

Research

UNESCO Chair



Of Traditions and Perspectives – Insights into Sustainable Mountain Development

Picture 1: Celebration of the Kenyan UNESCO Commission with the theme “Art is good for the health” (KNATCOM-UNESCO)

In brief

The UNESCO Chair on Natural and Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Mountain Development promotes research and exchange in the fields of nature conservation, renewable resources, protected area management, sustainable tourism, culture, traditions and regional development.

The Chair is run by the management centre of the UNESCO World Heritage Swiss Alps Jungfrau-Aletsch (SAJA) together with the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) and the Institute of Geography (GIUB) of the University of Bern as well as the Centre for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD) in Nanyuki, Kenya.

Learn more here.

Important publications with UNESCO Chair participation:
Maluf, Renato S.; Burlandy, Luciene; Cintrão, Rosângela P.; Tribaldos, Theresa; Jomalinis, Emilia (2024). Food Systems and Access to Healthy Food in an Amazonian Context. Sustainability, 16(7) MDPI 10.3390/su16072652
Tribaldos, T. and T., Kortetmäki (2022). Just Transition Principles and Criteria for Food Systems and Beyond. Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions 43, p. 244-256.

Dear readers

With this new issue of our newsletter, we would like to inform you about current events and projects of the UNESCO Chair „Natural and Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Mountain Development“. 2023 was an exciting year with various activities in university teaching and research as well as cooperation with our practice partners.

The topic of traditional irrigation was a key focus last year. We were able to successfully launch the project „Safeguarding the future of traditional irrigation as intangible cultural heritage“, which is funded by the Federal Office of Culture and managed by the International Centre for Traditional Irrigation. In this project, a trainee worked for us over the summer on questions relating to current and innovative new organisational forms of cooperation in the use of common goods (irrigation water). In addition, two Master's theses have been started on the topics of practical and linguistic knowledge of individuals working in traditional irrigation and on sustainable water utilisation in the Oberaar-gau region.

One of last year's highlights was the biennial conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons on the topic of „The Commons We Want: Between Historical Legacies and Future Collective Actions“. The conference took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in June and was jointly organised by our co-chair at CETRAD and the University of Bern. The theme of the conference provided an im-

portant opportunity for all interested parties to reflect on common goods, share experiences and discuss together how such common goods can contribute to sustainable development. On this occasion, we organised a session on traditional irrigation together with our co-chair, where we exchanged views on the various forms of traditional irrigation with colleagues in Kenya and Benin.

In December, UNESCO definitively added traditional irrigation to the list of intangible cultural heritage. We were very pleased about this, as we were able to closely follow the application process under the leadership of the Austrian UNESCO Commission.

Another topic we delved into with our co-chair in 2023 was the synergies between ecosystem restoration and sustainable food systems. Supporting these synergies is central to sustainable development in mountain regions, as the mountain populations are disproportionately affected by food insecurity globally and at the same time play a central role in the development of sustainable food systems.

Our Co-Chair at CETRAD in Kenya organised the International Summer School of the International Graduate School North-South in 2023 together with the University of Bern, Swisspeace and the University of Basel. The theme of the summer school, which was attended by 30 doctoral students from 11 different countries, was Global Change, Innovation and Sustainable Development. The aim was to provide conceptual and methodologi-

Picture 2: Caroline Ouko at the COP 28 Panel in Dubai (Miroslav Polzer – GLOCHA)



cal insights into research approaches for sustainable development in different contexts.

Caroline Ouko attended the 28th Climate Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in December 2023 as part of the Kenyan Government delegation on behalf of our Co-Chair and followed the topics around Action for Climate Empowerment. For the first time, a focus was on mountain ecosystems, which are also expected to be the focus of an expert dialogue of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice in 2024.

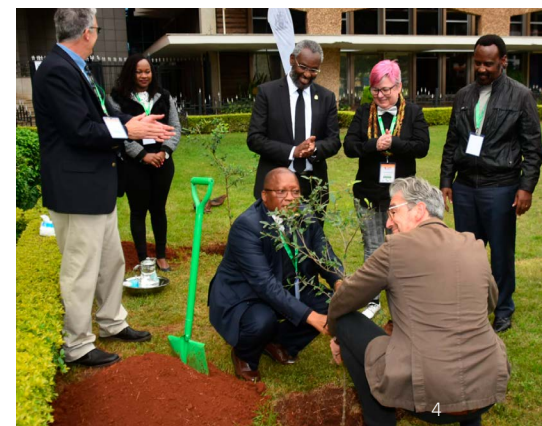
Our Co-Chair is also in close contact with the Kenyan UNESCO Commission, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in April 2023 with the theme „Art is good for the health“. Boniface Kiteme took part in this celebration, where contributions to Kenya's development in the fields of education, natural sciences, social sciences and humanities, culture and communication as well as information were presented. Towards the end of the year, we were busy

with our Chair's reporting for the 2020 – 2024 phase. This gave us the opportunity to reflect in depth on our activities and results and to plan the next phase 2025 – 2028. We are now hoping for a positive decision from UNESCO so that we can continue this exciting collaboration.

In the current year, we are continuing to work on various topics related to traditional irrigation. For example, we are still involved in the ongoing BAK project and are continuing to organise student projects on various aspects in this area. We are also organising a two-day excursion for students from the University of Bern to the Jungfrau-Aletsch UNESCO World Heritage Site in June, which will focus on common property in general and traditional irrigation in particular.

This year, we also want to promote the synergies between ecosystem restoration and sustainable food systems. To this end, we are planning an intensive scientific exchange with partners in Ethiopia and Kenya during the summer months. The focus will be on local projects we want to analyse and translate into scientific practice.

Theresa Tribaldos and Boniface Kiteme



Picture 3: Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Kenyan UNESCO Commission (KNATCOM-UNESCO)

Picture 4: Boniface Kiteme planting a tree during the IASC (Esther Nekesa University of Nairobi).

