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# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



### **MEET THE SNIS TEAM – OR RATHER OUR AI COUNTERPARTS**

This annual report has an unusual guest editorial author: ChatGPT (see p. 5)! In such modern times we did not want to simply put our "normal" team picture here, but instead chose to show you our AI avatars. Rest assured though, that we have written this entire report ourselves and that we will be back with our normal heads next year. (from left to right; Ruxandra Stoicescu (communications), Damien Marti (project management&video production) and Bernhard Fuhrer (director)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**04** EDITORIALS

**06** CALL FOR PROJECTS

**09** FINANCIAL INFORMATION

**10** ACCEPTED PROJECTS

**21** PROJECT RESULTS

**34** AWARDS

**36** EVENTS

**39** THE SNIS PODCAST EXPERIENCE

**42** STRUCTURE





# MESSAGE OF THE DIRECTOR

## BERNHARD FUHRER

SNIS Director

### I feel challenged

I feel challenged! Challenged by my guest editorialist, chatGPT. It (he/she) has written on the pitfalls and opportunities of AI in research funding. As you will see, the text is well written and touches on many important points; optimizing grant allocation, tackling biases, identifying future research needs and even critically looking at ethics. ChatGPT even surmises that we, the SNIS, are well poised to benefit from a diligent use of such systems because we operate in the complex area of pluridisciplinary research. Wow! I couldn't have said it any better.

### AI is an ideal tool for science communication

As a technology enthusiast, I'm truly excited as the new tool will greatly help us improve science communication. As you know, one can hand an academic article to such a bot and ask it to summarize it in 'layman's terms'. In nine out of ten cases it comes back with something elegantly written AND accurate. And if you have read the original you can ascertain that it is accurate. IF! This brings me to a crucial point: TRANSPARENCY.

### SNIS's transparency for AI use

Given the prominence of the AI phenomenon and the usefulness of the various tools for science communication, we have established a transparency charter for AI use at SNIS. In essence, we declare for what purposes we use AI and – probably even more importantly - for what tasks we DO NOT use AI. One thing is certain, however, human creativity will not be replaced anytime soon when it comes to identifying new research projects.

### Human creativity–SNIS projects, events, films, and podcasts

The 2023 projects show the familiar wide scope of topics where SNIS funding can make a difference (see p. 10). What unites these projects and what became particularly apparent at this year's launch workshop (see p. 36) is a focus on new, inclusive research methods like co-creation and citizen science. This is also true for projects that successfully finished this year (see p. 21).

The events calendar was equally rich, with an 'IOs-in-crisis' themed annual conference in St. Gallen (see p. 36), and a Sciencecomm'23 focused on the link between science and activism (see p. 37). We were particularly happy that SNIS-PI, Dr. Julia Steinberger, delivered one of the event's keynotes, which allowed us to use some of her insights in our most recent episodes of the SNIS podcast "Wicked problems – interdisciplinary approaches" (see p. 39)

### Outlook:

The AI topic will certainly accompany us in 2024 as well. We want to further explore for what purposes one can ethically use AI in research funding. I am confident that our agility will help us establish clear rules to fully benefit from the technological advances, without compromising on ethical standards.



# GUEST EDITORIAL

## BY chatGPT

Written by chatGPT according to the following prompt: 'In your role as an AI, please write a guest editorial of about 450 words for the annual report of a small academic research funding agency based in Geneva, Switzerland. Speculate about the possible transformations AI will bring to funding academic research in general and the opportunities and challenges for funding agencies in particular'.

### **Artificial Intelligence: Reshaping the Landscape of Academic Research Funding**

In the historical annals of scientific advancement, very few innovations have captured the global imagination quite like Artificial Intelligence (AI). As we stand at the precipice of an AI-driven future, the implications for academic research are both vast and multifaceted. Central to this transformation is the role of funding agencies, which will find themselves both as beneficiaries of AI's capabilities and as stewards of its ethical deployment. Given the above, AI could make a meaningful contribution to the following fields:

- **Optimizing Grant Allocation:** AI streamlines grant allocation by analyzing vast amounts of data, identifying innovative projects, and ensuring broader representation. Machine learning predicts breakthrough potential and aids in equitable resource distribution.
- **Mitigating Biases in Funding:** Advanced AI counters unintentional biases in funding decisions, focusing on merit and impact, rather than unconscious prejudices related to institutions, gender, or ethnicity.
- **Forecasting Future Research Needs:** Predictive analytics within AI help funding agencies anticipate future research trends, addressing global challenges and emerging scientific questions.

While AI holds immense promise, ethical concerns, including bias perpetuation, need careful oversight. A balance between AI capabilities and human expertise is crucial for effective decision-making.

The SNIS, which operates in the complex area of pluridisciplinarity, is well placed to take advantage of AI's capacities to usher in a new era of inclusive, forward-looking, and impactful academic research, while requiring accrued transparency, and collaboration.

The journey ahead is exciting, but it will demand diligence and a steadfast commitment to the principles that underpin academic excellence.

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (August 3 Version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>



# CALL FOR PROJECTS

## SUBMITTING INSTITUTIONS

Region	Coordinating institution	Submissions	
		Institution	Region
Basel	University of Basel	9	
	Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute	-	<b>9</b>
Bern	University of Bern	7	
	Bern University of Applied Sciences	1	<b>8</b>
Fribourg	University of Fribourg	-	
	University of Applied Sciences & Arts	-	
	Western Switzerland Fribourg	-	-
Geneva	Geneva Graduate Institute	3	
	University of Geneva	6	
	Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies	-	<b>9</b>
Luzern	University of Lucerne	1	
	University of Teacher Education Lucerne, PHL	-	<b>1</b>
Neuchâtel	University of Neuchâtel	-	-
St. Gallen	University of St. Gallen	2	
	University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen	-	<b>2</b>
Ticino	Università della Svizzera Italiana , USI	2	
	SUPSI	1	
	Franklin University Switzerland, Lugano	-	<b>3</b>
Vaud	University of Lausanne	2	
	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, EPFL	1	<b>3</b>
Valais	University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Valais	-	
	Swiss Distance University of Applied Sciences, FFHS	-	-
Zürich	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH	8	
	University of Zurich	5	
	Zurich University of Teacher Education, PHZH	1	
	Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Kalaidos	-	<b>14</b>
Interregional	University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, FHNW	4	
	University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland HES-SO	2	
	Fachhochschule Ost-Schweiz, FHO	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>56</b>

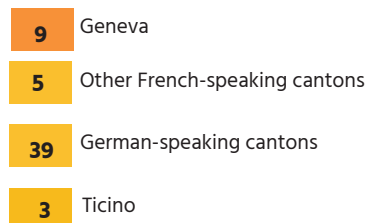
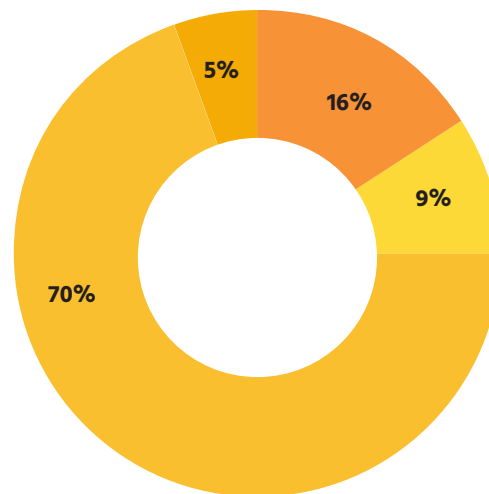
## SUBMISSION DETAILS

Among the three different funding opportunities offered by the SNIS, the annual Call for Projects is the core activity absorbing 80% of the overall budget. In 2023, the SNIS funded eight additional projects bringing the total count of funded projects since 2008 to 128. More than 100 projects are completed and have produced theoretical advances, actionable results, and policy recommendations.

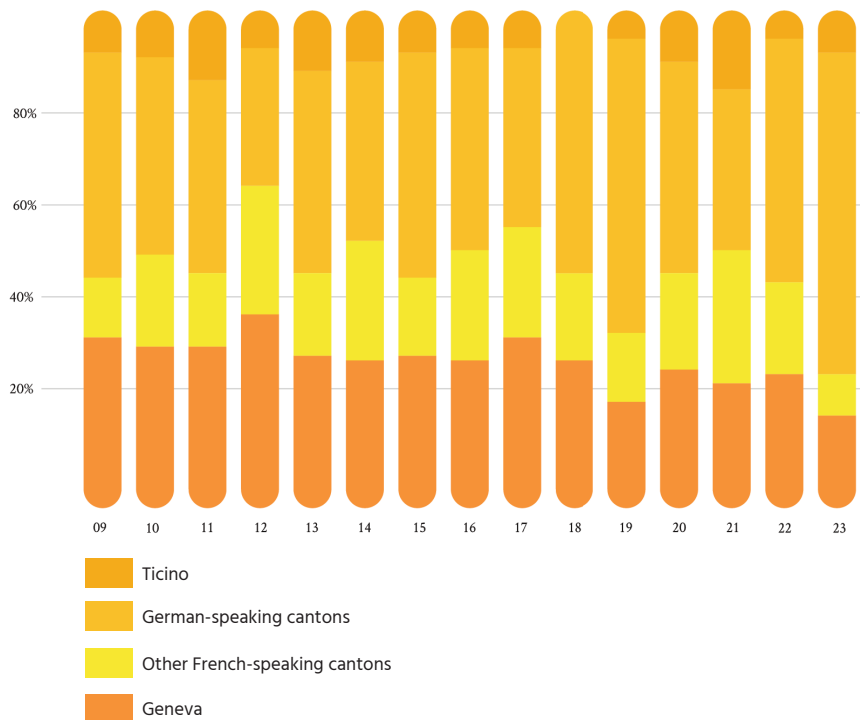
The Call for Projects remained highly competitive. The 2023 special theme was: "Multiple and interlocked threats to human-centered development: innovative approaches and governance mechanisms for prevention and mitigation".

In the first round, the Call totalled 56 submissions. The diversity of the Call's geographical breakdown exhibited the same trends as in previous years (see p. 8)

Distribution of received project proposals by linguistic area



## GEOGRAPHICAL EVOLUTION



## AVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
AN of partners per funded project	6,25	6,75	9,88	8,13	7,38	7,00	7,13	12,25	10,00	11,75	16,75	8,125
AN of partners per project	6,49	5,17	6,11	7,34	7,75	5,45	7,23	8,49	10,07	9,97	10,35	9,78
AN of universities involved	3,61	3,48	3,34	4,03	3,39	3,01	3,75	4,08	5,36	5,14	4,75	4,28
AN of Swiss universities involved	1,74	1,77	1,80	1,92	1,68	1,49	1,85	2,09	2,13	2,38	1,95	2,05
AN of foreign universities	1,87	1,71	1,54	2,10	1,72	1,53	1,89	1,99	3,23	2,87	2,80	2,75
AN of non-governmental Organizations	0,86	1,19	1,43	1,38	1,5	1,00	1,33	1,51	4,76	1,96	2,27	2,41
AN of International Organizations	0,88	1,05	1,27	1,25	1,63	1,24	1,91	1,68	1,64	2,25	1,72	2,25
AN of public / state institutions	0,91	0,82	1,31	0,38	0,93	0,85	0,86	1,03	0,29	0,87	1,03	0,87
AN of private companies involved	0,23	0,19	0,30	0,26	0,2	0,18	0,39	0,19	0,10	0,26	0,13	0,5



# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

2023 was a solid year, inscribed comfortably, within the framework of the allocated budget. The expenditure allotments have remained constant, with almost 83% of the funds going towards scientific activities.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

### Income

Swiss Confederation Subsidy	1'268'339.00
Canton of Geneva Subsidy	1'157'842.00
Dissolution of Reminders (Project Funds)	110'613.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2'536'794.00</b>

### Expenses

Scientific Activities	2'089'070.00
Operational Costs (Administration and Salaries)	437'040.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>2'526'110.00</b>

### Net Income

**10'684.00**

## EXPENDITURE

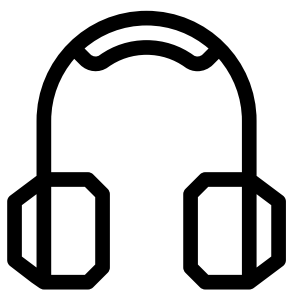
<b>Scientific Activities</b>	<b>2'089'070.00</b>	<b>82.7%</b>
Call for Projects	1'968'600.00	77.90%
Other science-related Activities	60'754.00	2.40%
Scientific Committee	59'716.00	2.40%
<b>Operational Costs</b>	<b>437'040.00</b>	<b>17.30%</b>
Salaries	392'855.00	15.60%
Administration	44'185.00	1.70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2'526'110.00</b>	<b>100%</b>



# ACCEPTED PROJECTS



## **Advancing International Cooperation on Neuro-technology to Enhance Human Rights Protection, Manage Societal Externalities and Mitigate the Risk of Conflict**



Law, Computer Science, Political Science

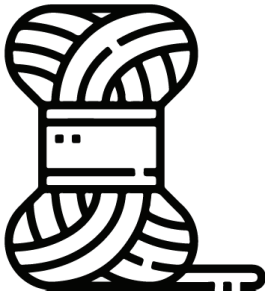
Erica Harper, Alexandre Pouget  
Graduate Institute, Unige

The field of neurotechnology, once limited to tightly regulated medical research in developed countries, has undergone significant changes. Advancements in brain mapping tools and machine learning have fostered applications beyond medicine, reaching the entertainment and lifestyle sectors. This shift has been accompanied by the involvement of private corporations, raising concerns about its potential misuse and the need for appropriate legal regulations.

To address such challenges, this project has gathered experts from the ethics, technology, human rights, conflict resolution, and social economics fields. Their multi-disciplinary approach combines content and legal analysis, exploratory and participatory research, as well as issue – mapping, to tackle the knowledge barriers between different sectors, to explain the limited regulatory responses to neurotechnology applications, and the insufficient understanding of its societal and human-rights implications.

The project's ultimate objective is to provide actionable information through the development of soft law guidelines, targeted at policymakers engaged in multilateral rights processes, as well as recommendations for the corporate sector and tech community. In doing so, the project seeks to establish a legal and policy framework for neurotechnology that is protective of human rights worldwide.

## Indigenous Agroecological Territories (INDAGAR) A Potential for Up-Scaling Sustainable and Just Food System Transformation



Environmental Science, System Science, Public Health

Sébastien Pierre Boillat, Cristine Jurt  
Bern University of Applied Sciences

In a world still experiencing rapid population growth and the consequent pressure to increase food production, there exists a promising solution known as "agroecology" which holds the potential to cultivate fair, sustainable, and resilient food systems. Agroecology emphasizes emissions reduction, resource recycling, and bolstering local supply chains. Its practices bear resemblance to the agricultural traditions of indigenous communities, steeped in centuries of traditional wisdom.

To amplify the impact of agroecology, the concept of "agro-ecological territories" has emerged. These territories strive to blend indigenous knowledge, safeguard indigenous food systems, preserve biodiversity, and fortify resilience against climate change. However, this classification of territories has evolved independently from indigenous territories themselves, lacking a clear linkage to them.

This research endeavor aims to explore the interactions between agroecological and indigenous territories, shedding light on their potential for collaboration as well as possible conflicts. The study encompasses a global analysis of indigenous agroecology initiatives, a network examination of agroecology and related policies in Bolivia, and a collaborative knowledge-sharing process involving indigenous communities from the region.

## The Empty Office: An International Study of Teleworking



Psychology, Public Health, Sociology of work

Mattia Vacchiano, Eric Widmer  
University of Geneva

Digitization and teleworking were subjects of study long before the onset of Covid, but the Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped research on this matter. On one hand, previous studies indicated that remote work could alleviate conflicts, offer greater flexibility, and foster a better work-life balance. Conversely, the years of the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored some negative aspects of widespread teleworking, including diminished social support, heightened feelings of isolation, and increased levels of surveillance of vulnerable employees.

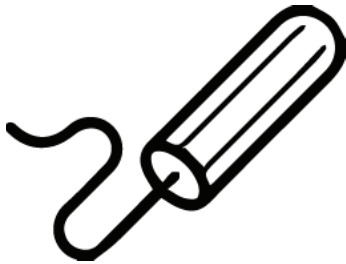
Hence, teleworking presents both favorable and unfavorable aspects, stemming from its impact on our social interactions. However, existing research leaves a gap in our understanding of this transformative phenomenon.

This project aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between teleworking and well-being, utilizing a longitudinal mixed-methods approach. An interdisciplinary team will gather both quantitative and qualitative data in Switzerland, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands. The research will encompass economics, sociology, family studies, and health psychology, delving into how biological, social, and psychological factors intersect to influence health.

By examining the impact of teleworking on social support, conflicts, interruptions, and control mechanisms, this project will significantly advance our understanding of how teleworking shapes individuals' lives. Its findings will aid policymakers and companies in devising regulations that balance workers' well-being with economic efficiency.



## The Impact of Menstrual Health Management on the Vaginal Microbiome



Public Health, Political Science

Sonja Merten, Adriane Martin Hilber  
Swiss TPH Basel

For centuries, menstruation has been shrouded in taboo, subjected to stigmatizing rituals, or has simply been ignored. Thanks to systematic efforts and awareness raising during the past three decades, menstrual health (MH) is now recognized as a public health and human rights concern, essential for women's equitable participation in society. Safety concerns surrounding menstrual hygiene products have garnered global attention from consumer groups and women's health activists. Significant initiatives now address menstrual health and related products, particularly in low-income countries.

This project seeks to increase the knowledge on this issue by establishing a comprehensive evidence base on the health effects of various menstrual products on the vaginal microbiome (VM), with a specific focus on low-income settings.

To achieve its goals, the research team will examine women's practices and preferences regarding menstrual hygiene products in Peru and Cameroon, while conducting a systematic global review to provide context. Additionally, the project will address gaps in evidence by studying how menstrual products impact the VM through ongoing multi-country citizen-science cohorts of women participating in vaginal microbiome screening.

Collaborating with menstrual health leaders, such as counsellors, doctors and community representatives, the project will raise awareness among concerned stakeholders about the need for improved scientific research, evidence, and regulatory guidance on menstrual products to ensure the safety of women wherever these products are used.

## Mapping the Transnational Circulation and Control of Small Arms in Latin America



Political Science, Political Economy, Anthropology

Keith Krause, Nicholas Florquin  
Graduate Institute

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) play a central role in the political and criminal violence patterns observed in Latin America and beyond. Among the various types of SALW used in the region, military-style automatic rifles are particularly prevalent and serve as a compelling case study for examining the emergence of violent dynamics and identifying effective entry points for policy responses and international cooperation initiatives.

Since there are still significant gaps in understanding SALW transnational circulation, and crucial analytical gaps regarding the social, cultural, and economic dynamics associated with their proliferation in Latin America, this project will generate a comprehensive, two-layered cartography of the circulation and control of military-style rifles in this area.

The first layer will gather quantitative data on rifle flows over the past decade, along with qualitative data on sociocultural and gendered perspectives that shape gun cultures and their political economy. The second layer will investigate the adoption and implementation of international, regional, and national norms on SALW in Latin America, evaluating their policy impacts.

Through a mixed-methods interdisciplinary research approach involving European and Latin American universities, NGOs, and international organizations, this project will inform evidence-based policy interventions aimed at curbing the circulation of military-style rifles and promoting regional security in Latin America.

## Dialogue after Peace? A Gender Perspective on Track Two Dialogues in Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines



Political Science, Gender Studies

Dana Landau, Metka Herzog  
Swiss Peace Basel

Peace agreements initiate a lengthy and often overlooked series of processes aimed at translating the formal terms of signed documents into tangible reality. These processes, known as Track Two dialogues, involve a diverse array of social, political, and economic actors whose interactions strive to transform conflict-ridden relations into enduring peace.

Women's groups and associations frequently play an active role in these dialogues, offering insights into an alternative conception of peace as a relational and gendered force emerging 'from below'.

This project extends the boundaries of prior research by delving into the precise mechanisms through which women-led Track Two dialogues contribute to upholding and reimagining peace in post-settlement contexts in Colombia, Kosovo, and the Philippines.

Through in-depth case studies of women-led dialogue initiatives in these settings, conducted through collaborative research employing methodologies borrowed from peace and conflict studies, gender studies, sociology, and anthropology, the aim is to co-create knowledge with dialogue practitioners. The ultimate goal is to generate policy-relevant outcomes that can guide the support of national and international actors towards dialogues worldwide.

## **CliMacro: Alternative Macro-Financial Frameworks for Climate-Just and Post-Growth Futures**



Economics, Environmental Science

Julia Steinberger, Cédric Durand  
University of Lausanne, Unige

In recent years there has been a growing acknowledgment of the imperative to address socio-economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and climate change collectively and comprehensively. Treaties such as the Paris Agreement have underscored the significance of adopting interdisciplinary approaches to confront these pressing challenges. It is evident that relying solely on technological solutions and policy adjustments will fall short; what we require is a thorough overhaul of our global socio-economic system.

A crucial aspect of this transformation involves reevaluating how countries invest and spend on a global scale, as these patterns play a significant role in perpetuating existing imbalances. This research project takes a fresh approach to the problem. Instead of focusing on endless economic growth, it aims to identify regulatory frameworks for goods, labor, and financial markets that operate within the confines of planetary boundaries and uphold principles of social equity.

To achieve the project goal a team of international experts will forge collaborations with international organizations, and will work to ensure that they align with global policies and civil society efforts. This analysis will draw upon various theoretical perspectives spanning macro-finance, ecological economics, political economy, and sustainability studies.

## **CONECTA: Building Local Capacity for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation across South/North Divides**

Environmental Science, Political Science

Manuel Fischer, Sarah - Lan Mathez Stiefel  
Eawag, University of Basel

Countries worldwide must adopt and implement climate mitigation and adaptation measures. However, not all are equally capable of doing so, especially developing ones.

This project is novel in that it focuses on analyzing strategies employed by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and other international funding agencies to enhance local capacity in the Andean region, with a view to produce knowledge that is actionable and valid in other cases, too.

The project will use quantitative methods to analyze the GEF-funded projects in Latin America, to understand the characteristics of local capacity strategies and develop a typology thereof. Secondly, a survey will be deployed with project stakeholders to identify factors that impact these capacity building strategies. Thirdly, the team will use qualitative analysis on a small sample of projects to uncover the mechanisms underlying the identified factors. Finally, the research will engage with development practitioners to discuss findings, identify gaps, and explore opportunities for enhancing capacity building strategies.

The research results will provide a better understanding of how international funding can effectively strengthen local capacities and inform the design of successful climate projects.







# PROJECT RESULTS



# WHAT INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATORS PROMISE AND DOMESTIC POLICYMAKERS ADOPT: POLICY AND POLITICS IN THE MULTI-LEVEL CLIMATE CHANGE REGIME

Marlene Kammerer | University of Bern

This project delved into global policy efforts aimed at addressing climate change, with a specific focus on examining the extent to which countries adhered to the commitments outlined in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the probable impact of these efforts on the objectives set forth by the Paris Agreement.

The team used two innovative indices to develop a thorough understanding of climate policies. The Target Index examined the alignment and scope of greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets within the NDCs and national policies of 82 countries. The Policy Effort Index evaluated the credibility of climate targets set by 36 countries.

Using these indices, the team focused on national decision-making processes, identifying factors such as democracy, fossil fuel dependency, and international dynamics (polycentricity and development status) as shaping countries' capacity to harmonize their NDCs and national mitigation policies.

Concretely, the Target Index shows that over a quarter of the countries covered, accounting for 45% of global emissions, have targets in their national policies that are either in line with, or are more ambitious than the NDC target. At the same time, the Policy Effort Index shows the countries accounting for 70% of global emissions, fall short of their GHG reduction targets if one considers the policy instruments employed. Sweden is in the lead when it comes to target ambition AND corresponding policy effort, with Denmark and Vietnam following closely.

The United States scores equally low on both indices, as does the United Kingdom.

Simultaneously, preliminary results from six policy elite surveys emphasized the importance of individuals and groups working with both governments and international organizations in bridging the gap between countries' NDCs and national mitigation policies.

Collaboration with computer scientists gave rise to two additional datasets, offering insights into countries' participation in international climate negotiations. Notably, the analysis differentiated between developing and developed nations, which helped with understanding the engagement of small states in negotiations, offering valuable insights into effective participation despite resource limitations.

These insights revealed that small states can enlist the support of NGOs, think tanks, or other experts to enhance their influence and gain access to pertinent scientific, legal, or diplomatic expertise. Secondly, they can dispatch more experienced delegates who possess a deeper familiarity with the subject matter and the negotiation process, enabling them to actively engage and assert their viewpoints. Thirdly, and in connection with experience, states can also prioritize delegation coherence by consistently sending the same team over time. This approach allows delegation members to specialize in various thematic sessions and effectively monitor them in parallel.







# GENDER, RETURN MIGRATION AND REINTEGRATION IN THE GAMBIA, GUINEA AND SENEGAL

Eveline Odermatt | University of Fribourg

Return and reintegration policies are integral to the European Union's strategies for managing migration. However, in the countries of origin of migrants, these initiatives are predominantly facilitated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and EU representative offices, rather than comprehensive government policies.

To understand successful return and reintegration processes, this research project delved into the influence of gender on the experiences of migrants returning to West African countries and their interactions with institutional support.

Employing a dual approach comprising qualitative interviews and focus groups, the study unveiled that returning to West African countries is often perceived as a setback, resulting in numerous challenges for returnees. In many instances, an individual's migration endeavor is bolstered by an entire social network encompassing parents, friends, and acquaintances. Consequently, when the anticipated outcome of establishing a life abroad is not achieved, communities often harbor sentiments of disappointment and resentment. These emotions may manifest in various forms of rejection and ostracization of the returnees

Gender-based stigma impacts both men and women differently, as women are often judged for returning alone while men face scrutiny for not bringing back economic resources. Women, in particular, endure prolonged suspicion, and adhering to traditional gender roles or marriage is frequently viewed as the sole avenue for improving their circumstances. Families and communities play pivotal roles in facilitating the reintegration process through negotiated returns.

The research underscores the significance of providing psychosocial support to returnees and highlights the fragile nature of reintegration for individuals of all genders. It also underscores the intricacies of the institutional support landscape, heavily influenced by external donors but lacking gender-sensitive approaches.

One of the project's key recommendations is to conduct more targeted, policy-oriented research focusing on gender-sensitive support for return migration in both the countries of departure and arrival. This approach would enhance the effectiveness of support systems and ensure a more inclusive approach to reintegration.



# **EFFECTS OF AN EXERCISE AND SPORT INTERVENTION AMONG REFUGEES LIVING IN A GREEK REFUGEE CAMP ON MENTAL HEALTH, PHYSICAL FITNESS AND CARDIOVASCULAR RISK MARKERS: A RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL**

Markus Gerber | University of Basel

Forced displacement reached a record high in 2021, affecting 94.7 million people globally. There has been a noticeable surge in forced migration to Europe, particularly through Greece. Individuals compelled to flee their homes encounter numerous challenges, including legal hurdles, financial strain, discrimination, limited access to healthcare, and food insecurity. These adversities hinder their recovery from the traumas endured before leaving their home countries, placing them at a heightened risk of developing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

To tackle these issues, this project assessed the mental and physical health of individuals residing in the Koutsochero refugee camp. The project introduced a sport and exercise program and evaluated its feasibility and effectiveness in alleviating PTSD symptoms. The study adopted a longitudinal approach, assessing participants at various intervals, including before, immediately after, and 20 weeks following the 10-week intervention.

The exercise and sport program, conducted five times a week for three months, resulted in quantifiably demonstrable enhancements in participants' cardiorespiratory fitness. Qualitative feedback also indicated positive impacts on their social connections and overall well-being, rendering them more resilient.

The program implementation encountered several challenges, including limited access to sports equipment, inadequate infrastructure, and the intricate social dynamics within the camp. Throughout the project, it became evident that a sports-based intervention alone couldn't fully address the refugees' needs. There's a necessity for broader involvement of the host community and state to tackle the refugees' challenges comprehensively. This involves allowing refugees to establish and sustain livelihoods both inside and outside the camp boundaries, along with creating spaces for interaction with local communities to prevent the development of animosity and prejudices.

The project suggests that future studies should concentrate on children, explore various camp settings, and engage smaller groups of motivated participants. Moreover, involving local stakeholders in program implementation could ensure more significant impacts.





# COALSTAKE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COAL POLICY

Aya Kachi | University of Basel

Despite global discussions advocating for a shift away from coal, the use of coal for electricity generation reached unprecedented levels in 2021. This surge can largely be attributed to the continued engagement of institutional and private entities that support the status quo.

The COALSTAKE project examined coal policies in Australia, Germany, and Japan, analyzing how different actors seek to either maintain or disrupt the coal industry. The study utilized interviews, surveys, document and media analysis, and compared employment and industry emissions across these countries. It also developed a unique framework to scrutinize the actions of "status-quo" actors who endorse the coal industry and "challengers" who oppose it.

It appears that "status-quo" actors leverage internal connections with trade unions, government officials, and the coal industry, while also participating in external activities such as forming alliances, conducting studies, media campaigns, demonstrations, conferences, and legal proceedings. "Challengers" struggle to match the influence of their adversaries but commission scientific studies, disseminate findings through traditional and social media, and organize protests. In Japan, where environmental concerns are less prominent, "challengers" concentrate on engaging investors and financial institutions. "Status-quo" actors consistently highlight the potential economic and job losses associated with phasing out coal, which has proven to be a persuasive argument.

The project's primary message is that transitioning away from coal necessitates addressing the concerns of stakeholders within the industry. Initiatives such as the German Coal Commission provide valuable insights for incorporating the needs of coal regions, particularly concerning job security. This commission, comprising a diverse array of stakeholders from industry, academia, civil society, labor unions, and policymaking, published a report in January 2019, recommending a phase-out of coal in Germany by 2038. Its comprehensive 278-page report proposed a wide range of measures to manage the structural transformation in affected regions and industry sectors.

The recommendations of the coal commission were not immediately translated into national law, but served as the foundation for the subsequent legislative process. This process concluded in July 2020, when both chambers of parliament passed several laws to codify the coal phase-out. While the adopted phase-out diverged somewhat from the commission's recommendations, it aligned with the commission's decision to set the end date for coal combustion in Germany to 2038.

The research contributes to a better understanding of sustainability transitions and underscores the importance of considering actor-oriented perspectives. Policymakers and practitioners can leverage these insights to expedite sustainability transitions across various sectors.





# URBAN SANITATION TECHNOLOGIES AS INTERNATIONAL POWER STRUCTURES (U-STASIS)

Olivier Crevoisier | University of Neuchâtel

Rapid urbanization presents challenges for public authorities worldwide as they strive to meet the needs of expanding populations.

The U-STASIS project centered on understanding the correlation between basic service arrangements and urban equality in the Global South, focusing specifically on sanitation. Employing a novel approach, the project investigated the impact of power dynamics, political and social factors, and ecological considerations on urban social inequalities. It also introduced a typology termed the «sanitation bargain,» which categorized various models of service provision (household, utility, cityworks, enterprise) and illuminated how choices in provision were influenced by factors such as private or public leadership and financing dynamics, thereby influencing social equality.

A key finding was the significant influence of major development banks on the sanitation sector. Since the 1960s, these banks have shaped technology and institutional practices, using their investments as testing grounds for introducing new financial and institutional arrangements that prioritize the financial utility of sanitation systems, sometimes at the expense of public health outcomes.

An example of this is Dhaka's adoption of the Citywide Inclusive Sanitation system, which did not result in equal access to safe sanitation but instead sparked intense negotiations over responsibilities and regulation of non-sewered sanitation. As spatial and institutional responsibilities were redrawn, policy development shifted the burden of financing a sanitation economy and organizing the sanitation service chain from the utility to the municipal government. Consequently, wastewater sweepers and low-income residents bore the brunt of the operation's risks.

The research underscores the importance of inclusive negotiation forums in shaping sanitation agreements. These forums ensure that equity and fair public health outcomes are prioritized in decision-making processes. Additionally, the study highlights the necessity of moving away from misleading terms such as "stakeholders" and "good governance", which can obscure conflicting interests and falsely assume that all actors have equal power.

By challenging these assumptions, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of ongoing urbanization processes and their impact on inequality.







# POLITICAL PRIORITISATION OF THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS: A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Nicola Low | University of Bern

Every day, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one million people aged 15 to 49 are infected by four common curable sexually transmitted infections (STIs): gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis, and trichomoniasis. Left untreated, these STIs can lead to various health problems, particularly for women and newborns. Despite their curability, these infections often do not receive the attention they require on policy agendas, frequently taking a backseat to concerns such as HIV.

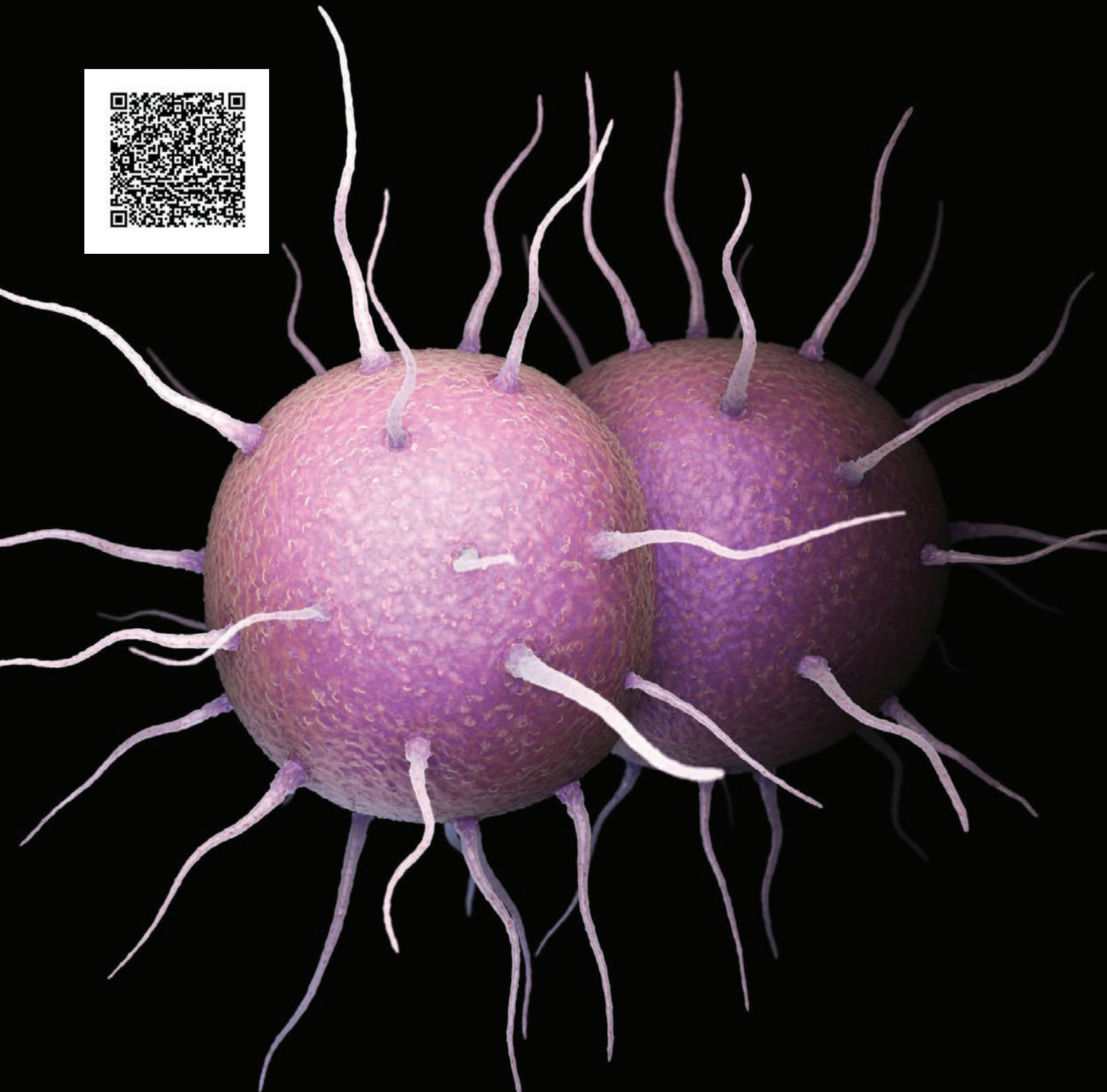
The main aim of this project was to uncover the reasons behind this phenomenon. To achieve this, the team conducted both a global literature review and specific case studies in Zambia and Papua New Guinea. What emerged was that stigma, blame, and traditional beliefs make it difficult to openly discuss STIs in communities. While people are aware of and concerned about STIs, they highlight a lack of up-to-date training and resources, indicating that STIs are not a priority at local and national levels.

Hence, the stigmatization and blame associated with curable STIs at the community level are likely reasons for the low levels of advocacy or civil society mobilization in support of STI treatment. Consequently, even if improvements in data accuracy indicate a high burden of curable STIs, more action is needed in the policy and political spheres.

The project suggests that several combined measures are necessary to formulate effective policies. Funding is needed for research on solutions such as tests and vaccines, and support from businesses in wealthy countries who recognize the profit potential is crucial for success.

On the political front, there is a global goal to ensure everyone can access healthcare, which could also cover STI care. However, consensus must be reached on how to prioritize treating curable STIs compared to other diseases that affect more people and have effective treatments. Currently, there is limited public campaigning for STI control due to stigma, making it challenging to push for political attention. To change this, the STI experts community needs to approach the issue more strategically, forming partnerships with other health groups and supporting leaders who can bring ideas and evidence together. Making the case for the urgency of treating curable STIs, agreeing on how to emphasize the need for measures, and boosting public campaigns for STI control are essential steps to elevate the priority of treating curable STIs on political agendas.

Looking ahead, strengthening civil society advocacy, tackling stigma, and framing the conversation strategically within the STI community are crucial for garnering more attention to this issue.



# AWARDS

## IG AWARD 2023

### **Clean Energy Access: Gender Disparity, Health and Labour Supply**

Imelda, AP Verma

This article highlights a successful development program in Indonesia that focused on providing subsidies for adopting clean cooking fuel – gas – instead of kerosene. Its results show that when women gain access to clean energy, notable improvements in their health occurs, leading to increased labour productivity. Concurrently, men also experience an increase in work hours, especially in households where women benefited the most.

The article suggests that improved indoor air quality plays a crucial role in achieving positive work outcomes and showcases Indonesia's effective fuel conversion initiative as a model for achieving widespread use of clean energy by 2030 in South East Asia.

### **DeepBreath—automated detection of respiratory pathology**

Alain Gervais et al.

This medical research article describes and analyzes the design of an innovative deep learning framework that effectively identifies audio signatures indicative of respiratory issues in children (pneumonia, bronchiolitis, and wheezing disorders), and works as a model for further implementation of AI-enhanced medical devices in scarce resource contexts where medical knowledge is needed most and not always available.

DeepBreath enables medical experts to identify specific sounds without the need for labor-intensive labeling of audio segments. This method relies solely on clip-level annotations, offering a more objective approach. Moreover, it could standardize the acoustic features of respiratory diseases into visually interpretable patterns, potentially benefiting medical training.

### **Methods Regimes in Global Governance**

Annabelle Littoz Monnet, Juanita Uribe

This article reveals that the dominance of GRADE, a standardized system used to assess and grade the quality of evidence in global health, has empowered a new group of methodologies perceived as more objective and adaptable across various domains, while marginalizing certain types of evidence, such as observational studies or case reports, because, allegedly, they do not align with GRADE's specific methodological criteria of scientific rigor.

COVID-19 related studies performed with respect to corticoid treatments showed the potential effects of favoring one method over others. While many such studies concluded to the lack of corticoid effectiveness in viral infections and observed an increase in side effects reported, in an interim guidance document, the WHO solely relied on available GRADE studies, which concluded that corticosteroids may reduce mortality in moderate to severe acute respiratory distress syndrome. Subsequent studies have indicated how tenuous, and in some cases, inconclusive, these results were, thereby cautioning against preferring some research methods above others in global governance institutions.

## SNIS AWARD 2023

### The Return of International Politics – Cooperation and Conflict in U.S-China Trade Relations

Tanja Schweinberger

This thesis delves into the intricate dynamics of trade tensions between the United States and China, and the wider implications they have for bilateral cooperation and the global order.

The research highlights how power shifts between the US and China play a crucial role in shaping their trade relation. As China's economy continues to grow, expectations regarding the benefits and losses of the trade relationship evolve accordingly. Trade imbalances become politicized and impact the willingness to engage in cooperative trade. For instance, deficits are increasingly perceived as weaknesses, especially by the American public. This emphasizes the importance of fostering mutual understanding to avoid hostility between the two nations. Interestingly, the research reveals that China's population seems to view bilateral cooperation more favorably than the US counterpart.

Additionally, the study highlights how reliability plays a part in fostering bilateral cooperation. When either party acts in an unreliable manner or violates agreed-upon trade rules, whether real or perceived, it contributes to eroding trust. This erosion of trust can lead to confrontational attitudes that further hinder cooperation.

By highlighting the significance of a rules-based trading system, the research provides context and support to the promises of renewed bilateral cooperation and global stability.

### Bordering Responsibility: The Unaccountable Politics of Migration Control in the Central Mediterranean

Kiri Olivia Santer

This thesis delves into a troubling practice observed in EU countries, where migration and border control responsibilities are effectively outsourced to non-EU nations lacking the same formal human rights and accountability standards. The focus of inquiry lies in the Central Mediterranean region, where a scheme known as 'cooperative interdiction' is active. Under this arrangement, migrants attempting to cross the sea are intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard and sent back to Libya, the very country they sought to leave.

To illuminate this issue, the author of the thesis draws upon various sources, including firsthand experience volunteering on an NGO rescue ship. Additionally, insights are gleaned from an Italian NGO dedicated to aiding refugees by identifying the institutions and actors accountable for their migration challenges, as well as from legal bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and European bureaucratic institutions like FRONTEX. By analyzing how 'cooperative interdiction' policies are implemented across different jurisdictions and clearly defined territories, and the subsequent legal ramifications (such as determining jurisdiction to address abuses), the research unveils the intricate and sometimes ambiguous structures surrounding migration control.

One primary argument presented in the thesis is that the complex legal frameworks and multi-tiered policies associated with outsourcing border control contribute to a lack of accountability for the treatment endured by migrants.

# EVENTS

## SNIS 2023 Biennial conference

The SNIS 2023 Biennial Conference was held on June 13th and 14th, 2023. It was organized by an energetic team led by Prof. James Davis and coordinated by Ms. Manali Kumar from the University of St Gallen, with technical and communication support from the SNIS team.

Aligned with SNIS' mission of bridging International Organizations with the knowledge, expertise, and know-how of Swiss academia and beyond, the conference centered on the role of international organizations in times of crises, delving into various dimensions across panels: governance & policy, norms & normativity, security & technology, and methods & methodology.

Among the highlights for the SNIS team were the recording of a podcast episode focusing on best practices for applicants to the SNIS funding scheme. Dr. Bernhard Fuhrer moderated the episode and interviewed Dr. Moira Faul, Prof. JP Villeneuve, and Dr. Paula Castro. Additionally, the keynote lecture in the evening by Nathalie Tocci, director of the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome, was particularly notable. Tocci's lecture provided insightful details on the EU's intellectual and material efforts, as well as its limitations, in redefining its geopolitical strategy following the conflict in Ukraine.

Both sessions underscored the significance of forging relationships and networks to ensure the rigorous implementation and follow-through of IO actions and initiatives.

In the spirit of effective and interactive science communication, the SNIS facilitated the attendance of a live illustrator, Raphael Gschwind, who documented the panels and speeches with a very astute pen (see p. 44) His day fresco was presented to all conference participants in the evening.

## SNIS Project Launch Workshop 2023

As every year in October, the SNIS held its Launch Workshop for the 2023 projects. Covering disciplines ranging from neurotechnology to agroecology, these funded projects confirmed a growing trend of choosing participatory research methodologies. As in previous years, the 2023 SNIS projects investigate underexplored fields, such as the link between brain mapping and respect for human rights, or how commercial menstrual hygiene products affect women's health.

Researchers presented their projects in the Pechakucha format comprised of a brief delivery and description of the projects' essential points and milestones through a collection of related images. This type of presentation stimulated a vivid exchange between researchers, who uncovered common areas of concern, such as human rights, relevant for both neurotechnology and menstrual health, or the issue of land exploitation, be it for agroecology or peace agreements. Video capsules of the projects, filmed throughout the day, can be watched on the SNIS dedicated YouTube channel.

### Science Comm 2023

This year's Science Comm conference took place in Bern, at the PROGR venue, celebrating 25 years of Science et Cité's activities and the building of a vibrant Swiss-wide science communication community.

The keynote speeches focused on questions surrounding the role of researchers in science communication in times of climate emergency and need for social justice.

Dr. Niels Mede, science communication researcher at Uni Zurich, held the first keynote speech, and provided a tour of the Swiss science communication landscape showing how scientific communication has transcended its traditional role of simply conveying scientific knowledge to the public. He explained that in Switzerland, science communication fosters a dynamic interchange between science and the public, enriching social and political initiatives. This transformative shift has not only enhanced the accessibility and inclusivity of scientific communication, but has also infused it with an activist spirit, legitimizing its democratic significance.

Dr. Mede concluded with the question on how can one uphold scientific research and an activist's stance, thereby opening the floor to the next day's keynote speakers, Professors Julia Steinberger of UNIL and Sonia Senevirante of University of Zurich, who brought very rich answers to this question.

Both professors provided candid accounts of their experience as researchers-activists, underlining the fact that their attempts to change the system has brought in-depth knowledge of its workings, which in turn has pushed them to take more activist stances, be it through participation in manifestations, court testimonies in defense of activists, or letter signing and interviews on behalf of a particular cause. Amongst the many insights of the discussion following the keynote speeches, the idea that connections between research and activism are blurry, resonated strongly as echo to the question: "who is an activist"? Prof. Steinberger underlined that the "activist?" as well as "the voice of reason" labels are often attributed by groups of interest and powers that be, in the service of upholding status-quo and undermine calls for change.







# SNIS PODCAST

In 2023, the SNIS expanded its media offerings by introducing a podcast series called "Wicked Problems. Interdisciplinary Approaches". It is primarily targeted at a policy-oriented audience and adopts a roundtable format, featuring researchers from current and past SNIS funded projects. Each episode digs deep into one of the eight large policy domains into which most SNIS projects fall: climate change, biodiversity, complex governance, migration, public health, sustainable economy, conflict and security.

Through its editorial structure, the podcast provides insights emerging from the exploration of specific themes from a 'long haul' perspective, and from the researchers' personal analyses. The podcast's timeliness is confirmed by the fact that most of its episodes contain anticipatory examples and analysis of current affairs, as instalments on carbon market negotiations or those on refugee issues have proven.

Other valuable contributions come from the "I wish..." section of each episode, which effectively provides an opportunity to outline ways of addressing current challenges, showing that there is new material for imagining different futures. Overall, the podcast series serves as a valuable resource for anyone interested in current international challenges. It helps listeners understand how scientific knowledge evolves over time, leading to transformative changes for individual researchers and their communities of practice. Most importantly, it helps researchers experience 'up and close', how the knowledge they produce can influence policies in their respective fields.

The podcast complements the SNIS video repository, which is constantly updated with new projects, result-oriented accounts, and testimonies from special events. Together, these media offerings expand the range of insights that can be gained from closely following the SNIS research and practice community.





## FROM SNIS STIPENDIARY TO PODCASTING QUEEN

Krittika Uniyal

In September 2020, I joined SNIS as that year's IO research stipendiary. I would define the next three months as exciting with a hint of the pandemic. If you know SNIS, you will know that it is a mini-museum of techno stuff and, oh, those damn wires! It is not easy to match Bernhard's enthusiasm and his love for experimenting with technology. Every day there is something new, and your opinions are consulted. While you are looking to hide your face, realise that the only technical skill you have is to successfully restart your laptop when it hangs. So, how does a techno dummie contribute in an office like this? Simple, you become a guinea pig for science communication experimentation. One day you are an object to check the lens focus, another day a microphone tester, and on good days, maybe a background extra.

Seeing my plight, my colleagues quickly took me under their wings and thus began my covert training session. Valentin was the audio expert, Ruxandra guided me through podcast production, Damien was a patent reviewer and Bernhard oversaw the whole process. One thing that stuck with me was that you don't need to be a software wizard to make a good podcast as it's all about good ideas and sparking conversations. By the end of my time there, one of my tasks was to present my research, for which I decided to make a stop-motion video. The SNIS had already done its magic.

In 2022, in a desperate attempt to end the pandemic-induced depression, I convinced my supervisor to join me in doing something creative. We transformed his office into a DIY recording studio, with just one spare microphone and his poncho as our noise-cancellation device and thus began our podcast series: 'The Academic Journey of a Doctoral Researcher'.

The episodes covered different aspects of academic research, from defining research questions to fieldwork and, ultimately, writing and publishing findings. Being aware of my highly skilled technical expertise, I knew recording the first episode would be no joke. So, I consciously chose to start with my colleagues who are my closest friends. We decided to talk about our fieldwork experience, a topic that was fun and engaging. I thought it would be the easiest as there's no embarrassment in making a fool of yourself in front of your friends, right? Oh, little did I know that it would be an epic failure. It took us over 27 minutes to stifle our giggles and get to some serious recording. Editing this episode was a nightmare.

With each episode, my confidence and skills got better. I realized that having a clear outline, a list of questions, well-drafted introductions, and conclusions helped. I found editing to be the most challenging, although the consent forms did grant me freedom, I somehow felt uncomfortable wielding power over someone's voice. I quickly killed this ethical conscience, considering I was fed up and bored. As the final step, I reached out to Stanley Gurvich to use his music, which gave a nice professional touch to the podcasts.

Within a couple of months of its publication, an astonishing nine thousand people had heard it. Although I wince every time I listen to them, I feel happy with the final product. If I can do it, anyone can!

**Krittika is a PhD researcher at the Institute of Environmental Governance and Territorial Development, at the University of Geneva. Presently she is a visiting fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Germany.**



# STRUCTURE

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European Organisation for  
Nuclear Research (CERN)

**Catalin Marinescu**

ITU, Strategy & Planning division  
Nuclear Research (CERN)

**Antonia Mihaylova**

ICMM

## SECRETARIAT

In 2023, the core team running the Secretariat stayed the same:

**Bernhard Fuhrer**, Director (80%)

**Damien Marti**, Project Manager (80%)

**Ruxandra Stoicescu**, Communication (80%)

This core team was supported by Kerstin Ullmann, who filled the intern position starting in September 2022.



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