From Grains to Riches: How Hydropower Production on the Möll River in the Austrian Alps Went from Local to Supra-Regional

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Summary

After the collapse of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy Austria was disconnected from its coal resources. Electricity production was focused on hydropower. The Möll is an example for the turn from local energy production to supranational electricity provision.

Koelnbrein dam and Galgenbichl reservoir as seen from the Arlhoche

2005 Michael Glanznig

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The Möll rises in the Hohe Tauern and flows eighty kilometers through the Austrian Alps. Today, six hydropower plants divert the waters of the river and its tributaries, providing 18 percent of Austria’s total hydropower capacity.
to rich coal sources. Nevertheless, the potential was intensively discussed and engineers systematically measured the flow and slopes of rivers. The collapse of the monarchy cut the country off from coal sources in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia.

Hydropower production was the perfect alternative, and gigantic projects were developed. The Hohe Tauern were immediately the object of energy dreams. Reports referred, in particular, to the enormous drop heights and the potential for tapping the precipitation from both sides of the mountain.

In 1928, the first plans for the Kaprun power plant were commissioned. Although completed only after World War II, it started the nationalisation of electricity production in the Möll valley. The large reservoirs and dams, as
well as the huge tubes for water diversion, changed the landscape drastically. Water abstraction and dykes modified the ecological conditions and threatened animal and plant species specific to the locality. The side-effects of clean, renewable “white coal” are particularly profound in steep alpine valleys.

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**Further readings:**


**Related links:**

- Nationalpark Hohe Tauern  
- Information site about Möll valley  
  [http://www.peak.at/moelltal/index.phtml](http://www.peak.at/moelltal/index.phtml)

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ISSN 2199-3408
Environment & Society Portal, Arcadia

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- [http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:K%C3%B6lnbreinsperre_from_Arlh%C3%B6he.jpg&filetimestamp=20061014194529](http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:K%C3%B6lnbreinsperre_from_Arlh%C3%B6he.jpg&filetimestamp=20061014194529)
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