

Sustainable Epistemologies: Investigating Everyday Life from a First-Person Perspective

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The question of developing sustainable everyday life challenges widespread practices of how to do academic research. Traditional approaches within psychology and the social sciences usually take a third-person perspective in their analysis. Building on theoretical languages and methodologies from the natural sciences, persons are constructed as objects and investigated from an external scientific perspective in abstraction of the immediate experience of the investigated subjects and their concrete social and technological life-world. In contrast to such an external, third-person perspective, the paper suggests to study everyday life from the perspective of the subject. My argumentation starts with the fundamental groundedness of human activity. This concept emphasizes that every individual action is grounded in reasons. Informed by critical psychology, phenomenology and analytical philosophy I argue that everyday experiences and reasons for action are given in the first person: they are always each person's "own" reasons, i.e., reasons from "my own" standpoint and "my own" perspective. In taking a first-person perspective in the study of everyday life I see a central prerequisite of overcoming an individualistic approach and to understand the precise social and technological mediation of human subjectivity and everyday conduct of life. This paper presents the theoretical construction of doing research from a "first-person perspective" and discusses its implications for the study of everyday life for an ecologically and socially sustainable future.