

# Research

# UNESCO Chair



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Chair on Natural and Cultural Heritage  
for Sustainable Mountain Development,  
University of Bern

in partnership with  
UNESCO World Heritage Site Jungfrau-Aletsch  
Centre for Training and Integration Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD)



## Of Traditions and Perspectives – Insights into Sustainable Mountain Development

### 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:

Tribaldos, T. and S. Rist (2022). Connecting human health to nature health? The bridging potential of sustainable food systems. The SAGE Handbook of Social Studies in Health and Medicine. Ed. S. C. Scrimshaw, S. D. Lane, R. A. Rubinstein and J. Fisher. London, UK, Sage Publications Ltd.

Ebner, L., Liechti, K., Tribaldos, T. und Rist, S. 2021. Forschungsschwerpunkt Traditionelle Bewässerung an der Universität Bern: Traditionelle Bewässerung in Europa – immaterielles Kulturerbe für die Zukunft. Working Paper. Bern, Schweiz: Centre for Development and Environment, Geografisches Institut, UNESCO Chair Natur- und Kulturerbe zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung von Berggebieten, Universität Bern, und Stiftung Landschaftsschutz Schweiz.

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". We are pleased to announce that Theresa Tribaldos has taken over from Stephan Rist as Chairholder since the beginning of the year and is now heading the Chair together with Boniface Kiteme. Stephan Rist started his well-deserved retirement at the end of 2021. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him sincerely for his great personal commitment to the Chair and for the fruitful collaboration. Under his leadership, we were able to build valuable partnerships and extend the Chair for another four years (2020-2024) based on the positive results.

In 2021, our activities were dedicated to living traditions. We focused on the still relevant traditional irrigation systems in mountain regions as a special cultural heritage of Europe and accompanied the process of the multinational submission of the intangible cultural heritage project "Traditional Irrigation" to UNESCO. At the conference on Park Research in Switzerland, we presented challenges and future prospects for traditional irrigation. Stephan Rist was appointed to the steering group "Updating of the List of Living Traditions 2023" by the Federal Office of Culture (FOC). Further, we investigated the integration of mountain huts into regional food systems and to what extent they support sustainable regional value chains. We presented the results of this research project to a broad audience at the Park Research in Switzerland conference in October.

In order to bring the topic of sustainable development closer to the next generation and to strengthen their connection to the unique alpine region, we conducted two excursions with primary and orientation schools in the Lötschental in September. In addition, we organized a two-day excursion with students from the University of Bern to the Jungfrau-Aletsch World Heritage Site on the topic of resilience. The excursions guaranteed an

inter- and transdisciplinary discussion and enabled the children and young adults to acquire valuable skills and extensive knowledge. Topics such as tourism, agriculture and living traditions found just as much space during the excursion as glaciers, geology, climate change, animals and plants in the World Heritage Site. It was important to convey the thematic focuses in an age-appropriate way.

In 2022, the focus will be on educational, research and implementation (of promising incubator ideas) work. With the support of the Lötschental communities and schools, we are planning to develop a UNESCO education centre there. This is intended to vividly convey topics of sustainable development to an interested public and to encourage reflection and dialogue through a variety of educational offers such as a research workshop or a new climate-culture nature trail. Landscape conservation and other activities are also intended to contribute to sustainable tourism in the Lötschental. Results from research and practice will also inform university teaching. In addition, a broad range of interventions are planned in the water-energy-food security nexus in Kenya. We also plan to promote increased stakeholder engagement in order to enhance local ownership and participation in the conservation of Mt Kenya as a World Heritage Site.

The second priority for this year is to strengthen supra-regional cooperation for the restoration of alpine ecosystems within the framework of the Interreg Alpine Space Programme. In cooperation with other UNESCO Chairs in Austria and Slovenia, we are aiming at a practice-oriented project with civil society and private partners to develop support measures for the restoration of these ecosystems.

We would like to exchange with you about our projects and possible avenues of cooperation. An invitation for the workshop on 28 September 2022 will be sent out soon.

Theresa Tribaldos and Boniface Kiteme