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Faculty of Humanities
Institute of Social Anthropology



The International
Association
for the Study of
the Commons

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CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT

Possible excursions include: Törbel – in the footsteps of Robert Netting; Forest commons in the Bernese Oberland; Alpine pastoral commons; Participatory conservation in the Gantersch Nature Park; Conflicts and institution building in the Grisons area; Farmer Associations in the Canton of Bern; Landscape management in Grindelwald; Producer–Consumer Associations in Bern; and guided tours in Bern.

Time frame

15 Aug 2015	Call for panels
15 Nov 2015	Call for papers
15 Feb 2016	Papers selected and programme organized
15 Feb–15 Apr 2016	Conference and field trips prepared

Conference

10 May 2016 (Tuesday)	Travel, registration. Evening: opening keynotes
11 May 2016 (Wednesday)	Panel sessions
12 May 2016 (Thursday)	Excursions
13 May 2016 (Friday)	Panel sessions and late afternoon closing ceremony with keynote and evening banquet

Potential keynote speakers (to be confirmed):

Melissa Leach, Olivier de Schutter, Jesse Ribot, Nancy Fraser, David Harvey

Organizers

University of Bern
CH-3012 Bern

Institute of Social Anthropology (ISA)
www.anthro.unibe.ch

Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)
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Supported by

Institute of History and World Trade Institute,
University of Bern

Institute for Ecology and Action Anthropology,
Switzerland

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IASC REGIONAL CONFERENCE (EUROPE) 2016
BERN, SWITZERLAND

10–13 May 2016

Venue: University of Bern, Main Building

Organized by the Institute of Social Anthropology (ISA), the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), and the Department of Integrative Geography (DIG), in collaboration with the Institute of History and the World Trade Institute (WTI), University of Bern, Switzerland

Commons in a “Glocal” World



“Châstellet” is a tradition in the Swiss Alps in which alpine cheese is distributed among the commoners.
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The topic: *Global Connections and Local Responses.* Much research on the commons deals with one of two topics – either the interaction between local participatory governance and the development of institutions for commons management, or the issue of global change that is related to the increasingly globalized expansion of capitalist modes of production, consumption, and societal reproduction. The conference aims to bridge the two, investigating how global players such as multinational companies and organizations affect the commons worldwide and how they relate to responses emerging from within the commons.

Our focus is on inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue among representatives of academic disciplines (e.g. geography, social anthropology, history, development studies, economics, political science, and law) and non-academic actors (e.g. from business, policy, and civil society).

Relevance of the venue: Bern is an ideal location for this topic. It is the capital of Switzerland, a country whose policies are developed within a strongly decentralized system that includes participatory politics from the village level to that of the national parliament. Its long tradition of decentralized governance also extends to mainly alpine commons (i.e. pastures, forests, wildlife, lakes, and rivers) and other common-pool resources (CPRs). Switzerland’s importance for the debate on the commons is illustrated by Elinor Ostrom’s reference to Robert Netting’s work on the pasture, water, and forestry commons in Törbel in the Swiss Alps.

In addition, Switzerland is one of the world’s leading financial marketplaces, and hosts the headquarters of large multinational companies in mining and agro-business that represent global players at critical glocal interfaces concerning e.g. the global land rush, mining, oil and gas commodity extraction, and commodity trading. Switzerland is also home to the United Nations and many international conservation organizations (e.g. IUCN and WWF), and a hub for international treaties and legal affairs.



Switzerland is a hub for headquarters of transnational companies involved in mining, production, and trading of commodities, which affect the commons directly and indirectly. Mopani Copper Mines, Zambia. © Meinrad Schade

We propose the following panel topics, which may be supplemented depending on proposals following the call for panels:

A) European investments and the commons in the world

- Investments in land, water, biodiversity conservation, as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the impact of these investments on the commons
- Extractive industries, commodity trade, and their effects on the commons: Policy coherence of co-existing corporate social responsibility and soft and hard laws at national and international levels
- Local responses at the interface of national and European actors

B) Collective action, the commons, and sustainability: bottom-up participatory resource governance (constitutionality) in Switzerland and in other European political systems

- “Nature Parks”, protected areas, UNESCO world heritage and biosphere reserves in Switzerland, Europe, and beyond
- Village governance: Linking management of the commons in forests, pastures, water, and wildlife with the state in Switzerland, Europe, and beyond
- Institutional change and management of the commons of larger European cultural landscapes (Alpine and others) in a context of climate change

C) The commons in the context of international law, human rights, trade and investment policies, and their relation with the triple crisis of financial, environmental, and humanitarian processes

- Trade regimes and policies and their effects on the governance and socioecological outcomes of the commons
- Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals in relation to the commons

The host organizations and venue: The University of Bern was established in 1838 and hosts 160 institutes at 8 faculties. It ranks among the world’s leading universities on topics such as climate change and sustainability. The organizing institutes have long addressed issues of sustainable development, CPR management, North-South relations, large-scale land acquisition, conservation, and participatory sustainable resource governance.

Bern has excellent hotel facilities including youth hostels and B&Bs, with prices ranging from €70 to €140 per night. Many hotels give a discount of about 15–25% if booked through the University of Bern.