of groundwater on different governance levels.

Groundwater is the most important source of drinking water worldwide and a central resource for food production. As a habitat for special animal organisms, it is also characterised by a unique biodiversity. Despite their important role in ecosystem health and for human well-being, groundwater bodies are threatened by climate change, overuse and pollution. The scientists will use their research to better understand how groundwater bodies in Europe are impaired – from a hydrological, geographical, ethnological and ecological perspective. In this regard, the project investigates telecouplings, i.e., remote effects that lead to problems of quality and availability locally, but which originate in other regions due to socio-economic and political interdependencies. In these remote effects, the project analyses conflicts, norms and values in dealing with the invisible resource groundwater.



The junior research group works with stakeholders in case studies in Europe to generate new local knowledge and draw comprehensive conclusions for appropriate management. These conclusions have the potential to be applied in Europe as well as in other regions worldwide.

The junior research group consists of six members. Dr. Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky and Dr. Robert Lütke-meier lead the group; Anne Jäger, David Kuhn, Dženeta Hodžić and Linda Söller work as PhD-candidates on their individual dissertations.

The research group is based at ISOE in Frankfurt, with Goethe University Frankfurt and the University of Koblenz-Landau as partnering institutions.

The junior research group is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the program “Research for Sustainable Development (FONA)”. The regulate project is part of the funding measure “SOEF – Social-ecological Research” in the funding area “Junior Research Groups in Social-Ecological Research”.

<https://regulate-project.eu/>

<https://www.isoe.de/en/research/junior-research-group-regulate/>





GUEST
LECTURER



Dr. Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky
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Dr. Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky has been a research scientist at ISOE since 2018 and has been head of the Practices and Infrastructures hub with Immanuel Stieß since April 2023. Since 2020, she has been leading the junior research group *regulate*. In her PhD thesis and as a research assistant at the Institute of Geography at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, she investigated institutions and social inequalities in access to water and adaptation to flooding using the example of Accra (Ghana). Prior to this, she worked at the Ecologic Institute in Berlin. In her studies of environmental planning in Munich and London she was focusing on municipal adaptation to climate change, green infrastructure and sustainable urban development.

<https://www.isoe.de/en/institute/team/team/person/fanny-frick-trzebitzky/>



GUEST
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Dženeta Hodžić, MA has been a research scientist at ISOE in the junior research group *regulate* since 2020. She is a doctoral candidate at the Institute for Cultural Anthropology and European Ethnology and an associate of the Research Training Group “Fixing Futures – Technologies of Anticipation”, both at Goethe University Frankfurt/Main. Prior to this, she worked at the Berlin Social Science Center and at the Institute for European Ethnology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where she obtained her BA and MA in European Ethnology. Her work is situated at the intersection of anthropological Science and Technology Studies and environmental anthropology through which she studies field sites in the post-Yugoslav space. Within *regulate*, she ethnographically studies groundwater management and knowledge practices in two case studies in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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ABSTRACTS

Wednesday, 8/11/2023

Social-ecological research across boundaries: bringing the Frankfurt approach into engagement with telecoupling

Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky

In the German speaking academia, social ecology emerged in the 1980s as a field of research based on the critique of how previous knowledge systems had addressed the ecological crisis. Among others, the institute for social-ecological research (ISOE) was founded as a pioneering research institute to deal with problems in the relations between nature and society by conducting integrated research, involving multiple disciplinary, academic and non-academic perspectives. Researchers at ISOE theorize the multiple crises as crises of societal relations to nature. Concepts such as social-ecological systems serve to operationalize the theoretical frame of the so-called Frankfurt school of social ecology. In its early phases, empirical research in this field has mostly been concerned with local examples. However, in the course of accelerated globalization and its effects, symptoms of the crises of societal relations to nature are spanning across the globe, and link places across large distances. Other strands of social-ecological research have addressed this effect as “telecoupling”. In the lecture I will give an overview on the Frankfurt school of social ecology, and explore the idea of “telecoupling” as a way to address spatial effects in societal relations to nature.

Key words: *telecoupling, societal relations to nature, social ecology, social-ecological crisis*



Anthropologizing groundwater in the Dinarides: Ethnographic and historical perspectives on groundwater in social-ecological research

Dženeta Hodžić

The Dinarides are not only characterized by stunning karst landscapes and its water riches, both ground- and surface waters, but also by a longstanding local interdisciplinary tradition of karst and karstic groundwater scholarship. From Jovan Cvijić, the so-called “founding father of karstology” who also partly pioneered anthropogeography in the region throughout the 19th and 20th century (with difficult geopolitical legacy) to Ivo Lučić, a karstologist and environmental activist nowadays bridging hydro(geo)logical and ethnological research, the call towards a holistic research practice of groundwater and karst as cultural landscape persists. In my presentation, I aim to discuss a reading of these works through the lens of social ecology to work out how these studies might be understood within this framework as well as what they might contribute to a conceptualization of social-ecological systems as well as interdisciplinary (karstic) groundwater research. In the end, I will contextualize my own ethnographic research in two case studies in the Dinarides, namely 1) the transboundary groundwater catchment between the Plitvice Lakes and Bihać and 2) the region of Rijeka and the island of Krk, within an anthropology of (ground-)water and a social-ecological perspective.

Keywords: *ethnography, groundwater, Dinarides, karst, interdisciplinarity*





SECOND PART: Social-ecological discipline and approaches

Social-ecological tradition and environmental movement in Croatia

Jelena Puđak

In this paper we will outline three time periods through which we will describe the main developmental processes in formation of civil society and environmental movement in Croatia. In the first part of paper we will describe beginnings of civil society formation in Croatia still being a member of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Awareness of environmental problems in Croatia and Yugoslavia appeared relatively early, during 1970s, not lagging much behind the developed countries, but still in a quite smaller extent. Reactions of the system regarding warnings about environmental deterioration and pollution coming from below have been restricting and civil society had limited impact. As the political system changed, and as Croatia gained independence, new processes are appearing on the civil society scene. In second part of paper we will describe development and change of non-governmental organizations / environmental movement in the period from 1990 till today. Over past 25 years number and profile of environmental NGOs in Croatia has changed constantly in number and character, but in last couple of years the civil society 'scene' has stabilized and matured. In third part of paper we will outline the state and profile of environmental non-governmental organizations in Croatia in 2014. Then we will address most recent relevant surveys, Sustainability Index of civil society organizations and Civil society index, and we will outline the part of qualitative research that refers to the sectoral perception of environmental NGO-s. Finally, we will conclude about the state and direction of environmental organizations development in Croatia. Regarding the later we can speak of well-formed and developed environmental movement in Croatia, although not mass and large-scaled. The state of environmental organizations is improved in almost every aspect, except in financial segment regard in the economic crisis. Nonetheless, despite the improvements in public perception, environmental organizations are still not recognized as equal partner by the policy and private sector.

Key words: *environmental movement history in Croatia, civil society, social ecology*



Application of social-ecological theory and social-ecological systems approach in understanding Croatian rural areas

Tijana Trako Poljak

The main goal of the research project “SECRURAL” funded by Croatian Science Foundation is to determine the current state of development of Croatian rural areas and their capacity for resilience against social-ecological challenges. Globalization processes, further aggravated by global ecological crisis, exert exogenous pressures on all parts of the world and Croatian rural areas are no exception. Post-socialist legacy, wartime destruction, transition to democratic liberal system, and accession to the European Union are just some of the endogenous challenges to the perspectives of rural development. However, while rural areas are regaining principal position in international developmental policies, there is a lack of systematic scientific research in Croatia that could inform national rural development strategies, which must be adapted to the local context. Furthermore, such strategies can only be successful if rural areas and their population are seen as active participants.

In our research we, therefore, rely on new theoretical and methodological approaches, which define rural areas as dynamic social-ecological systems (RSEs) with the capacity for adaptation and resilience. A more dynamic understanding of rural areas and their communities as socio-ecological systems offers a useful novelty in conceptual and methodological research not only of changes that occur in rural areas over time, but also their response to these changes through key concepts of sensitivity, adaptation and resilience. We analyse how this conceptual and empirical approach can be applied to Croatian rural areas using both qualitative and quantitative research methods: desk analysis, face to face interviews with rural population and stakeholders and nationally representative survey.

Key words: *socio-ecological systems, rural areas, Croatia, rural development, modernization*





Sustainability and resilience on islands – female perspective of life on Brač

Jelena Zlatar Gamberožić, Sara Ursić & Jana Vukić

A comprehensive grasp of spatial, social, and cultural resilience is intrinsically linked to the role of the community as a pivotal actor within this dynamic process. This association, particularly in the context of social resilience as a tool for enhancing both rural and urban spaces, underscores the critical importance of understanding contemporary socio-spatial relationships. Furthermore, the spatiality and locality of communities play a vital role in reevaluating novel dimensions of communal existence. The localization of both resilience and sustainability occurs primarily through the prism of community, whether it is within spatial or cultural contexts. This research focuses on islands as exemplars of fragile habitats and communities. Islands frequently feature numerous small peripheral locales, often distant and isolated, while grappling with a multitude of social, economic, and demographic challenges, thereby placing them in a position of inequality and imbalance compared to coastal counterparts.

The development of cultural heritage and traditional activities on islands should be integrated into the development of tourism, especially sustainable tourism, since many tangible and intangible cultural assets have cultural-tourism potential. Qualitative research on the islands of Brač showed the necessity of increasing the visibility of the islands' cultural heritage and traditional activities. It was established that these places have a rich cultural heritage, however tourism development is not focused on it, nor on traditional activities, especially agriculture, which is mainly limited to individual and family activities.

The ecological facet of sustainability on islands has demonstrated significant development, underscored by the presence of pristine natural resources. However, it necessitates more systematic attention and care to mitigate the risks of pollution. Additionally, there is substantial potential for further development, particularly in the realm of agritourism. The local population and other interested actors therefore point out that for further development of island tourism it is crucial to include their cultural and historical dimension, and the local and traditional knowledge and activities.

This research contributes to the analysis of tourism development on the Adriatic islands.

Keywords: *sustainability, resilience, culture, agritourism, islands, women*



THIRD PART: Social-ecological research and applications

Adaptive governance as bricolage

Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky

Adaptive governance is proposed as an analytical framework for understanding water distributions in the Anthropocene and for fostering transformative interventions. In this contribution, I demonstrate the usefulness of bricolage thinking for a more grounded and power-sensitive analysis of adaptive water governance. More specifically, I employ the notions of institutional bricolage and extend them to socio-technical tinkering to argue for an understanding of adaptive governance as an experimental practice. To develop our arguments, I draw from research on municipal water supply governance in Mansfeld-Südharz, Germany. I demonstrate how residents and water providers adapt to local historical–geographical contexts and unexpected disruptions by using novel and existing multi-purpose institutional and infrastructural arrangements across multiple scales. Through the notion of water bricolage, I show how modest imaginaries and realities of municipal water supply infrastructure and governance emerge. In concluding, I suggest everyday engagements with rules, people and materials as a lens to further understand adaptive governance and identify spaces for transformative interventions. I furthermore discuss governance as bricolage as a way of conceptualizing social-ecological regulation.

The presentation draws on a paper I wrote together with Rossella Alba and Kristiane Fehrs: *Frick-Trzebitzky, F., Alba, R., and Fehrs, K.: Adaptive governance as bricolage, Geogr. Helv., 78, 397–409, <https://doi.org/10.5194/gh-78-397-2023>, 2023.*

Key words: *institutional bricolage, adaptive governance, municipal water supply*





Qualitative and quantitative research into the quality of life in Croatian rural areas

Bruno Šimac & Vladimir Ivanović

The concept of Quality of Life (QoL) is broadly and diversely defined in sociology and it usually encompasses a plethora of different objective and subjective indicators which is why SECRRURAL approached it from a qualitative and quantitative standpoint with special consideration taken to honor the uniqueness of rural areas. For qualitative research into quality of life, we constructed an interview protocol for conducting deep semi-structured interviews that relied on previous theoretical and empirical findings about quality of life in general and in rural areas specifically. Based on preliminary research findings of the qualitative segment, as well as previous conceptual elaboration of the quality of life, we approached the construction of the comprehensive survey questionnaire. In total, we conducted 97 deep semi-structured interviews with rural residents while the survey was conducted on a nationally representative sample of N=831 respondents. These qualitative and quantitative approaches to quality of life research of Croatian rural areas helped provide meaningful new data and insight into the population that has recently been left out of the scope of Croatian sociology. Main findings showed that there is lot more to quality of life than meets the eye, and that despite a lot of objective shortcomings, certain subjective and social facets of rural life were important aspects of rural residents' quality of life and life satisfaction.

Key words: *quality of life, rural sociology, rural areas, quantitative and qualitative methodology*





Empowering rural women and driving socio-ecological innovations led by women in agriculture, the rural economy and rural communities: Presentation of the project GRASS Ceiling - Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation Systems

Nataša Bokan

GRASS Ceiling is a three-year (Horizon Europe) multi-actor project which aims to empower rural women and increase the number of socio-ecological innovations led by women in agriculture, the rural economy and rural communities. The project will contribute to advancing the UN's goals on gender parity, realize the EU gender equality strategy, and achieve the goals of the main strategy document in the EU (Green Deal, the Farm to Fork strategy, the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, and the European Pillar of Social Rights). The GRASS CEILING objectives are to establish a testbed through Living Labs (LLs), to create tools to improve policies that impact on agriculture and rural women innovators, to provide an analysis of the current position of women vis-a-vis the megatrends in European agriculture and rural areas, to co-create knowledge of gender norms and the drivers of women-led innovation. It will also be presented what has been delivered in the first year of the project: report on existing knowledge of rural women-led innovation, statistical report on rural and farm women, two out of nine living lab meetings and interviews with stakeholders and focus groups with rural women and men innovators.

Key words: *rural women, women farmers, socio-ecological innovation, gender equality, action research*





Methodological challenges in qualitative research of rural areas – notes from the field of Croatian villages

Krešimir Žažar

Quite often a certain gap between instructions advised in methodological textbooks and concrete situation in the field appeared. This paper conveys auto-reflexive considerations of a researcher based on a series of interviews conducted in Croatian rural areas. In the spotlight of discussion are following topics: access to the field, gaining trust and approach to respondents, adjustments of a language, focus on details, avoiding biases and potential ethical issues, constant comparison of provisional abstractions and continuously gathered data, size of a sample estimation of conceptual saturation stage, challenges of further analytical procedures and theory development, and other relevant queries. One of the main conclusions is that researcher as a primary research tool should be active during entire stay in the field and not solely while conducting interviews. Moreover, it is especially important to focus on visual details in surroundings as they might be source of highly valuable insights, supplementary to data produced through interviews, when striving to comprehend object under consideration, i.e. how does life in particular villages actually function.

Key words: *qualitative methodology, conducting interviews, researcher's self-reflection, visual sociology*





Thursday, 9/11/2023

METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOP:

Dr. Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky & Dženeta Hodžić, MA

Transdisciplinary research methods: Towards an integrative perspective

Transdisciplinarity is a mode of research that brings multiple epistemological and ontological approaches into engagement. It is a key mode of research in social ecology as it produces new forms of knowledge to both understand social-ecological challenges, and develop practical approaches to address them, in order to foster social-ecological transformation. To do so, transdisciplinary research projects aim at producing system knowledge, orientation knowledge and transformation knowledge. Knowledge production in transdisciplinary research thus involves multiple methods and formats of integration around a shared research issue. In the workshop, we will give an overview on transdisciplinarity as a research mode in research on and for social-ecological transformations. We will explore key concepts such as that of boundary work in inter- and transdisciplinary teams. We will give inputs on key methods of integrations, such as real-life laboratories, stakeholder workshops and scenario techniques. Based on examples from our own research, we will discuss hurdles and ways to overcome them. Teaching formats include role-play, group work and further transdisciplinarity in teaching methods.

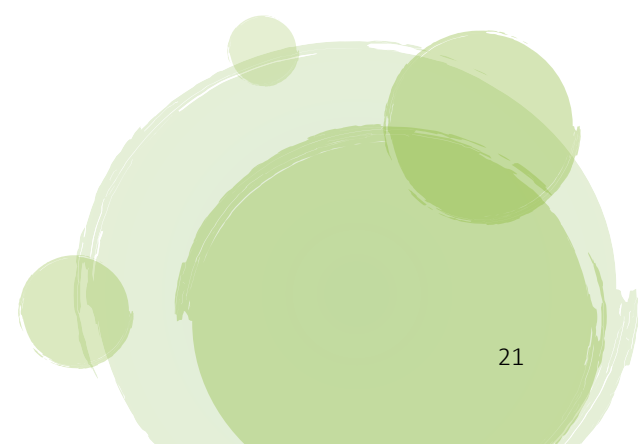




METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOP:
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tijana Trako Poljak

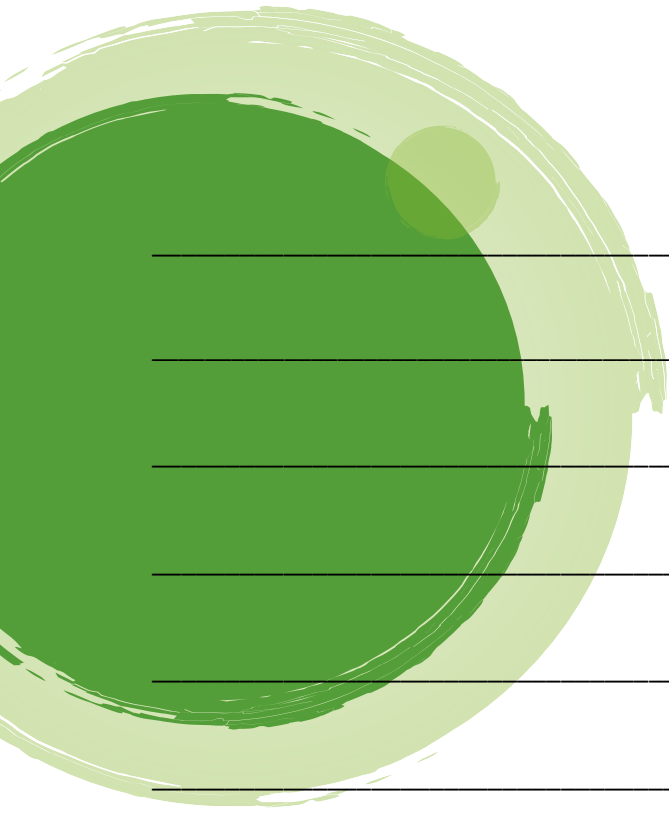
Micro-sociological approaches in social-ecological research

The workshop will be focused on the presentation and discussion of key theoretical and conceptual approaches and the most influential empirical research in the field of social ecology and environmental sociology. At the beginning, a brief history of fundamental sociological and related approaches to the study of the relationship between society and the environment will be given. Given that the majority of social-ecological research is macro-sociological and quantitative in nature, the emphasis of the workshop will be on micro-sociological perspectives and qualitative approaches that have appeared in the recent years in this field. Students will have the opportunity to practice data processing and analysis using the existing qualitative data (conducted interviews on a social-ecological topic).

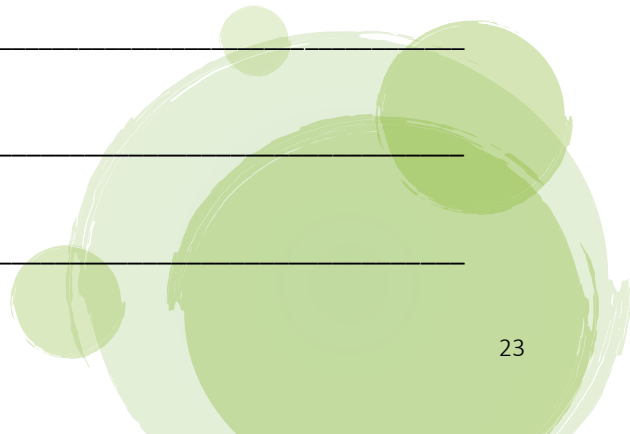


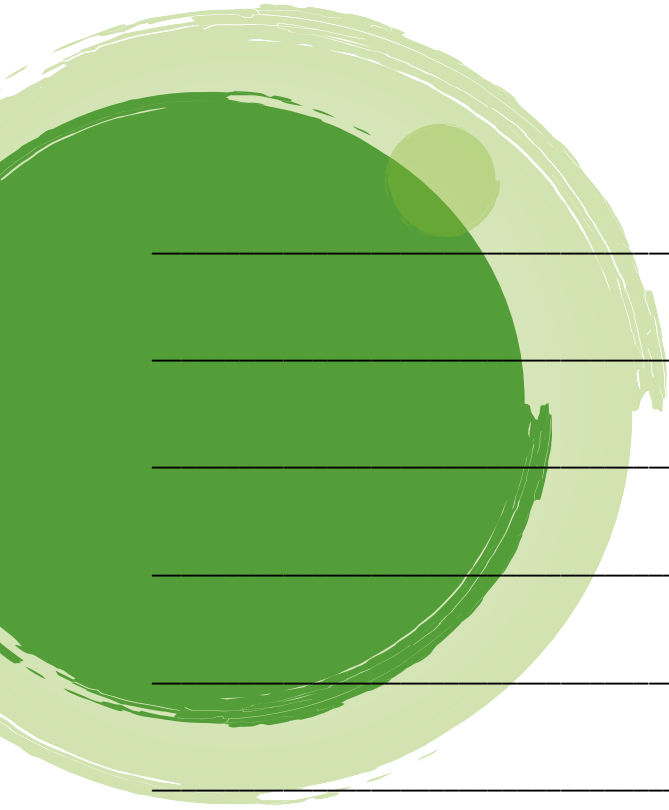
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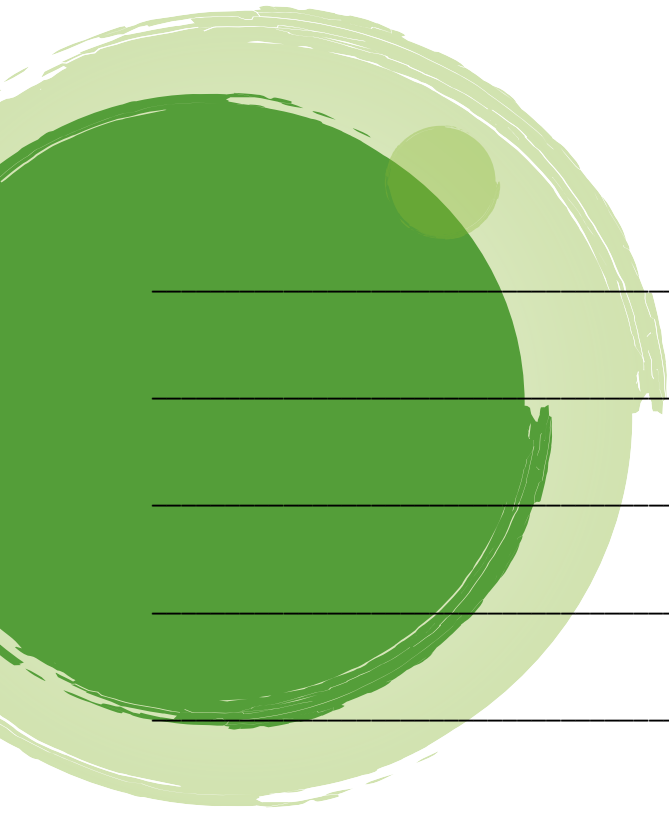
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