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Author: Scheurer, Thomas

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The Swiss Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies (ICAS)



Swiss Academies
of Arts and Sciences

ICAS
Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies

A Swiss national platform for Alpine studies

The Swiss Interacademic Commission for Alpine Studies (ICAS) is an interdisciplinary commission of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT). It was founded in 1994 and has been supported since then by the Arts and SCNAT and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAHS).

ICAS was established to develop a national platform in Switzerland for inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation in mountain research in light of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 (1992) and to cooperate in meeting the needs of the Alpine Convention

(1991). ICAS thus promotes research among all disciplines concerned with mountain issues and—as mountain research was long driven mainly by the natural sciences—especially between the natural sciences and the humanities. In recent years, ICAS and SAHS have successfully committed the humanities and social sciences to mountain research, for instance by initiating the Swiss National Research Programme 48 (NRP48), “Landscapes and Habitats in the Alps” (2001–2007; see also the Special Issue of *Mountain Research and Development* [MRD] published in May 2008). Furthermore, ICAS is engaged in permanent dialogue between science and society (mainly with

policy-makers, administrators, and practitioners).

Main activities

Pursuing these tasks in national and international contexts, ICAS focuses on the following activities:

- **Swiss Mountain Day**, which brings together the Swiss mountain research community to discuss current and future trends in mountain research and development:
 - <http://brig08.alpinestudies.ch/d/>
 - <http://tagung-benefits-berggebietsforschung>

FIGURE 1 The Swiss Alps and Swiss mountain policy: panorama of the Alps from Bern, Switzerland's capital city, with a glimpse of the parliament building on the right (see next page). (Photo by Thomas Vatter, Bern)



BOX 1: ICAS in a nutshell**Organization**

The Commission is composed of 15 members from different disciplines and research institutes and additional guests from scientific networks and federal agencies.

Members (as of 2010) include: Prof Heinz Veit (president, University of Berne, physical geography, ISCAR delegate), Prof Bernard Debarbieux (University of Geneva, human geography), Prof Reynald Delaloye (University of Fribourg, physical geography), Prof Adrienne Grêt-Regamey (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology [ETH] Zurich, landscape planning), Prof Christian Körner (University of Basel and Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment [GMBA], plant ecology), Prof Walter Leimgruber (University of Basel, social anthropology), Dr Luigi Lorenzetti (University of Southern Switzerland, Laboratory of Alps History, ISCAR delegate), Prof Cla Riatsch (University of Zurich, Romance languages and literatures), Prof emeritus Peter Rieder (ETH Zurich, agro-economics), Dr Andreas Rigling (Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research, forest dynamics), PD Dr Eva Schüpbach (University Center César Ritz, meteorology), and Prof Dominik Siegrist (University of Applied Sciences Rapperswil, tourism).

Guests (as of 2010) include: Andreas Stalder (Swiss Federal Office for the Environment), Silvia Jost (Swiss Federal Office for Spatial Development), Prof emeritus Paul Messerli (SCNAT), Dr Manuela Cimeli (SAHS), Christian Preiswerk (SCNAT), Dr Urs Kneubühl (Swiss Alpine Museum), Prof Rolf Weingartner (Mountain Research Initiative [MRI]), and Dr Astrid Wallner (Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern).

Office

The ICAS office in Bern (Figure 1) provides operational support for ICAS as well as for ISCAR activities (3 part-time jobs totaling 120%).



- akademien-schweiz.ch/d/index.php
- The biannual meeting of **PhilAlp**, the mission of which is to give a voice to young academics:
 - <http://philalp10.akademien-schweiz.ch/d/>
 - Promoting dialogue between **science and society** on topics of current concern, such as the development of high mountain areas and migration:
 - <http://icas-tagung-migration.akademien-schweiz.ch/d/index.php>
 - http://icas.akademien-schweiz.ch/downloads/Tagungsbericht_.pdf
 - Providing information and expertise to policy-makers and interested audiences (eg databases or a pool of recognized experts):
 - <http://4dweb.proclim.ch/4dcgi/proclim/en/findpers.html>
 - <http://icas.akademien-schweiz.ch/d/alpenforschung/forschungsprojekte/>

Internationally, ICAS cooperates closely with the International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps (ISCAR: <http://www.iscar-alpineresearch.org>). ISCAR is an official observer of the Alpine Convention and therefore focuses on pan-Alpine topics of relevance to the Convention and on research cooperation among scientists from all Alpine countries:

- Fostering pan-Alpine research topics and inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue within Alpine research fields and between science and policy arenas by periodically organizing the **ForumAlpinum and AlpWeek** with partner organizations:
 - <http://www.forumalpinum.org/2010/>
 - <http://www.alpweek.org/>

- <http://www.forumalpinum.org/2007/>
- Elaborating a research agenda to promote research concerns of the Alpine Convention (in cooperation with the Observation and Information System of the Alpine Convention) and promoting topics highly relevant to sustainable development in Alpine spaces (with other Alp-wide networks):
 - http://www.iscar-alpineresearch.org/research_agenda/to_map/
 - <http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org/>
- Promoting research on Alpine Protected Areas by providing a research platform and a specific online journal on mountain protected area research and development:
 - <http://www.alparc.org/our-actions/research-platform>
 - <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/ecomont/>

Links to mountain research initiatives, networks, and programs in Switzerland

The ICAS website provides links to a number of projects and networks.

National

- NFP 48—Nationale Forschungsprogramm 48 “Landschaften und Lebensräume der Alpen” (<http://www.nfp48.ch>).
- NFP 61—Nachhaltige Wassernutzung (2010–2014) (<http://www.nfp61.ch/D/projekte/Seiten/default.aspx>).
- MOUNTLAND—Sustainable land use practices in mountain regions (<http://www.cces.ethz.ch/projects/sulu/MOUNTLAND>).
- AgriMontana—“Beiträge der Landwirtschaft für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung des Berggebiets”

- (<http://www.agroscope.admin.ch/agrimontana/>).
- TourEspace—Tourismus und Lebensraum, Nationales Kompetenz-Netzwerk der Fachhochschulen (<http://www.tourespace.ch>).
- Koordinationsstelle Parkforschung Schweiz (Federal Office for the Environment and akademien-schweiz) (<http://www.parkforschung.ch>).
- Regiosuisse Forschungsnetz Regionalentwicklung (<http://www.regiosuisse.ch/forschungsnetz>).

International

- Global Change Research Network in European Mountains (<http://mri.scnatweb.ch/networks/mri-europe/>).
- ISCAR—International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps (convention with 6 national partner institutions; <http://www.iscar-alpineresearch.org>).
- Laboratorio di Storia delle Alp (Internationalen Gesellschaft für historische Alpenforschung and Università della Svizzera italiana; <http://www.isalp.unisi.ch>).
- MRI—The Mountain Research Initiative (<http://mri.scnatweb.ch>).
- GMBA, DIVERSITAS Network (<http://www.gmba.unibas.ch>).
- MRD—The journal of the International Mountain Society (<http://www.mrd-journal.org/ims.asp>).
- National Centre of Competence in Research North–South—Research Partnerships for Mitigating Syndromes of Global Change (<http://www.north-south.ch/>).

AUTHOR

Thomas Scheurer

icas@scnat.ch
 ICAS Office, Schwarztorstrasse 9, CH-3007
 Bern, Switzerland.
<http://www.alpinestudies.ch> (information in German and French)

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