

The Centre for Mountain Studies

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The Centre for Mountain Studies



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Perth College

Centre for
Mountain Studies

The Centre for Mountain Studies was established at Perth College, Scotland, in August 2000, with the objective of creating a center of excellence for work in mountain areas within a new University of the Highlands and Islands.

Main goals of the Centre for Mountain Studies

With a focus on mountain environments and the people who depend on them, both in Scotland and internationally, the Centre for Mountain Studies (CMS) has 4 main goals:

- To undertake and communicate high-quality research;
- To convene meetings to disseminate and discuss knowledge and to develop research agendas;
- To contribute to informed policy-making processes;
- To lead in the development and delivery of academic courses and training.

In 2009, the global dimension of the activities of the CMS was recognized by the establishment of the United Nations Education, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) Chair in Sustainable Mountain Development at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), with Prof Martin Price, the director of the CMS, as the chairholder. This was the first UNESCO Chair in Scotland. To celebrate its 10th anniversary, the CMS produced a report that summarizes its activities. This article summarizes key elements of that report, which is available on the CMS website and provides more detail, including published references, about the activities mentioned below.

Generating and integrating knowledge

Over the past 10 years, together with many partners (Figure 1), the CMS

has been involved in applied research projects, often with an important knowledge exchange component, at 3 scales: Europe; the Northern Periphery of Europe, which extends from Greenland to Finland and as far south as the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; and Scotland.

At the European scale, the CMS has coordinated 2 state-of-knowledge reports on Europe's mountains for the European Commission's directorate-general on regional development (2004) and the European Environment Agency (2010). These have shown the great importance of Europe's mountains, which cover 36% of the continent and are home to 17% of its population, as water towers, centers of biological and cultural diversity, and places for tourism and recreation, and because of their sensitivity to climate change. This work is now being taken further in the Geospecs project for the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion: www.geospecs.eu.

Climate change and Europe's mountains

Within the Northern Periphery, which includes many mountain areas, climate change will bring both challenges and opportunities. These were investigated in the Clim-ATIC project, funded through the European Commission's Northern Periphery Programme (2008–2011). In each participating region, in Finland, Greenland, Norway, Scotland, and Norway, public sector and academic institutions, communities, and other stakeholders implemented a linked series of activities: a comprehensive review of likely implications of climate change on communities; the development of "climate change vulnerability scenarios"; identification of barriers and opportunities for communities to adapt to climate change, which

lead to "community climate change adaptation strategies"; and adaptation projects on 4 themes: energy management, risk management and response, tourism, and transport. Key outcomes are the Internet portal www.climatechangeadaptation.info, which provides ongoing support for communities to adapt to climate change, linked to materials for a "train the trainers" course.

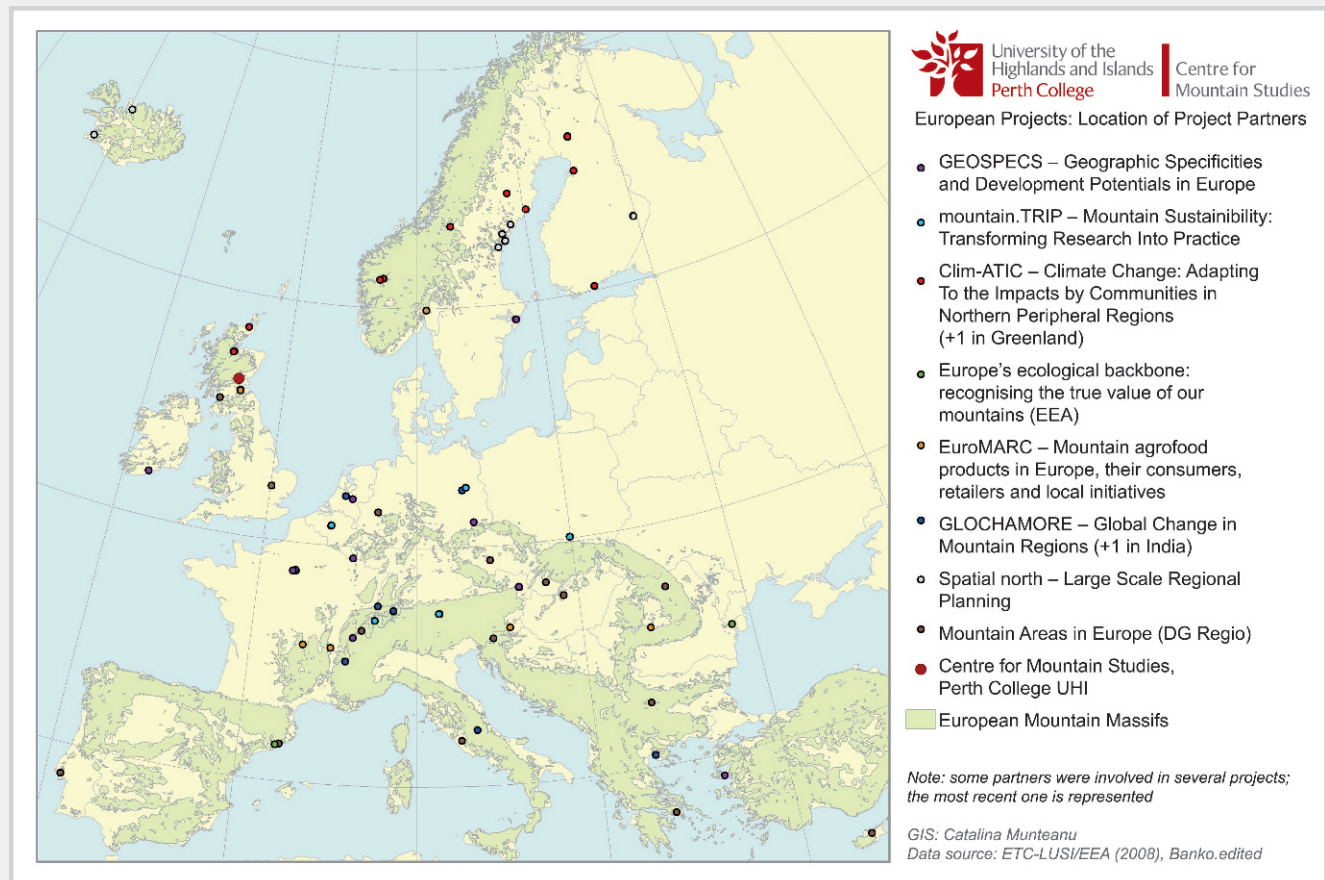
The Scottish uplands

Scotland's uplands are characterized by a unique pattern of land ownership, with much of the land within privately owned estates, some more than 100,000 ha in area. From 2007–2012, the main in-house project at the CMS has considered "Sustainable estates for the 21st Century." It is the first major project to take an integrated look at estates in the Scottish uplands and goes beyond previous studies, which generally looked at a narrow range of issues or focused on individual estates. Its primary objective is to understand the complex driving forces that influence large upland multifunctional estates and how their owners and managers make decisions that permit them to ensure that their estates fulfill their diverse roles, which may include any combination of field sports, agriculture, forestry, tourism, renewable energy and property development, and promote sustainability. The project has received great interest from diverse stakeholders and will conclude with a book to be published by Edinburgh University Press in 2012.

Exchanging and using knowledge

Although many CMS research projects have had an important element of knowledge exchange, the CMS, often working with partners, also has undertaken many activities in which knowledge exchange has

FIGURE 1 Location of the CMS's project partners in Europe. (Map by Catalina Munteanu)



been the main focus, at a diversity of scales from the globe to Scotland. More than 2000 people from all continents have attended meetings organized by the CMS. Many of the activities described below, particularly with regard to increasing understanding of global change in mountain regions and education for sustainable mountain development, fall within the scope of the UNESCO Chair.

Fostering sustainable mountain development

The CMS has been centrally involved in global initiatives relating to sustainable mountain development (SMD) since its establishment. During the International Year of Mountains (IYM) 2002, working with the United Nations Environment Programme, Martin Price acted as editor-in-chief

for the final global event, the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, which led to a United Nations General Assembly Resolution on SMD and to an edited book based on the background papers for the meeting. The CMS also took the lead for the IYM in Scotland by organizing a very wide range of activities with support from diverse organizations. The CMS is currently involved with the mountain aspects of the "Rio+20" process.

Understanding global change in mountain regions

The CMS has organized 2 major conferences on this subject, the first in 2005 at the end of the Global Change and Mountain Regions (GLOCHAMORE) project supported by the European Commission and UNESCO, and the second, together

with the Mountain Research Initiative in 2010, probably the largest international mountain science conference to date: <http://mri.scnatweb.ch/events/mri-events/global-change-and-the-world-s-mountains-perth-uk.html>. The CMS also has organized meetings on aspects of global change with a Scottish focus.

Fostering effective interdisciplinary and applied research

In 2004, building on previous work with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere program, Martin Price and the Banff Centre, Canada, organized a conference on interdisciplinary research and management in mountain areas, which led to a book published by Earthscan in 2007. At present, the CMS is involved in the mountain TRIP (Transforming Research Into Practice: www.mountaintrip.org).

mountaintrip.eu) project, funded by the European Commission, which aims to ensure that applied research in mountain areas is used more effectively.

Education for sustainable mountain development

Since 2004, the CMS has run a part-time online master of science degree

in Managing Sustainable Mountain Development, available across Europe. This answers the need of many mountain people for a flexible course that can be taken from their homes, rather than travelling to, and staying in, distant cities. One aim of the UNESCO chair is to use this experience to the benefit of mountain people outside Europe.

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