OCCR Flash – News from the Oeschger Centre

The *Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research* puts a focus on interdisciplinary research beyond natural sciences. The two researcher who last joined the OCCR are Philippe Thalmann, an economist and Karin Ingold, a political scientist.

Successful Symposium on Documentary Data

The symposium *The Relevance of Historical Documentary Data for the Debate about Climate and Natural Hazards* on 3 May 2012 at the University of Bern caused much interest with researchers and practitioners involved in the management of natural risks. More than 70 persons attended the lectures and workshops organized by the OCCR and the Swiss GCOS (Global Climate Observing System) office. The event provided the platform for the public launch of Euro-Clim-Hist (www.euroclimhist.ch), an online database developed at the OCCR by Christian Pfister and colleagues. This unique tool allows the interested public to access 120'000 entries on past climate and extreme events since 1550 which were gathered from historical documents.

Using this painting of a flood in Basel in 1852 climate historians were able to reconstruct the magnitude of floods in preinstrumental times.

For the presentations given at the symposium see: www.oeschger.unibe.ch/events/conferences/euroclimhist/presentations_de.html

New researchers join the OCCR

Philippe Thalmann is the OCCR's first Adjunct Researcher. He is a professor of economy and works at the Economics and Environmental Management Laboratory of ETH Lausanne. His research focuses on economics and costs of climate change, economic instruments and its acceptance as well as mitigation and adaptation. Karin Ingold heads the OCCR's group for Environmental Policy Analysis. She is a political scientist and works as an assistant professor at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Bern. She is interested in the analysis and design of policy processes and instruments.

OCCR publications provide important new insight

The transition from a glacial to an interglacial state is governed by a complex system of feedbacks such as the change in the atmospheric CO_2. OCCR researchers Jochen Schmitt et al., in a Science publication, provide important new carbon isotopic data that help to explain these changes. The primary challenge the researchers of the division for Climate and Enviromental Physics at the University of Bern had to overcome were technical. Samples from ice cores are small, making it difficult to make precise measurements. Jochen Schmitt and colleagues refined the existing technique of sublimating ice and coupled it with a sensitive mass spectrometer to measure isotope ratios. They have thus created what a comment in Science calls the «best record to date of the glacial to interglacial variations in stable carbon isotopes of CO_2».

Climate change could profoundly influence the hydrosphere of mountain ecosystems. OCCR researcher Ole Rössler, in a recent publication, analyses the potential drought stress in a Swiss mountain catchment. The forecasting of high mountain soil moisture reveals a drastic decrease, despite major uncertainties. The study by Ole Rössler of the Institute of Geography at the University of Bern, which was published in the renowned journal Water Resources Research analyses the impact of the climate on soil moisture in a high mountain catchment in order to facilitate the development of mitigation and adaptation strategies.

For an overview of OCCR activities and events see www.oeschger.unibe.ch

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