

Annual Report

2020

“The two most valuable commodities
any single person has are their voice and
their time. Use them!”

— Hansjörg Wyss, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist

2020 **Annual Report**

Wyss Academy for Nature
at the University of Bern

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Foreword

The time is right – the Wyss Academy for Nature



Peter Messerli, Director



Christian Leumann, President of the Board

In December 2019, the Wyss Foundation, the Canton of Bern and the University of Bern reached an agreement to work together to establish the Wyss Academy for Nature at the University of Bern. The purpose of the new foundation is to develop and implement urgently needed, innovative solutions that will reconcile people and nature, against the backdrop of the loss of biodiversity, climate change and unsustainable use of land. This move represented the end of a pilot phase, which allowed us to refine the purpose and mission of the Wyss Academy in East Africa and South America. It also marked the beginning of the two-year ramp-up phase for the Wyss Academy: as a new and diverse team, we have been working together for a few months now, managing several projects and pursuing ambitious goals. With this report, we would now like to look back together on the year 2020.

At almost the same time as the ramp-up phase began, the Covid-19 pandemic was spreading across the globe. The world that had formed the basis for our assessments,

plans and strategies was transformed rapidly and permanently. It became obvious that alongside the start-up we had three major challenges to overcome. Firstly, continuing our operations in a world where meetings and travel had become almost impossible. Secondly, the fast-moving changes to problems and priorities, particularly in countries of the global South, and, thirdly, the question of whether our strategy and impact hypotheses were still relevant and valid.

Our priority in the first months of 2020 has been to rapidly build the institutional and legal framework of the Wyss Academy. After only four months, the foundation had been established and the most important contracts, regulations and bodies were in place. This laid the basis for recruiting the members of the management board and the team. They came together during the course of the year from different technical backgrounds and regions. The move to the new headquarters in Bern's Old City in September was followed by the establishment of the management and administrative structure. At the same time,

“The pandemic has resulted in a new reality for our future work.”

Peter Messerli, Director,
Wyss Academy for Nature

the election process for all six future professorships at the Wyss Academy took place in just six months thanks to the considerable support and flexibility of the University of Bern. In other words, during the silence of the pandemic, we were able to set up a management center that is now ready to tackle the many and varied activities and challenges of the Wyss Academy.

However efficient the establishment of the management center may be, the work in the regions is proving to be just as challenging. The implementation program consisting of a variety of projects was launched in the Canton of Bern. This is already demonstrating how exciting the search for solutions for nature and people can be in a real-life laboratory outside our own front door. By contrast, massive restrictions related to the pandemic were imposed on the projects in Kenya, Peru and Laos. It was only because of the long-term, trust-based partnerships between the University of Bern and experts in the countries that some of the activities that had already started in the pilot phase could be continued. However, no local meetings could be held and the fieldwork also had to be temporarily suspended. The empowerment and the development of decentralized teams in the regional Hubs of the Wyss Academy will remain of highest priority in the future.

The pandemic has resulted in a new reality for our future work. Year-long efforts to combat poverty, providing education, and achieving other social and economic goals have been lost. At the same time, however, the pandemic also acts as a magnifying glass under which the need for innovation and transformative change in the relationship between nature and humans becomes crystal clear: we will ultimately have to pay the social and environmental costs of our globalized economy and these are by no means evenly distributed between winners and losers. But we also see the fragility of a conservation approach that can only be sustained thanks to global flows of tourists or investments. Combating the consequences of current crises is considerably more difficult and more expensive than taking preventive measures against their causes. Scientific

findings may be essential, but they are not sufficient to provide solutions for complex, so-called wicked problems and conflicts of interest between economy, society and environment, between today and tomorrow, and between here and there.

Looking back on the first months of the Wyss Academy fills us with pride for much that we have been able to achieve. At the same time, we feel both respect and humility towards the great challenges that we are aiming to overcome. Crucially, however, after this unexpectedly turbulent year, we feel all the more reaffirmed that the Wyss Academy's mission is important and timely: we need to break down the silos of science, policy and practice so that we can work together to develop, test and scale up innovations that will catalyze co-benefits between nature and people. We are well aware that this search for innovations cannot be postponed and that achieving a rapid and tangible impact is not negotiable. As a growing team, we are feeling both enthusiastic and passionate about the prospect of establishing the Wyss Academy for Nature as a unique new institution at this specific time.



Peter Messerli, Director,
Wyss Academy for Nature



Professor Christian Leumann,
President of the Board

From Bern out
into the world:
The Wyss Academy is researching
topics such as
climate change in
the Bernese Alps.



2020 The first year of the Wyss Academy for Nature

Focussing on people and the environment: With the Wyss Academy for Nature, the Canton of Bern, the University of Bern and the Wyss Foundation established a private foundation in May 2020. It combines ambitious, innovative goals with a transformative approach.

Why was the Wyss Academy founded? For no less reason than to develop innovative long-term pathways that strengthen and reconcile biodiversity conservation, human well-being and the sustainable use of natural resources in diverse landscapes worldwide. After a two-year pilot phase in Peru and Kenya, the desire for more effective conservation ultimately led to the foundation charter being signed.

On May 18, 2020, the partnership between the Wyss Foundation, the University of Bern and the Canton of Bern was formally established with the founding of the Wyss Academy. This represents a unique opportunity to enter into groundbreaking collaborations.

Local, regional and global

On the basis of many years of research experience into socio-ecological systems, it has been important to highlight the human factor and, in particular, social justice. Human well-being is an essential prerequisite for successful long-term conservation measures. Clever, inclusive, forward-looking decision-making is needed, which acknowledges the needs of all living beings and respects the finiteness of resources.

Areas for informal discussions of the kind that take place in the social Hub are part of the efficient structure of the organization.



So why are people not included in the name of the foundation? “Hansjörg Wyss emphasized the fact that people ultimately form part of the concept of nature,” explains Peter Messerli. He was referring to the central feature of the Wyss Academy’s mission “Creating a New Relationship with Nature.” Our future is not a question of choosing between people or nature anymore; it is neither or both.

Local impact and global interconnectedness characterize the thinking and the actions of the Wyss Academy for Nature at the University of Bern. Science creates an objective basis for this approach. By carrying out rigorous research, it can reveal the complex dynamics of human-environment systems, highlight the different levels of related interests and act through knowledge diplomacy. The objective is to achieve an engaged collaboration between science, civil society, business and the public sector that is rooted in local communities and spreads to regions across the world.

From Bern out into the world: Management board and Hubs

In a pandemic year characterized by shutdowns and cancellations, we succeeded not only in founding the Wyss Academy, but also in increasing the size of our management board from August 2020 onward. The first

new arrival was Olivier Jacquat, the Head of the Bern Hub. In September, Matthias Schmid-Huberty joined as COO and Sonja Schenkel as Head of Communication. The heads of the Regional Hubs, Eva Ludi and Andreas Heinimann, became part of the team in November. Tatjana von Steiger, Head of Global Policy Outreach and of the Synthesis Center, followed in early 2021.

Once the management board was complete, we were able to start strengthening the institutional roots in the regions. With the support of the long-term networks of the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), the Wyss Academy began to establish its presence in Peru, Kenya and Laos. At the Bern Hub, work on implementing the portfolio of projects in cooperation with the Canton of Bern began.

Before the incubator activities could begin, teams in all regions worked on developing existing networks and started preparations for co-design processes. In addition, the cooperation with the CDE, the Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research and the Institute of Plant Sciences at the University of Bern was expanded.

The academy also became more visible in the city of Bern. A stone’s throw from the Federal Palace (the Swiss Parliament building), the Wyss Academy moved into its offices



in Kochergasse on September 1. As a partner of the “Rendez-vous at Bundesplatz,” which had the theme of sustainability, in November 2020 the Wyss Academy, together with other actors involved, helped to decorate the Bundesplatz in Bern with the 17 symbols of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

At the end of 2020, the Wyss Academy Team grew larger, the first board meetings were held and the foundation’s logo and website were created.

This laid the operational foundations for the mission of the Wyss Academy: “Creating a New Relationship with Nature.”

The rooms on the ground floor of Kochergasse 4 in Bern are semi-public and are being used as a “habitat” for co-design and engagement.



The complete management board met for the first time in September 2020 (when Covid-19 restrictions were briefly lifted).

Why an academy?

The name “Wyss Academy” is based not only on the scientific concept of six teams of leading researchers, but also on the idea that relevant knowledge can come from a variety of different experts. The original ancient Greek term (Ἀκαδημία) referred to Plato’s academy that used to meet in the gardens outside Athens. Later the term became associated with knowledge and later still with culture and the arts. With

these three central pillars of knowledge, practical implementation in the natural world and a developing culture of transformation, the Wyss Academy had a very promising start in 2020, despite the challenges of a global pandemic.

Regional Hubs

The centerpiece of the Wyss Academy

The Wyss Academy for Nature works with partner organizations all over the world to achieve a just relationship between nature and people. In the Regional Hubs, sustainable development is all about the three core elements: incubators, engagement and knowledge.

The Wyss Academy is like a network. The different components are interconnected and every one of them has a function and a meaning. Though it also has something like a centerpiece – the Regional Hubs – to achieve impact and bring about real change. In this regard, the Wyss Academy's work from the pilot phase 2018 onward and during the founding year 2020, has already involved a range of different activities world-wide.

Local, regional and global

The regional hubs in South America, East Africa, Southeast Asia and the Canton of Bern in Switzerland allow the Wyss Academy to become deeply involved in each local area in close cooperation with its partner organizations. Direct engagement with civil society, political decision-makers and the private sector enables it to combine the best ideas in creating solutions for complex, so-called wicked problems. Beyond addressing causes, it is important to identify levers that allow tackling challenges in a systemic manner. Although problems manifest themselves locally, their roots often lie elsewhere. This is why the Wyss Academy not only focuses on the local context, but also takes a global approach.

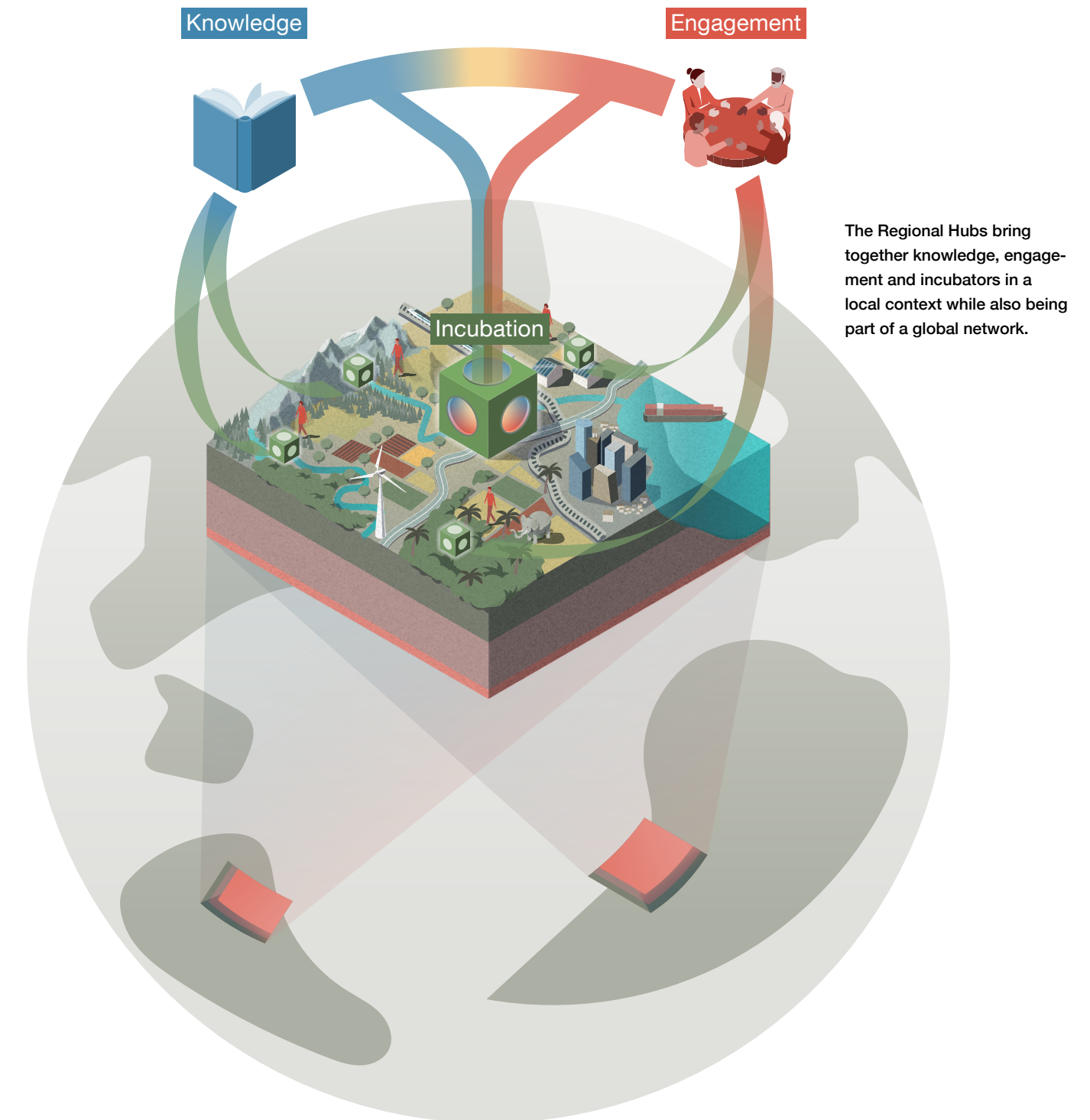
In order to bring about systemic transformations, three basic components interact within each Hub. Firstly, engagement with a broad range of stakehold-

ers; secondly, compiling, processing, translating and providing socially relevant and system-related knowledge; and thirdly, real-life testing of possible solutions to specific problems (incubator). Outside the Hubs, the three components are connected both with global networks where the Wyss Academy is represented and with other Hubs so that they can share experiences across national borders, learn from one another and raise their profiles by entering into coalitions with like-minded organizations. It is clear that many drop-lets of water can fill a growing reservoir of solutions.

Relevant ideas from incubators, engagement and knowledge

Incubators are generally initiated following an intensively managed local co-design process. This involves in-depth discussions and the participation of representatives from science, government and administration, the private sector and civil society. Examples include the incubators in the South America Hub (more information on pages 14-19).

The Wyss Academy sees itself as a facilitator using knowledge diplomacy to open up entrenched power structures. Experience has shown that knowledge, while a crucial precondition, is alone not sufficient to bring about political changes and create sustainable solutions. This is why the Wyss Academy engages closely with actors at local, national and global scales.



The Regional Hubs bring together knowledge, engagement and incubators in a local context while also being part of a global network.

Through its local, regional and local Engagement Platforms, the Wyss Academy aims to convene representatives of different interests and perspectives. It thereby wants to ensure that also marginalized actors, interests or topics are heard and included in debates. Whether they are activists, business people, researchers or government representatives: Motives may differ, yet they must share a common goal. Different cultures, world views and living conditions must be reflected in a shared vision. Identifying socially relevant and sustainable solutions requires compromises and evidence-based negotiations. The main aim is to disseminate transformative solutions that have a systemic rather than an incremental impact.

The Wyss Academy underpins its solutions with top quality research, that is relevant to society and the system at stake and this is what makes it different from other organizations. Successfully tested solutions are made available to decision-makers to be scaled up and replicated, where possible.

More information about the Regional Hubs worldwide can be found on the following pages.

Co-design

Implementing visions together

From the forest to the plate:
The Wyss Academy for Nature
cooperates with different
actors to promote projects with
a systemic impact.

“One important aspect of co-design is to build a shared vision and to identify shared activities.”

Sarah-Lan Mathez-Stiefel, Senior Advisor
South America Hub, CDE

In Madre de Dios there are up to 300 different species of trees per hectare of land.

connection between knowledge and transformative action, always on the basis of in-depth discussions with local actors.

Co-design processes in the Hubs

In Peru a variety of different actors are involved in protecting the Amazon rainforest, but many of them are working in isolation. This means that important connections between environmental conservation, social justice and economic development are being missed. For this reason, the Wyss Academy has been working since its pilot phase in Madre de Dios with the Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA), which has had a presence in the region for several years. A co-design process run jointly with local stakeholder resulted in a fully integrated Brazil nut project. The support for the Brazil nut trade and related activities was focused not only on the product and its cultivation, but also took into consideration a variety of needs and perspectives covering the entire value chain from the Peruvian rainforest to the customer's plate in the large cities of South America and the rest of the world.

More information about the South America Hub in Peru can be found on the following pages.

To solve complex problems, more than one perspective is needed, which is why engagement is an integral part of co-design for the Wyss Academy. This means developing shared visions with local stakeholders based on scientific evidence, as well as implementing the projects that result from them. The conventional silos of science, conservation, development cooperation and everyday politics are thereby broken down. Scientific findings may be applied quickly and can have an impact. The goal of the co-design processes is to bring together different actors. They work together to produce ideas, identify needs and conflicts of interest and develop practical ideas that contribute to sustainability for nature and people within a region.

Context-specific innovations worldwide

Using a reflective and adaptive approach to its co-design processes, the Wyss Academy regularly cooperates with representatives from research, politics, business and civil society. Experts work locally to plan for current requirements on the basis of the latest knowledge. When implementing its projects, the Wyss Academy attempts to make a direct

“If we can identify a common thread of a shared vision, then this will work.”

Sofia Rubio (35), entrepreneur

South America Hub

Collaborative protection of habitats

The Peruvian rainforest is one of the most species-rich habitats on the planet. Using co-design processes, the Wyss Academy for Nature has been able to work with a variety of local actors to analyze the problems involved in protecting biodiversity and to identify solutions.

The rapid loss of biodiversity, the acceleration of climate change and the growing demand for land resources are closely linked.

Since the discovery of gold deposits in the alluvial plains in the 1980s, gold mining has become an important industry in Madre de Dios. People have been arriving in large numbers from the Peruvian Andes and fueling the gold mining boom, most of which is artisanal and illegal. At the same time, people from the coastal regions and the Andes have been looking for new agricultural land, because extreme weather conditions and land degradation have caused their crops to fail. All of this puts increasing pressure on the rainforest and the animals and people who live there.

This is precisely where the Wyss Academy comes in. A team of scientists is taking part in an iterative process together with specialists from practical fields and representatives of politics, business and civil society to develop

innovative ideas for protecting the rainforest and ensuring that it can be used sustainably. The practical applications, strategies and political guidelines are tested locally as the shared vision of different actors.

The common denominator? A healthy forest!

“If we can identify a common thread of a shared vision, then this will work,” says Sofia Rubio, biologist and entrepreneur in Madre de Dios. As the daughter of Brazil nut harvesters, Sofia Rubio has her own grove of trees and a small workshop for the preparation of food products based on Brazil nuts. The 35-year-old is also taking part in the Brazil nut project, which is being run by the Wyss Academy in collaboration with its partner ACCA. The project brings together people involved in harvesting Brazil nuts, the transporting and processing industry, exporters and scientists. According to Sofia Rubio, all of these actors have different interests, but one common denominator: “Without a healthy forest, there will be no Brazil nuts.”

In addition, the Brazil nut trees in the Amazon rainforest attract a variety of insects and birds, which help to foster biodiversity by spreading seeds and pollen. Moreover, the



The Madre de Dios department in the Amazonas region of Peru has a unique level of biodiversity.



Sofia Rubio comes from a family of Brazil nut harvesters. She is a biologist who is now running her own business.



South America Hub

Location/region: Madre de Dios is a department in Peru (85,300 km²).

Inhabitants: approximately 141,070

Biodiversity: As part of the global biodiversity hotspot in the tropical Andes, Madre de Dios has large areas of intact forest. These have one of the world's highest levels of biodiversity and are home to unique species. With up to 300 species of trees on a single hectare of land, the forest stores globally significant amounts of carbon dioxide.

“The indigenous people live in the rainforest – it is a part of them. Protecting the forest must include protecting the way they live.”

Jamil Alca Castillo, anthropologist

cultivation of Brazil nuts as a monoculture has not been successful. Yet, when Brazil nut trees have a connection with their surroundings and with people, they thrive.

Brazil nuts are very popular on national and international markets. As well as the unprocessed nut, which is an important source of selenium, a variety of products can be produced, including Brazil nut beer. Even the shell is used to create craft items. A number of small and large actors make up the Brazil nut value chain, though with a differing level of influence. The Wyss Academy aims to establish alliances, break down power structures and, as a result, ensure that there is social, economic and political support for more sustainable and fair value chains, including locally managed transformation processes. According to Sofia Rubio, despite the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the co-design methodology can help, because a new approach is needed in many areas: “Co-design as a method allows the local population to become much more involved in deciding what will happen. This increase in responsibility throughout the entire process helps the people, the whole system and ultimately the habitats.”

Buffer zones: Reconciling conservation and sustainable livelihoods

The focus on landscapes instead of on isolated individual areas is also the goal of the strategic plan for the buffer zone of Tambopata National Reserve, called PEZA, which began in 2017 and has been strongly supported by the Wyss Academy since 2020. It is based in the Tambopata National Park in the Madre de Dios region.

The Wyss Academy incubator aims to answer the following question: How can conservation and a sustainable economy be combined? Buffer zones around forest conservation areas are one way of testing innovative protection models that provide the livelihoods needed by the local people and reduce the pressure on natural resources.

A study commissioned by the Wyss Academy as part of the project has already shown that the participative co-design approach used in Tambopata is a significant success factor. The introduction of incentives for local people has played a decisive role in the success of the management of the buffer zone.

The project has supported the development of an integrated participatory monitoring tool for the buffer zone of Tambopata National Reserve. It further investigated which aspects of the overall management approach can be transferred to other conservation areas of Peru, and what would be the strategies to do so. At its core stands the conviction that the involvement of local people is what is needed to maintain buffer zones around conservation areas, rather than fences or monitoring programs.

Economic activities, sustainable forest management, participatory management and legal support are the measures that have a positive impact on these border regions. The PEZA model has proved its usefulness in practice and is recommended for scaling up and replication on the basis of the evaluation carried out by ACCA in collaboration with the Wyss Academy.



The Wyss Academy works with ACCA in Madre de Dios. The organization also runs a research station.



Brazil nut trees grow in the rainforest. They can be harvested without destroying precious habitats.



Brazil nuts grow in the wild and are a valuable source of selenium. They are in great demand both in Peru and internationally.



Gold mining is an important industry in Madre de Dios, but it has a negative impact on the people who live there and on the environment.



During the pilot phase, scientists of local partner organizations met with researchers from the University of Bern.



Pumas are one of many species that can be found in the Tambopata National Reserve. Their habitat extends as far as Bolivia.

Selected activities of the Wyss Academy in South America

Establishment of the South America Hub:

- Analysis of different partners and possible models that will give the Wyss Academy a legal footing in the region to allow it to operate there (e.g. employing staff, implementing activities, signing partnership contracts with Peruvian organizations)

Engagement:

- Establishing comprehensive contacts with potential partners for future knowledge, engagement and incubator activities, with a focus on protecting biodiversity in and around protected areas, creating sustainable value chains for crops from the Amazonian rainforest
- Multi-stakeholder workshops for the development and testing of an integrated and participatory monitoring tool for Tambopata buffer zone

Knowledge:

- Identifying institutional actors at national level (Peru) (national and local government, international organizations and NGOs, universities, associations, civil society organizations, the private sector, etc.) in the fields of research, conservation, the protection of biodiversity and development with which the Wyss Academy can enter into partnerships
- Biological monitoring with camera traps: Data collected in ACCA's private conservation area up from June 2019 to June 2020 give an insight into the changes in the wildlife as a result of improvements in the management of the conservation area (comparison with data from 2005)
- Studies on Brazil nuts: systematic processing of existing knowledge and literature (by the Institute of Plant Science, IPS), integrated study on the future impacts of climate change on Brazil nut production (with OCCR and CDE); mapping and analysis of the stakeholders that play a role in the Brazil nut value chain; surveying transformative initiatives and research projects that the Wyss Academy can build on with its engagement and knowledge diplomacy

- Study on the governance framework and policy coherence of conservation and sustainable development in Madre de Dios

Incubators:

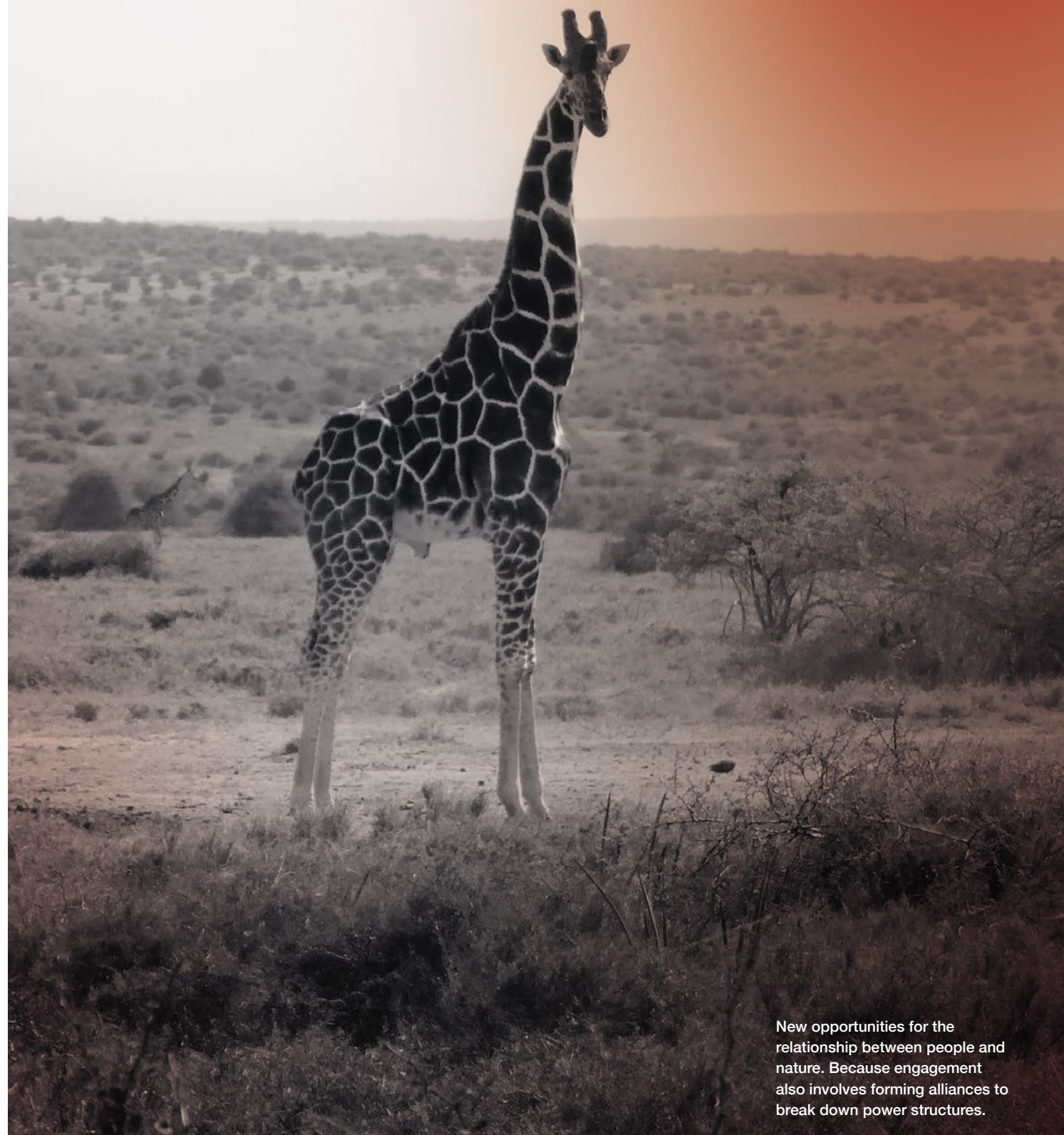
- Tambopata buffer zone: Testing and adapting the monitoring system for the Tambopata buffer zone management plan. Establishing a monitoring system that includes participative and scientific methods. Initial assessment of the effectiveness and the potential for scaling up the revised monitoring system
- Brazil nuts: Specific co-design workshop involving Brazil nut stakeholders on the basis of the synthesis studies and the survey of stakeholders to identify and design incubators for improving the Brazil nut value chain, but it had to be postponed until 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic

Covid-19:

- Strict restrictions, including lockdown and restricted travel within Peru, resulted in some field-based research and engagement activities being postponed until 2021

“Engagement is about much more than just sitting down with a few of the people involved.”

Boniface Kiteme, from the partner organization CETRAD in Kenya



New opportunities for the relationship between people and nature. Because engagement also involves forming alliances to break down power structures.

Engagement — Creating alliances

Meeting the challenges of the future with trust, consistency and acceptance: The Wyss Academy for Nature emphasises broad-based and systematic engagement.

Each Wyss Academy Hub relies on a wide-ranging network of partners from research, civil society, government and the private sector. Discussions covering a variety of topics are decisive for the transformation processes. However, engagement is a delicate process. It is all about trust and consistency.

Engagement processes create tightly woven alliances. They require the development of a shared vision to also reach skeptics, critics and opponents. These networks cover all sectors of society and often start with official institutions that represent specific interests. However, it is also important to involve farmers in the villages, herders on remote plains, hunters and workers in the fields – people who may speak the same language but have a different culture and living conditions.

Discussions involving everyone

Discussions between individual actors are made easier by the Engagement Platform of a Hub, which can look very different and range from virtual networks to negotiation workshops. The Engagement Platforms are used to identify current and future challenges in the field of conservation and development, to establish alliances for tangible action as well as to discuss political options. Firstly an in-depth analysis of the power relationships and the existing networks and their structure

is needed. Participation and equity are two of the core values of the Wyss Academy. This means that not only people with an active e-mail account are part of the engagement process, but also people who are more difficult to reach. In Kenya, so-called champions can help here. They are people who support and represent the joint project within their network. The arrangements relating to these roles are relatively informal. It is all about the passion, conviction and position within a specific network that the champion can contribute.

Promoting understanding

“Engagement is about much more than just sitting down with a few of the people involved,” says Boniface Kiteme from the Wyss Academy partner organization CETRAD (Center for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development) in Kenya. According to Kiteme, a highly experienced facilitator is required to ensure that everyone understands the advantages and disadvantages. CETRAD has been working for decades in the area around Mount Kenya and in other regions of East Africa. It has close relationships not only with the local people, the government and local research partners, but also with the University of Bern and, in particular, with the CDE (Centre for Development and Environment).

More information about the East Africa Hub can be found on the following pages.

“Sometimes you travel through the area around Mount Kenya and feel as if you are in a war zone. There are fences on both sides of the road for 20 kilometers.”

Joan Bastide, Senior Advisor Wyss Academy

East Africa Hub

People and animals in partnership

Wildlife routes and local communities:
In the unique environment of East Africa, the Wyss Academy for Nature is working to achieve sustainable co-existence.

In East Africa, like elsewhere, it is not possible to turn back the clocks. Although people and animals lived here side by side 50 years ago, conflicts between them now occur more frequently. Wildlife and local herders use the same land and elephants destroy fields, trample small domestic animals, damage infrastructure and present a risk to the local population. “The people in the villages are frightened to send their children to school when elephants are in the area,” says Joan Bastide, Wyss Academy Senior Advisor to the East Africa Hub in Kenya.

Protecting diversity

Mount Kenya, Kenya’s highest mountain, is also the source of the Ewaso Ng’iro river. The landscapes in this area range from an afro-alpine zone at the top of the mountain to a tropical forest belt in the middle and a sub-humid zone on the lower slopes, which transitions into the semi-arid plateau and arid plains of the lowlands. The plateau and the plains consist of bush and grassland. The

diversity of the flora in these ecosystems provides a unique habitat for many different animal species. The huge variety of wildlife in the region includes many types of birds, alongside zebras, impalas, warthogs and the enigmatic big five: lion, leopard, rhino, elephant and Cape buffalo. But these habitats have also been shaped by people and their land use.

The expansion of agricultural land, large-scale development projects, urbanization and other changes in land use are all increasing the pressure on the area around Mount Kenya. Fences, roads and the loss of vegetation cover have led to the fragmentation of landscapes and a reduction in the connections between ecosystems and habitats and in the freedom of movement of wildlife and herders. The situation is complex. The more people expand their landuse, the more pressure increases on wildlife as a result of protection measures that cut across migration routes between grassland and watering holes.

Wildlife corridors as the starting point

The livestock and wildlife corridor initiative (CorriDOOR project) is one of several incubators in the region. Essentially the project aims to ensure that migrating wildlife and local people can co-exist sustainably. It attempts to reconcile livelihoods of herders and conservation activities by taking into consideration



In East Africa, wildlife and herds of livestock share the same resources and migration routes.



In the livestock and wildlife CorriDOOR incubator, conservation and development organizations are attempting to ensure that people and wildlife can co-exist sustainably.



The increasing demand for land by small farmers and large scale agricultural is exacerbating the conflict between wild animals and people.

Selected activities of the Wyss Academy in East Africa

Establishment of the East Africa Hub:

- Analysis of possible legal forms how the Wyss Academy could be set up as an entity and that will allow it to become fully operational there (employing staff, signing partnership agreement with Kenyan organizations)
- Expanding the network in Kenya and beyond (Tanzania and Madagascar) with the aim of regionalizing the East Africa Hub

Engagement:

- Developing a comprehensive engagement process covering issues such as landscape connectivity, the availability of water and land use planning. This will involve local communities, county and national government, international organizations and NGOs, associations on a local level and civil society.
- Establishing an institutionalized group of champions involving a broad range of local and national stakeholders to promote the shared use of migration corridors by wildlife and herds of livestock belonging to the local people
- Organizing a variety of training courses and workshops on specific subjects with local partners

Knowledge:

- Acquiring and analyzing critical basic knowledge at the landscape level (including vegetation dynamics, habitat connectivity, animal migration routes, land use, invasive plants, etc.)
- A systematic inventory of actors and interest groups lays the foundations for targeted engagement and social innovation
- Creating high-resolution climate models and temperature and rainfall scenarios (Climate and Environmental Physics (CEP))

Incubators:

- Wetlands incubator: Understanding the hydrology in the catchment area of the Gambella wetlands. Creating possible incubators in the areas of water governance and land use planning
- Opening a new area of activity to support integrated land use planning on a district level as an opportunity to influence spatially explicit development planning in solution landscapes

Covid-19:

- Significant limitations on engagement and the incubators. Consequence: new ways of working within partnerships and in reaching communities

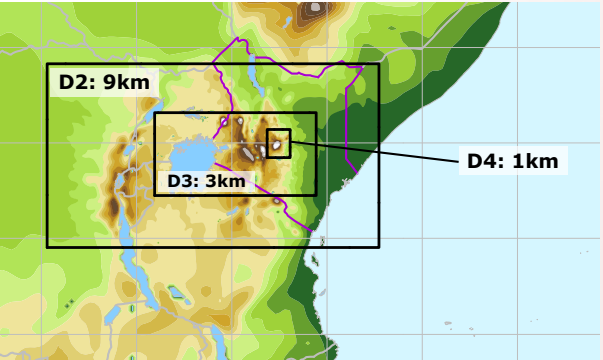
shared interests and the competing demands of unilateral economic development. Establishing dual corridors in the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin where both wildlife and people with their livestock can migrate can be a way of mitigating conflicts and achieving mutual benefits for people and nature.

According to Joan Bastide, these alternatives to the current situation are very important: "Sometimes you travel through the area around Mount Kenya and feel as if you are in a war zone. There are fences on both sides of the road for 20 kilometers. This is a big problem." But who decides where and how the wildlife corridors should be set up? Who is affected by them? It emerged during the course of the project that the answers to these questions were much more complex than had been anticipated. Because everything is connected with everything else.

Engaging in discussions

In addition to environmental organizations and tourism businesses, many other interest groups need to be able to contribute to a project like CorriDOOR. A cautious approach is important and maintaining contacts by means of engagement plays a key role in allowing sensitive issues such as land rights and infrastructure planning to be addressed.

In early 2020, first meetings were held in villages and a group of champions was formed as a support network. These meetings had to be paused because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, because CETRAD has been active in this area for many years, the work that has been done will not be wasted, but will be taken up again after the imposed break.



The Climate and Environmental Physics department at the University of Bern, created climate simulations with a resolution of 1x1 km for the area around Mount Kenya.

Development of the wild animal population in three districts around Mount Kenya

Species	County		
	Laikipia	Samburu	Isiolo
Burchell's zebra	↑	↘	↓
Buffalo	↑	↓	↘
Elephant	↑	↗	↘
Ostrich	↓	↘	↓
Giraffe	→	↓	↓
Grant's gazelle	→	↓	↓
Warthog	↘	↓	→
Eland	↓	↓	↑
Oryx	→	↓	↓
Impala	↘	↓	↘
Grevy's zebra	↑	↓	↓
Waterbuck	↘	↓	↓
Vulture	↓	↓	↓

↓ Strong decrease
↘ Decrease

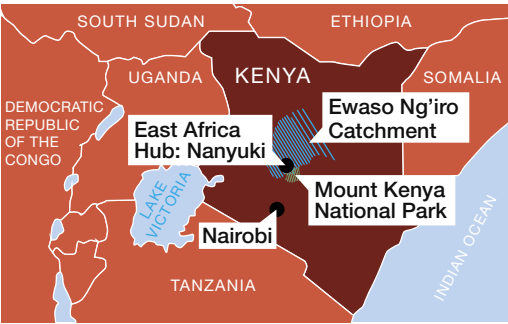
↑ Strong increase
↗ Increase

→ Stable

Based on literature review by the Institute of Plant Sciences (IPS)



In Kenya, so-called champions help to build up local networks to support long-term transformation.



East Africa Hub

Place/region: Mount Kenya and the catchment area of the Ewaso Ng'iro river together with the Laikipia, Samburu, Isiolo and Meru counties

Inhabitants: approximately 2.5 million

Biodiversity: The area ranges from the green, forested slopes of Mount Kenya to the semi-arid lowland plains almost 4,000 meters below. This variety of habitats is home to one of the densest populations of wild animals in the world, including large mammals such as elephants, rhinos and big cats.

Knowledge

The systemic perspective

Knowledge plays a key role at the Wyss Academy for Nature. Research questions and solutions emerge from the local level, but always with the big picture in mind.

Step-by-step: This is how a restricted, sectorial perspective on problems may be transformed into a systemic search for solutions. Hence innovation and transformation evolve through a better understanding of underlying driving forces. By identifying leverage points and effects of this kind, the researchers at the Wyss Academy for Nature aim to make an impact in a more efficient way.

Knowledge in action

But research questions do not remain on the metalevel: they are formulated on the basis of their relevance to society and challenges in the area of biodiversity and climate change. This calls for an agile and dynamic structure, supported by the six designated professorships at the University of Bern.

Their research activities allows the Wyss Academy to investigate current issues while remaining independent of traditional research funding. The hereby generated knowledge is in constant practical use, both when being collected and when applied in the incubators and co-design workshops. To frame such an approach as applied research would be too narrow a description. Rather, this is mission-oriented research, in

which production of knowledge is oriented to a jointly defined purpose, and uses evidence-based, systemic knowledge as the basis for a common understanding and approaches towards solutions.

Bridging the knowledge gap

Negotiation processes with scientists acting as mediators take place at a local and a global level in Wyss Academy projects. The systemic approach highlights the mutual interconnectedness and dependencies. Insights that are gained locally are also discussed on a global level, during processes of synthesis, also based on successful incubators. The divide between local realities and the global agenda as well as between local research and political decision-making is hereby reduced.

The synthesis center is part of the engagement toolkit, though its contents are developed in close coordination at the interface with the knowledge component of the Wyss Academy. In 2020, the Wyss Academy carried out a scientific synthesis of the socio-ecological systems in Kenya, Peru and Laos in collaboration with other partners at the University of Bern, such as the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), the Climate and Environmental Physics (CEP) and the Institute of Plant Sciences (IPS). These first synthesis will be completed in 2021. One example is the study of ecosystem services carried out by the Southeast Asia Hub and led by the CDE in Laos.

More information about the Southeast Asia Hub can be found on the following pages.

Mixed land use instead of overuse is in the interests of everyone.

“Extreme weather events are becoming more and more frequent, revealing the irreplaceable value of ecosystem services – and not just to affected local populations.”

Michael Epprecht, Special Advisor

Southeast Asia Hub, CDE

Southeast Asia Hub

Researching ecosystems

Everyone benefits from the protection of ecosystems. In Southeast Asia, the Wyss Academy for Nature researches how people can halt the destruction of the natural basis of their livelihoods. Local events have a global impact.

The preservation of the ecological basis of our life can only be achieved if as many people as possible participate in decision-making about ecosystem services. The Savannakhet province in Laos acts as an illustrative example in this respect. Savannakhet is the largest province in Laos and, after the capital Vientiane, has the second biggest population. The province is also one of the poorest in the country, with significant regional differences.

A study on ecosystem services commissioned by the Wyss Academy is the first representative survey on this subject in Laos. The ecosystem services in the country are very important in local terms for the food security of the population and protecting people from flooding, for example. Laos also has a high level of biodiversity and its forests play an important role in counteracting global warming. However, until now the value of these ecosystem services has been underestimated and government policy has rather focused on rapid growth. Foreign investors have been given

free rein, because in line with the traditional logic of economic growth, a tree is most valuable once it has been felled. For this reason, landscapes have been homogenized by the introduction of monocultures. As a result, the many and varied ecosystem services, which have a monetary value that is not obvious in the short term, are declining.

Closing the knowledge gaps

Clear facts are what is lacking. To what extent is small-scale farming better for maintaining diverse ecosystem services? And to what extent does that support the well-being of nature and people? The Wyss Academy is aiming to close a knowledge gap in this area. In 2020, it collaborated with the CDE Laos to map and model ecosystem services as well as to gain insights into the needs and demands for ecosystem services of local people. The data will be used as a basis to negotiate and develop incubators. In concrete terms, the hope is that Laos might leapfrog mistakes made by other countries with regard to monocultures and the homogenization of the landscape.

Laos has almost completely closed its borders since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the country had almost no cases of Covid-19 and no restrictions on movement.



A study on ecosystem services in Laos was carried out in 2020 in the varied landscapes of the Savannakhet province.



A citizen-science approach was used to highlight the different needs and perspectives on ecosystem services on the basis of geographic data and a survey of local households.

In the case of the study on ecosystem services, this meant that a comprehensive household survey could be carried out in the Savannakhet province. Households were asked, for example, what value they put on the natural world around them and how they interact with it.

A matter of opinion? No, science!

Ecosystem services can best be investigated in tangible applications and situations. Does the forest purify the air? Does it provide protection against erosion? Emphasis can also be placed on other services such as recreation, because people also go into the forest to relax. Depending on who is asked the questions, the fertility of the soil for growing crops or large-scale exports may be the most important issues. Other considerations include the beauty of the landscape, which will attract tourists. Furthermore, forests sometimes have a spiritual significance.

Having insights into the modelled provision of an array of ecosystem services, as well as the local demands for services is key to give voice to the local needs and perspectives on nature, and to identify possible transformative solutions. This is where a divide between urban and rural regions becomes clear. In addition, there is a difference between the scientific assessment of ecosystem services and the ecosystem services identified by the local population.

The household surveys were carried out in a total of 36 villages in collaboration with universities in Laos. However, the surveys had to be postponed several times. First, there was a dangerous storm in the region, which was followed by floods and landslides where many people lost everything they owned. “Extreme weather events are becoming more and more frequent, revealing the irreplaceable value of ecosystem services – and not just to affected local populations,” says Michael Epprecht from the Southeast Asia Hub. In this respect, the view of ecosystem services has changed. Local people have become aware that an in-

tact forest landscape would have reduced the impact of the floods and that fish stocks have diminished significantly. Having insights into the modeled provision of an array of ecosystem services, as well as the local demands for services it key give voice to the local needs and perspective on nature, and to identify possible transformative solutions.

Education about ecosystems

One part of the results indicate that environmental education would be a good starting point and that the local population plays a vital role in this. Only people who are well-informed and involved in decision-making can take responsibility for decisions taken.

The study on ecosystem services in Laos provides the scientific basis to initiate a series of co-design processes and to launch future incubators. Its systemic perspective may also help to highlight connections not only locally but also in a wider context.



River algae for the urban market. Ecosystem services are defined according to needs and benefits.



Scientific data show that the links between nature and people go further than just the direct benefits.



Southeast Asia Hub

Place/region: Savannakhet is the largest province in the south of Laos (~22,000 km²)

Inhabitants: approximately 1 million

Biodiversity: The Savannakhet province is part of the Southeast Asian biodiversity hotspot along the Annamite mountain range. It offers an unparalleled mix of different landscapes, including unique forest ecosystems with rich biodiversity, seriously endangered wildlife and wetlands under threat. However, the region is also characterized by considerable socioeconomic contrasts.



The economic pressure on land resources in Savannakhet is growing. It ranges from huge projects...



...to large-scale monocultures in crop plantations...



...and poaching. Wild animals that are hunted illegally are often exported.

Selected activities of the Wyss Academy in Southeast Asia

Establishment of the Southeast Asia Hub:

- Identification of possible models that will give the Wyss Academy a legal footing in Laos and in the region

Engagement:

- Starting an engagement process to assess different valuations of nature and related power relations in Laos
- Establish contact with a wide range of potential partners for the Wyss Academy's future knowledge, engagement and incubator activities in Laos and in the region

Knowledge:

- National modeling of high-resolution indicators for a broad spectrum of ecosystem services provides initial insights into the portfolio and the characteristics of the services
- A survey was carried out in 36 communities in Savannakhet to allow the local requirements for ecosystem services to be better understood and to give local people a chance to be heard in ecosystem service assessments
- Mapping and evaluation of actors at the interface between human development and conservation efforts in Laos
- An assessment of transformative conservation activities in Laos to gain an overview of the promising initiatives was made.

Incubators:

- As 2020 was the first year of the Wyss Academy's initiatives in Southeast Asia, no incubators could be set up because of the pandemic
- Initial ideas for potential incubators were discussed with a series of stakeholders and will be developed further in early 2021

Covid-19:

- Closure of all borders to international travel in March 2020 and national lockdown from March to May 2020. This resulted in the cancellation of the exploratory mission and other meetings originally planned with people from outside Laos

“For me the three components are like a puzzle. Sometimes everything begins with an incubator as a pilot project. In other cases, we start with engagement or knowledge.”

Olivier Jacquat, Head of Bern Hub

Incubators

Reinforcing transformation

Knowledge does not automatically lead to transformation, but requires certain conditions. To evoke innovation, the Wyss Academy for Nature experiments worldwide within test and pilot projects.

diplomacy. The demand-oriented, experimental approach taken by the Wyss Academy connects research, politics and practical activities within the individual projects.

Three basic components

The incubator as the basic component of a Hub never functions independently of the other basic components: knowledge and engagement. Olivier Jacquat, Head of Bern Hub, underlines: “For me the three components are like a puzzle. Sometimes everything begins with an incubator as a pilot project. In other cases, we start with engagement or knowledge.”

Experiences from individual projects are constantly compared and analyzed. The projects in the Canton of Bern are an example of how cooperation and networking can function across the boundaries of an individual incubator.

More information about the Bern Hub can be found on the following pages.

In the fields of medicine and biology, the term “incubator” refers to a piece of equipment that can provide and maintain a suitable environment for development and growth. The Wyss Academy sees its worldwide incubator projects and the associated components of engagement and research as spaces where something significant can grow on the basis of concrete experience. The Regional Hubs in South America, East Africa and Southeast Asia and in the Canton of Bern in Switzerland are the driving forces behind the selection and implementation of these test and pilot projects, known as incubators.

Protected knowledge spaces

What happens in the incubators all over the world? In line with the vision and mission of the Wyss Academy, promising approaches and innovations are jointly designed, tested and adapted to the given realities. The idea is to respond to local interests and to overcome conflicts of objectives by using knowledge

People's need to be outside in nature during the Covid-19 lockdown brought about new challenges in the field of conservation.

“It is clear to everyone here that heating our homes with oil isn’t a long-term option. The snow line is creeping ever higher. We have to do something.”

Peter Aeschimann, President of the Regional Conference

Oberland East and businessman

Bern Hub

Designing our world for sustainability

Sustainability should be more than an abstract buzzword. It should lead to specific, definite actions. A series of projects in the Canton of Bern are helping to get climate change under control, prevent the loss of biodiversity, and preserve the region’s wide-ranging natural and cultural landscapes.

When Peter Aeschimann looks up the mountains in his home county of the Bernese Oberland, he sees just how far the glaciers have retreated over the years. Aeschimann, President of the Regional Conference Oberland East, says: “It is clear to everyone here that heating our homes with oil isn’t a long-term option. The snow line is creeping ever higher. We have to do something.”

Experiments in developing a climate-neutral society have been ongoing for some years. In the Bernese Oberland, the political desire to create a carbon-neutral tourism region around the Jungfrau mountain gave rise to a concrete request to put this idea into practice.

Switzerland faces numerous challenges that threaten its diverse natural and cultural landscapes. These challenges are wide-ranging and include both specific practices and the lifestyles of the local society in general. For the Wyss Academy, the Bern Hub is a source of inspiration for other European regions that

will also need to one day redefine the relationship between people and nature.

The Bernese incubators focus on a number of different but connected topics such as climate change, renewable energy, the circular economy, demographic change, increasing spatial requirements and the demand for functional ecosystem services. All of these developments have an impact on nature and people living in Switzerland’s cultural landscapes. The incubator in the tourism region Jungfrau is an excellent example (see infographic on page 40).

A carbon-neutral tourism region

The impetus to start an incubator here came from the Bernese Oberland itself. But how can a project work towards creating a carbon-neutral region while taking all of the various stakeholders into account? In this case, the Wyss Academy has chosen to focus on four sectors: tourism, housing, food supply and mobility.

In this context, it is down to the world of science to present the processes and show where an efficient impact can be made. The Wyss Academy is working with the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern. A specialist in transformation processes, the center provides advice and helps to moderate the project. Science is trying to advise the region on how to achieve carbon-neutrality in an efficient way, while also working out which solutions are endorsed by everyone involved.



The impetus to create a carbon-neutral tourist region here came from the Bernese Oberland itself.



Discussing the Circular Economy: Peter Messerli during a podium with Christoph Ammann, member of the Cantonal Government of Bern, 2020



Bern Hub

Place/region: The Canton of Bern lies in western Central Switzerland.

Inhabitants: more than 1 million

Biodiversity: Moors and moor landscapes are some of the rarest, most beautiful and most valuable areas for nature in Switzerland. They form the habitats of many protected plants and animals. As a mountainous, agricultural canton, Bern is heavily affected by global climate change. This is increasingly resulting in dry summers, heavy precipitation, more high-temperature days and snow-poor winters.

“A transformation can happen when various projects integrate and learn from one another.”

Stephanie Moser, Engagement leader, CDE

“Our enquiries with the communes within the Regional Conference Oberland East were met with great interest. The majority of the 28 communes are prepared to participate in the process,” says the CDE’s engagement leader, Stephanie Moser. But the 2020 pandemic has created pressure on international tourism. In light of this, it is important that the project in the tourist region includes negotiation processes. Integration with other initiatives, such as Laax in the Grisons, is also important here. “A transformation will be more effective if you are not working on a project alone,” explains Stephanie Moser.

An ecological network

Integration not only in terms of the society, but also within a landscape, is the mission of another Bern Hub project on ecological infrastructure.

It aims to establish a Switzerland-wide network of valuable core and integration zones to protect and preserve biodiversity. Much like a traffic network, it requires connections, corridors and bridges. Questions that need to be answered here include: Where are the biodiversity hotspots? What is the value of a system? But also, where are there gaps in the conservation areas, and where are the corridors and exchange zones? The data gained from this helps with decision-making and brings surprising findings to light. “There are actually places in Swiss cities where very rare orchids grow along busy streets. Whereas the biodiversity in a mountain forest can be surprisingly low,” says Urs Känzig, Head of Nature Promotion for the Canton of Bern.

Känzig sees the collaboration between the Canton of Bern and the Wyss Academy as an opportunity to change established thought patterns. In his experience, it requires a certain drive, a strong force of imagination and innovation, to enact change. Central to this is the participative approach of the Wyss Academy – both in terms of the specific implementation and the dialogue with the stakeholders involved.

The Bernese portfolio currently comprises 15 projects. Other incubators will be developed during and after the launch phase of the Wyss Academy in 2020/2021. The Parliament and Government of the Canton of Bern are set to take a particularly collaborative role in the implementation of the ideas and further project development at the Bern Hub over the next ten years. Based on the University of Bern’s globally recognized expertise in the areas of biodiversity, land use and climate change, the Wyss Academy will develop innovations that break with the conventional thought patterns of scientific research, conservation and development practices, and political routine.

“There are actually places in Swiss cities where very rare orchids grow on busy streets. Whereas the biodiversity in a mountain forest can be surprisingly low.”

Urs Känzig, Head of Nature Promotion for the Canton of Bern



Dactylorhiza fuchsii (common spotted orchid) on the roof of the Anna-Seiler-House at the Inselspital Bern.

The Wyss Academy’s activities in Canton Bern

Establishment of the Bern Hub:

- Bilateral contract agreed between the Wyss Academy and the Canton of Bern (governing the partnership)
- Award of contracts for Bern Hub projects: finalization of the legal report on public procurement and VAT for the implementation program, start of contract development for 12 of the 15 projects
- First draft of the governance regulations for the implementation program (evaluation, reporting, procurement)

Engagement:

- Assistance with the organization of and participation in the CE2 Conference on the circular economy (GS-1 project, Interlaken, September 17, 2020)

- Development of the mandate and appointment of the Bern Hub program committee (strategic body of 7 people, defined in the bilateral contract between the Wyss Academy and the Canton)
- Bilateral discussions with key stakeholders (e.g. Swisscleantech, Sanu Durabilitas, Federal Office for the Environment, Federal Office of Energy)
- Initial stakeholder mapping
- Communication: several media enquiries on projects within the implementation program

Knowledge:

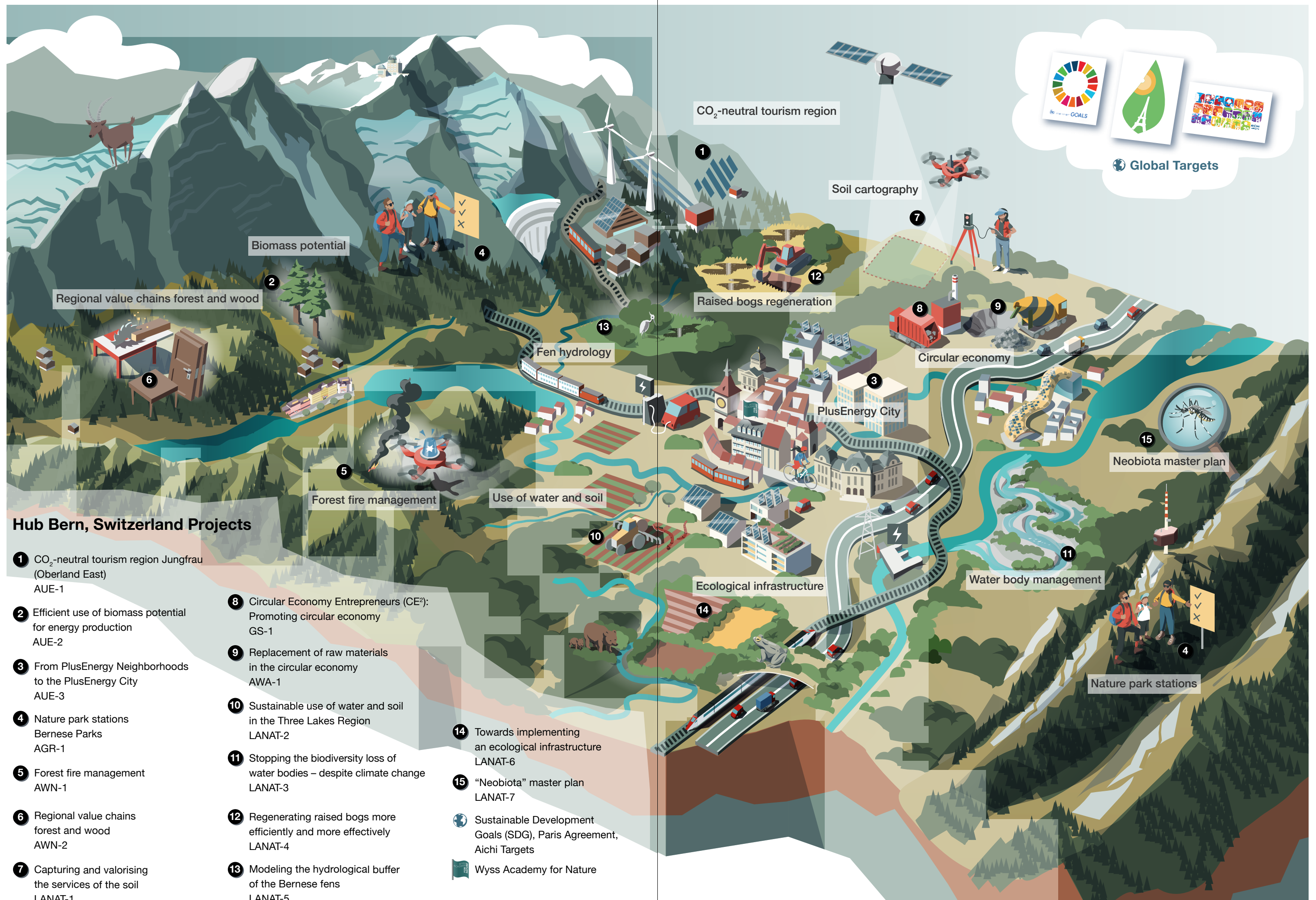
- Review and expertise for the Canton of Bern and the Federal Administration (climate funds, circular economy)

Incubators:

- Kick-off meetings and launch of the incubator portfolio: 13 projects across six different fields (biodiversity, energy, natural hazards, resource usage, agriculture, tourism)
- Selection of a new incubator project for the portfolio (substitute raw materials in the circular economy)

Covid-19:

- Significant limitations on engagement and the incubators. Consequence: some revision of how we work within partnerships and reach communities



Covid-19

Great opportunities despite significant challenges

Covid-19 has taken hold of our world. How the Wyss Academy is navigating the pandemic.

The Wyss Academy for Nature was launched in a world heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The effects on our societies and economies go far beyond the healthcare sector, and are predicted to have a long-term impact.

But what does this all mean for the direction and future work of the Wyss Academy? “As we are still in the process of establishing the institution and its programs, it is important for the Academy to consider the consequences of the crisis proactively,” says Joan Bastide, Senior Advisor at the East Africa Hub.

The Covid-19 crisis is having a dramatic impact on the cornerstones of our societies: security of supply, employment, public health, education, mobility. Countries such as Peru have seen their efforts to reduce poverty set back some ten years. And instead of seeing an expected 6 percent rise in GDP, Kenya has experienced a significant fall of -5.7 percent. The pandemic has destroyed millions of jobs in sectors such as tourism, education, manufacturing and even agriculture.

The world through a magnifying glass

But Covid-19 is also changing the public discourse about what we want our societies to be like in the future. It is an opportunity to address pressing issues such as climate change and the loss of biodiversity. “We are starting to see the existential threat as if through a magnifying glass, which is enabling



Collaboration in times of Covid 19 in the East Africa Hub

us to view the state of the world with greater clarity,” says Peter Messerli, Director of the Wyss Academy.

Confronted with supply bottlenecks, mobility restrictions and the loss of other freedoms we would normally take for granted, our awareness of global dependencies has increased, for example with regard to our food supply systems. But our local surroundings have also taken on a very different and important significance in terms of food supplies and tourism. People are increasingly escaping lockdowns by heading to conservation areas. Some are fleeing existential threats such as unstable food supplies in certain countries, whereas others, as the Bern Hub’s projects have observed, are simply looking to spend time in nature and the chance to vacation domestically.

The world as a laboratory

These examples demonstrate the complexity and variability of the relationships between people and nature. The pandemic has transformed the world into a giant laboratory for researching and observing resilience, vulnerability and sustainability. For a research organization such as the Wyss Academy, this represents both a significant challenge and a great opportunity. In general, the overall approach and mission of the Wyss Academy remain the same in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and beyond. It has become more relevant, but changes are also needed in

terms of its organization. These include identifying how the crisis has impacted the gulf between science, politics and society, finding innovative ways to increase engagement in a world of distanced relationships, integrating pandemic-related research into the portfolio, and developing a strong framework for adaptive management in order to achieve our defined objectives.

From a practical point of view, the Wyss Academy will have to invest in equipment that will enable meetings and events to be carried out online. Guidelines and tools will need to be developed to integrate these technologies into the academy’s DNA. This will become a specific work package in our strategy. In an environment subject to such significant changes as this, it is important to be able to continually adapt to new challenges. The development of an agile management framework will help us to navigate through this uncertain future.

The Wyss Academy’s strength lies in the fact that it is a start-up and therefore in a constant state of development and growth. This means that it can still adapt the work plan and coordinate its activities and components of its institutional development in such a way that we can rethink how we access the field and how we utilize integration mechanisms as part of our engagements.

“By integrating art, the Wyss Academy aims to show that nature and culture are not opposing forces.”

Sonja Schenkel, Head of Communication and Social Innovation at the Wyss Academy

Habitat

On the culture of transformation

The Wyss Academy’s vision is to develop new relationships with nature. Art plays a role in this. The headquarters in Bern offers space for this and in the future also in the regions. Because nature and culture are not opposites.

“Art can change the world!” wrote Ai Weiwei in his Manifesto without Borders. Underneath, he put in enlarged type: “If we allow ourselves to continue to dream and use our imagination, anything is possible,” and thereby struck on an important point of the Wyss Academy. Developing a new relationship with nature is at its core an act of innovation, a creative process in which vision and new ways of thinking play a key role.

Innovation as a form of creative thinking, undermines saying no, pessimism, paralysis and ignorance. Neurological studies have shown that creative thinking takes place in a different part of the brain than our basic reflexes of fight, flight, freeze and fawn. We need other connections to enable us to think in new and different ways. Physical and emotional sensations play an important role here.

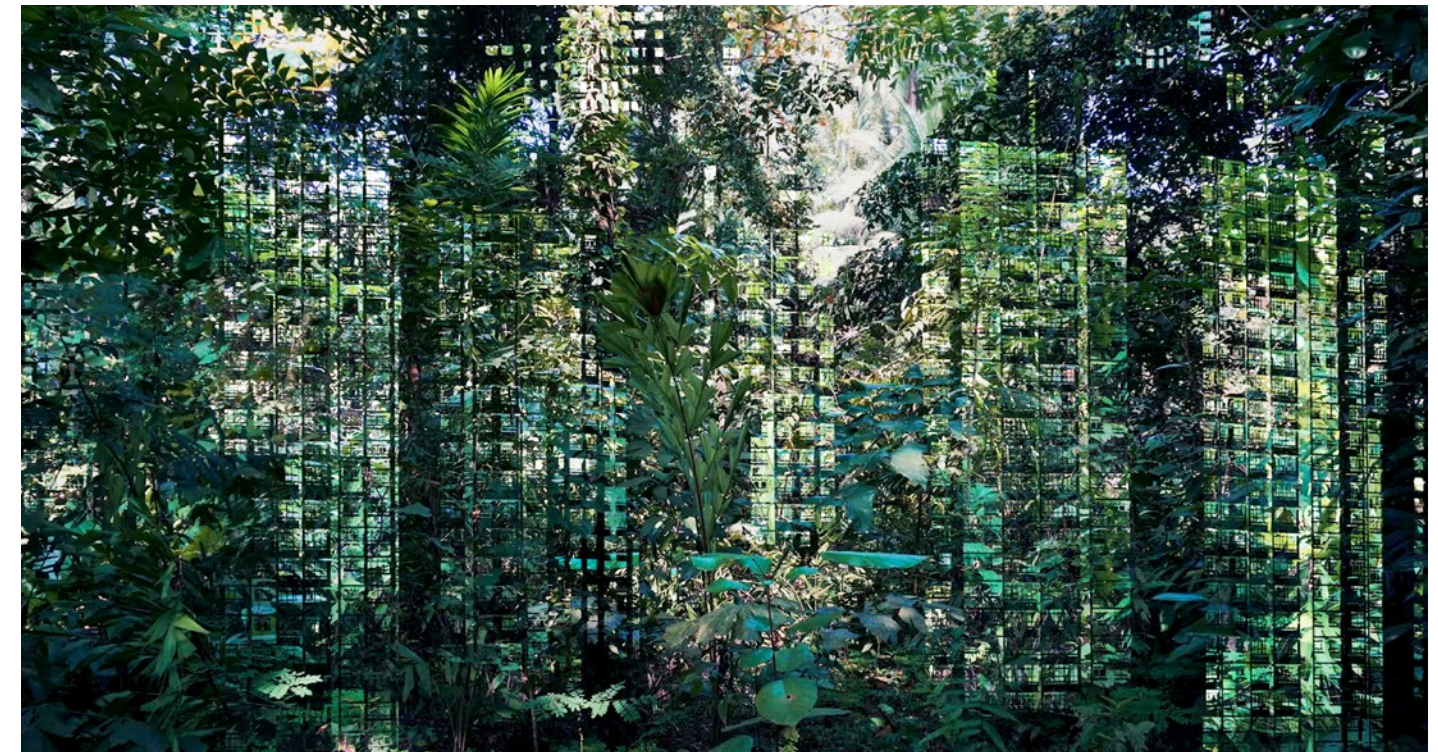
The field of visibility, viscosity, readability and even the imaginative opportunities we find in art have great potential to stir up our powers to develop our visions and to create. “By involving art, we also want to show that

nature and art are not opposites,” says Sonja Schenkel, Head of Communication and Social Innovation at the Wyss Academy.

The Academy’s first habitat, a so-called “narrative environment”, was created at the headquarters in Bern in 2020. Narrative environments are laboratories in which narratives can be developed, tested and applied to a wider audience.

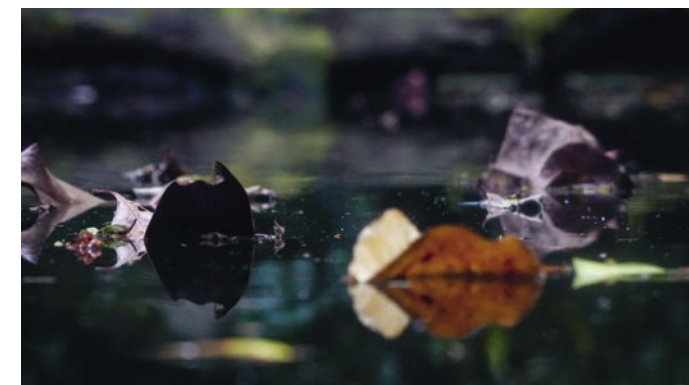
The Habitat at the Wyss Academy is a space for guest artists who work in the same core fields as the foundation. On the other hand, it invites co-design processes with the broader public and spurs digital collaboration with the hubs in the regions. The culture of transformation as part of our engagement is at the core of its concept. Similar spaces will be created in East Africa, South America and Southeast Asia. With this Habitat, the Wyss Academy has developed a sensory level that will accompany us through both our engagements and in communicating our knowledge. Sensuality supporting sense-making.

Monica Ursina Jäger’s installation “Forest Tales and Emerald Fictions” (2019) opened in 2020, almost exactly at the same time as most cultural institutions went into lockdown. Hers is the first chapter in a series that visualizes the Hub’s current projects and its engagement processes.



Can forests be a model for urban development? The installation explores this idea.

Left: The light-sensitive natural pigment chlorophyll gradually transforms over the life of the exhibition.



Top: Ephemerality and transformation are recurring elements in nature.

Left: Artist Monica Ursina Jäger prepares her chlorophyll image. The installation was curated with Damian Christinger.

Forest Tales and Emerald Fictions (2019)

The installation describes the forest as a spatially complex structure, a place of multi-layered relationships and dependencies, and a space for imagination, narration and remembrance. The video installation shows the forest not only as the resource, infrastructure and service provider as we often see it, but also as an ecosystem with a transtemporal and translocational character. The artist asks us to what extent the forests can be used as a model for sustainable urban development.

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Annual Report 2020

Facts & Figures

This section of the annual report summarizes the Wyss Academy's organizational structure and financial achievements in 2020. It further presents the people behind the new organization: its funders, partners and the core team.

An overview of the funding, the annual accounts and spendings by business unit boils down the detailed financial report, which comes as a separate document.



Building a Networked Organization

Supported and guided by its Board, the Wyss Academy builds on a solid internal structure: its backbone, the Management Center, supports the other four business units in their daily challenges of resource mobilization, governance, co-design, networking and collaborating with external partners and stakeholders. This setup builds the foundation for the institution and for a global network.

At the end of 2020, the Wyss Academy had 9 employees – by the end of 2021, it will have over 60 employees worldwide.

However, with our projects and partners on the ground, our team of collaborators and supporters is likely to be larger. The basic idea of the Wyss Academy: “Creating a new Relationship with Nature” stands as an invitation to build a global network organization.

The Board of the Wyss Academy for Nature



Prof. Dr. Christian Leumann
President of the Board and
Rector of the University
of Bern



André Nietlisbach
Vice-President of the Board
and Secretary General of
the Ministry of Economic
Affairs, Energy and the
Environment of the Canton
of Bern



Dr. h.c. Hansjörg Wyss
Board member, Entrepreneur
and Philanthropist, Wyss
Foundation



Dr. Molly McUsic
Board member and
President of the Wyss
Foundation



Prof. Dr. Peter Messerli
Board member and Director,
Professor of Sustainable
Development

Three questions to a Board Member

What has been the biggest shift in nature conservation as a global effort in 2020?

Nations are now, rightly, treating the crisis facing the planet's biodiversity and the crisis facing the planet's climate as dual existential threats, both requiring serious deliberation and ambitious policy action that simultaneously conserves natural areas on a large scale and harnesses nature to ameliorating climate change. To support policy ambition, nearly 60 nations have joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, an inter-governmental organization advocating for a global goal to protect at least 30% of the world's lands and ocean by 2030.

In your view, how have nature-people relations evolved during this year?

The global pandemic has put people's relationship with the natural world into stark relief. On the one hand, our relationship with nature – or more accurately our broken relationship with nature – is responsible for a global pandemic, caused by a zoonotic disease, that's touched every corner of the globe and significantly impacted lives and livelihoods of every human on the planet. At the same time, in a year of lock-downs and social distancing, access to nature and outdoor spaces provided one of the few respites for people to escape and find some solace.

Three grains of hope for 2021?

1—With parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity set to meet in Kunming, China, I'm hopeful nations will establish meaningful and ambitious global protected area targets, including setting a goal to protect at least 30 percent of the planet's lands and ocean by 2030.



Molly McUsic, President of the Wyss Foundation

2—Nations around the world continue re-orienting their relationship with Indigenous Peoples by acknowledging their critical role in safeguarding biodiversity since time immemorial and following their lead on conservation efforts by ensuring the principle of free, prior, and informed consent is at the forefront of efforts to protect Indigenous lands.

3—The United States will re-engage in global environmental diplomacy, joining international partners to hopefully mobilize much-needed financial resources to manage protected areas for biodiversity and climate benefits.

The people behind the Wyss Academy for Nature

Combined experience: experts from across a range of fields working together to find sustainable solutions for existential human-environment challenges.

Management board



Peter Messerli
Director

Peter Messerli is a geographer and land system scientist working on sustainable development of human-environment systems in a globalized world facing existential environmental challenges. He is a professor of sustainable development at the University of Bern, co-chairman of Future Earth's Global Land Programme and co-publisher of the UN Global Sustainable Development Report 2019. As director of the Wyss Academy for Nature, he is committed to combining science, politics and practice to develop tangible innovations for nature and people.



Tatjana von Steiger
Head of Global Policy Outreach

Working at the interface between norms and their implementation in global sustainability policies: Tatjana von Steiger. As an experienced development diplomat, she has always been able to integrate very different points of view into solution-finding processes, including in her role as the Vice Head of Global Collaboration at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA), and when representing Switzerland in the negotiations surrounding the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Matthias Schmid-Huberty
Chief Operating Officer

A business economist and expert consultant in the fields of management, governance and anti-corruption in the non-profit sector, Matthias Schmid-Huberty has previously spent many years working for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Asia and Africa. As the former administrative director of the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH), he worked at the interface between applied research and human wellbeing. In his role at the Wyss Academy, he combines effectiveness and efficiency with systemic approaches and his knowledge of international business law.



Sonja Schenkel
Head of Communication

Various projects led the moderator of co-design processes and trained filmmaker to North and Latin America, East Africa and Asia. With a doctorate in development studies, Sonja Schenkel marries art and science, integrating communication with sustainability and social change. Results were presented at international conferences and public events and were exhibited in museums. As head of the communication department, Sonja Schenkel aims to support and empower people to enact positive change through the tools of communication, co-creation and art.



Olivier Jacquat
Head of Bern Hub

Since gaining his doctorate in environmental science, Olivier Jacquat has enjoyed working at the interface between applied research, administration and practice. He has a wealth of experience in the implementation of innovations in the environmental sector. Optimistic, creative, future-minded, bilingual, persistent, humorous, open, someone who thinks outside the box and has a can-do attitude, Olivier Jacquat enjoys taking participative, innovative and results-oriented approaches in his role as the Head of the Bern Hub. He works hand-in-hand with our planet, the Wyss Academy, and its communities in the Canton of Bern and beyond.



A connected team

Collaboration in the age of Covid-19 puts geographical distance into a new perspective – this screenshot from a meeting represents many like it over the past year. In this picture: part of the 2020/21 Wyss Academy team and some of our partners from the regions.

From left to right:

Top: Eva Ludi, André Gasser
 2nd row: Joan Bastide, Sarah-Lan Mathez-Stiefel, Olivier Eschler
 3rd row: Bianca Binggeli, Andreas Heinimann, Tatjana von Steiger, Olivier Jacquat
 4th row: Boniface Kiteme, Sonja Schenkel, Peter Messerli
 5th row: Marianne Künzle, Barbara Willi, Dominic Martin, Philipp Kocher



Eva Ludi

Head of Regional Hubs

Her objectives for the Wyss Academy? Eva Ludi, a Geographer by training, combines her deep knowledge, insights and extensive networks to achieve just relationships between people and nature. She draws on her experiences working for the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, UK. While there, she worked, among others, on climate change, water (in)security, and resilient livelihoods. Eva Ludi has extensive experience in policy and practice-relevant research. Working closely with decision makers in both the public and private sectors from academia, civil society, government and businesses, she strives to find solutions to complex systemic problems.







Andreas Heinimann

Head of Regional Hubs

As an internationally renowned land system scientist, Andreas Heinimann moves with ease between the academic and the policy and development practice world. He is driven not by science and its narrow evaluation schemes, but by the concrete transformative power and actions of knowledge for more just and sustainable development. As a former director of a sustainability center of the University of Bern, he has lived and worked for many years in countries of the Global South and deeply understands the importance of highly contextualized knowledge diplomacy approaches towards effective and concrete societal impact of knowledge.



Partners and donors in 2020

Donors

 <p>Wyss Foundation www.wyssfoundation.org</p>	 <p>University of Bern www.unibe.ch</p>	 <p>Kanton Bern Canton de Berne www.be.ch</p>	 <p>Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra</p> <p>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC www.eda.admin.ch/sdc</p>
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Partners

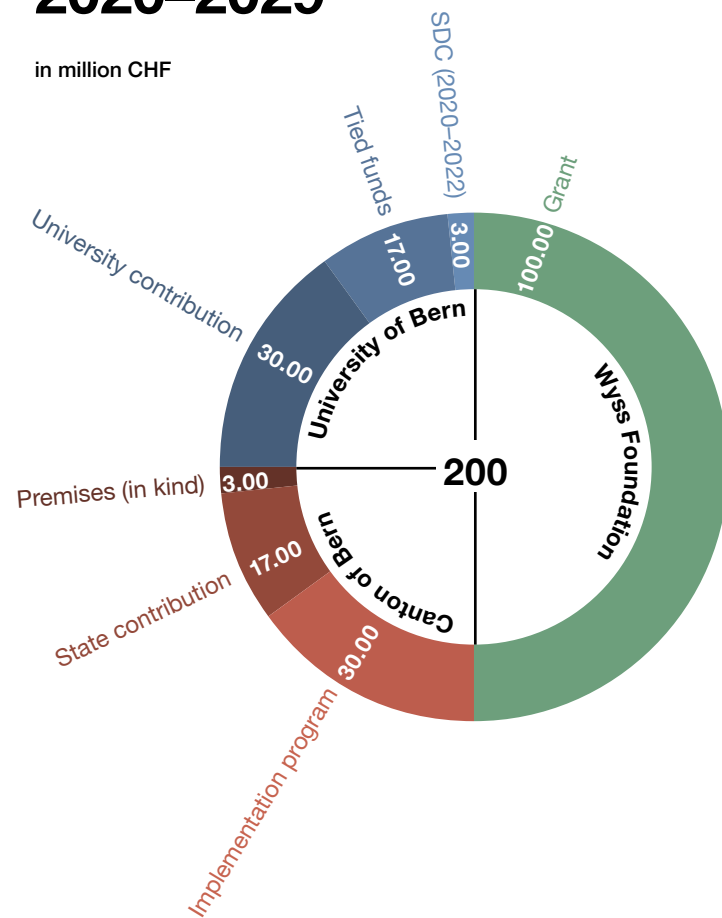
 <p>CDE CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT www.cde.unibe.ch</p>	 <p>Oeschger Centre CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH www.oeschger.unibe.ch</p>	 <p>Institute of Plant Sciences (IPS) www.ips.unibe.ch</p>	 <p>Centre for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD) www.cetrad.org</p>
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 <p>Asociación para la Conservación de la Cuenca Amazónica (ACCA) www.acca.org.pe</p>	 <p>Canton of Bern www.be.ch</p>
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Finances

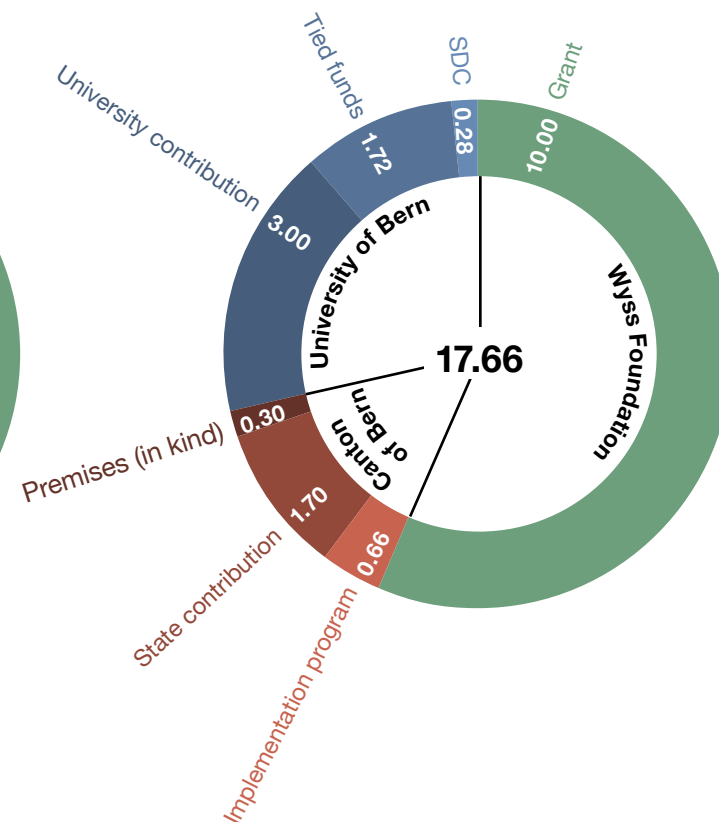
Funding 2020–2029

in million CHF



Funding 2020

in million CHF



Funding

in million CHF

Donor	Purpose	Overall Committed	Avg. per year	Allocation to Foundation capital	Income 2020	Total 2020	Remaining commitment 2021–2029
Wyss Foundation	Grant	100.00	10.00	6.00	4.00	10.00	90.00
Canton of Bern	Implementation program	30.00	3.00	–	0.66	0.66	29.34
	State contribution	17.00	1.70	1.70	–	1.70	15.30
	Premises (in kind)	3.00	0.30	–	0.30	0.30	2.70
University of Bern	University contribution	30.00	3.00	2.30	0.70	3.00	27.00
	Tied funds	17.00	1.70	–	1.72	1.72	15.28
	SDC (2020–2022)	3.00	0.30	–	0.28	0.28	2.72
Total		200.00	20.00	10.00	7.66	17.66	182.34

Annual Accounts

Income Statement 2020

2020

	CHF
Donor Contributions	7,000,000
Income for implementation program Bern Hub	658,934
Other operating income	1,000
Total operating income	7,659,934
Personnel expenses	-2,042,912
Depreciation	-85,605
Operating expenses	-1,430,773
Total operating expenses	-3,559,290
Result of the year	4,100,644

The financial statements were established in accordance with the Swiss GAAP FER standard – for detailed information, please refer to the separate Financial Report 2020.

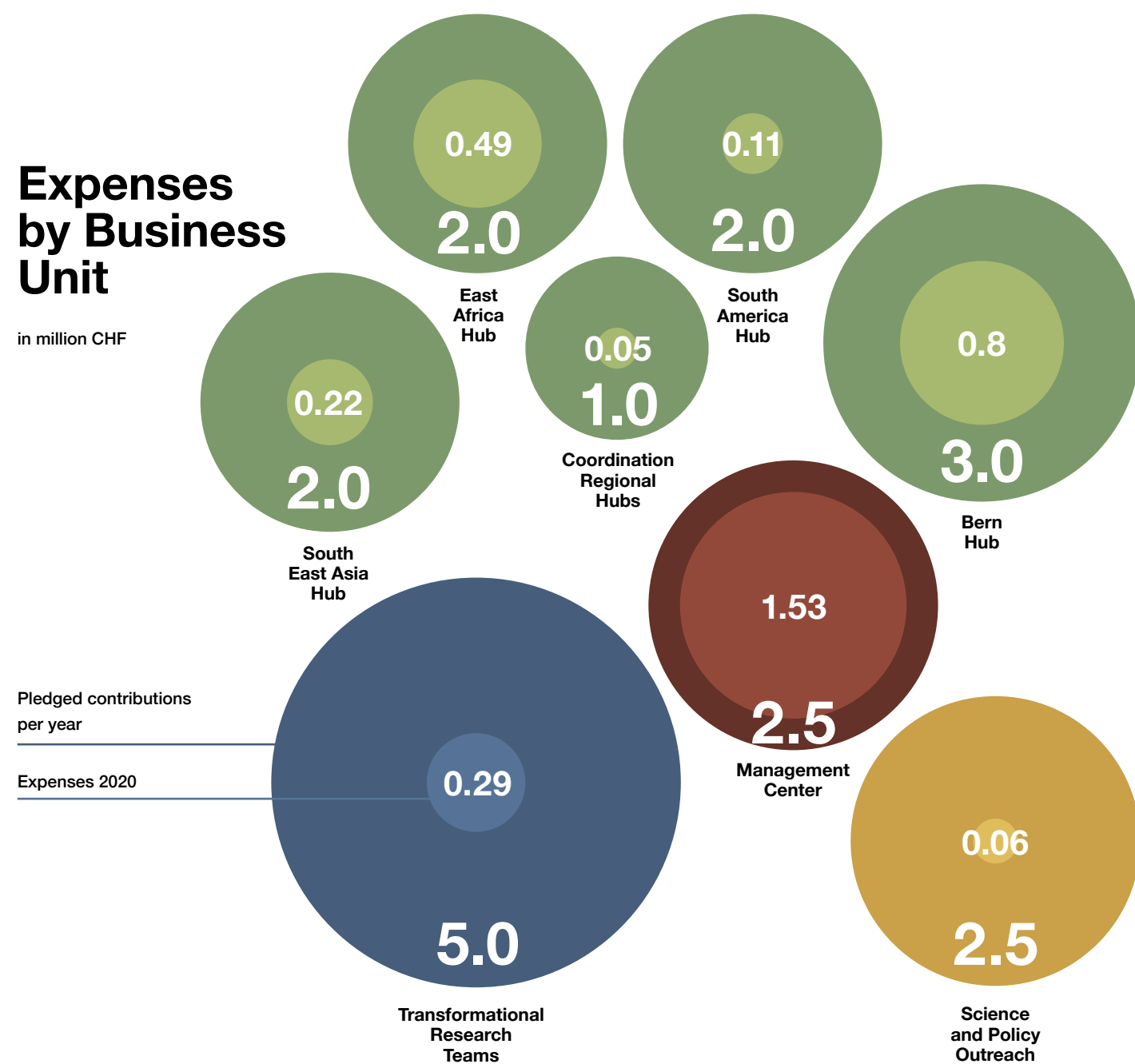
Balance Sheet 2020

31 Dec 2020

Assets	CHF
Cash, equivalents and financial assets	13,752,771
Receivables	2,203,847
Prepayments and accrued income	194,509
Current assets	16,151,127
Tangible fixed assets	307,000
Intangible Assets	143,000
Non-current assets	450,000
Total Assets	16,601,127
Liabilities and foundation capital	CHF
Payables from goods and services	918,378
Accrued liabilities and deferred income	1,512,765
Short-term provisions	69,340
Current liabilities	2,500,483
Foundation capital	10,000,000
Result of the year	4,100,644
Total foundation capital	14,100,644
Total liabilities and foundation capital	16,601,127

Expenses by Business Unit

in million CHF



The graphs show the expenditures by business unit in relation to each other. In 2020, basic infrastructure and support structures at headquarters were the primary focus (CHF 1.53 million). Activities in the Regional Hubs amounted to a total of CHF 0.88 million, while the Bern Hub already implemented projects of a value amounting to CHF 0.8 million. The Transformational Research Teams, whose initial work in 2020 was conducted by ad interim research teams of the University of Bern led to spending of approximately CHF 0.3 million. The Science and Policy Outreach was only initiated in early 2021, so that in 2020 only small expenses occurred.

The pledged expenses foreseen as an average over the 10 years funding period as compared to the expenses in 2020 are shown in the graph above.

Clearly, the major part (one third) of the basic funding shall be spent in the Regional Hubs (CHF 7.0 million/year). The Transformational Research Teams are expected to contribute mission-oriented research at a budget of CHF 5.0 million, thereby directly serving the knowledge platforms and incubator projects in the Hubs. 15% of the basic funding will be spent by the Bern Hub, including specific funding of the Canton of Bern at an average of CHF 3.0 million/year. The Science and Policy Outreach and the Management Center are each foreseen to spend ⅓ of the basic funding per year.

Acknowledgements

Publisher

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Translation

UGZ Übersetzer Gruppe Zürich

Image processing and printing

Vögel AG, Langnau i.E.

Illustration

Samuel Bucheli (pages 11, 40–41)

Photos

Shutterstock/Adamus Photography (Cover, 34); Wyss Academy for Nature/Daniel Rhis (5); University of Bern (5); Shutterstock/Michal Balada (7); Wyss Academy for Nature/Matthias Schmid Huberty/Sonja Schenkel (8, 9); Wyss Academy for Nature (12); Paisaje EBLA/Walter Wust/ACCA (15); Sofia Rubio (15, 17), 21_los-amigos-concession-sign_4322679719 (17), Conservación Amazonia ACCA (18); ACCA/Francisco Llacma (Puma 18); Wyss Academy for Nature (18); Wyss Academy for Nature/Eva Ludi (20, 23); Wyss Academy for Nature/Peter Messerli (23); CETRAD (23, 25); modified from Messmer et al. (2020) (Karte 25); That-heva Saphangthong & Michael Epprecht (26); Phetsaphone Thanasack (29); unknown (29, 31, 32); Michael Epprecht & Luang Prabang (32); Shutterstock/Tatiana Kovaleva (37); Swiss Economic Forum (37); Stefan Müller (39); CETRAD (43); Monica Ursina Jäger (45); Wyss Academy for Nature/Daniel Rhis, freelance photographer (team members 50–52); provided (board members 48–49).

Quote on page 2: www.mogobay.com – Interview with Hansjörg Wyss by Rhett A. Butler on 26 October 2020, <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/10/despite-covid-political-divides-conservation-can-advance-hansjorg-wyss>

The First Year of the Wyss Academy for Nature in Words and Figures.

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From snow-capped mountains
to hot deserts, the Wyss Academy
for Nature scales solutions that
transcend local contexts.