

2020

Zoï Environment Network
Annual Report 2020

editorial

Knowledge enables action

If you want to keep track of the jungle of international laws and conventions on environmental protection, Zoï Environment Network is the right place to start. The non-profit organization is a hub of environmental knowledge. Zoï employees analyse environmental data, and communicate the findings and implications to political leaders and the general public in easily understood language and in the context of whatever other relevant circumstances may be in play.

It is quite possible that Greta Thunberg has studied Zoï's publications to understand climate change, its causes and global impact. Political leaders, officials and financial actors have certainly done so for a long time because they trust Zoï to transform complex environmental analyses into accessible knowledge. While the content of Zoï publications is serious, the 17 collaborators communicate their findings in attractive illustrated publications that are energetic and hopeful, worried and caring at the same time – Zoï and Thunberg are similar in this respect as well. The big difference is that almost everyone knows the young Swede – whereas practically no one knows Zoï Environment Network. This is due to the fact that Zoï may work for the big players – the UN, the World Bank, the Swiss and other governments, and in a very transparent way – but it always remains in the background.

The founders of Zoï, Otto Simonett, Nikolai Denisov and Claudia Heberlein, met in Norway, where all three worked for a branch of the UN Environment Programme. In 2008 they became independent – with the UN city of Geneva as a base. The language spoken at work is English, and the collaborators live all over the world. Until the end of 2020, Susan Boos, editor of the WOZ, was president of Zoï.

Environmental protection is conflict prevention

Zoï is convinced that today's environmental problems are precursors to tomorrow's conflicts. This insight starts with the idea that the state of the environment is a primary determinant of our living conditions. To take one example, when environmental degradation leads to rural-to-urban migration, and then the lack of jobs in the cities leads to disaffection, conflict may follow. Interventions to improve the environment can improve our living conditions and preclude the instability that might otherwise follow. Director Otto Simonett: "We know out of experience: If the environment is in better shape, human beings are too."

Zoï works with various means and communication tools, and appealing infographics are one of their specialties. Recently, they created a poster for InforMEA – the United Nations Information portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The infographic shows the multitude of environmental treaties, the set of rules on which states have reached legally binding agreements: the conventions on climate and atmosphere, chemicals and waste, environmental management, soil, agriculture, biodiversity and marine and freshwater.

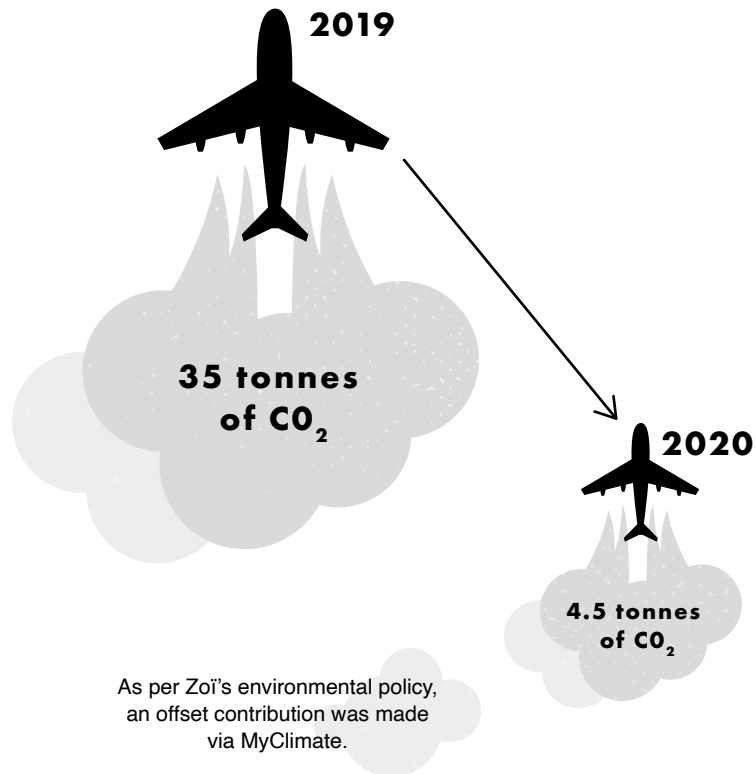
In addition to highly visual publications, Zoï also produces films. And they also engage on the ground, a kind of diplomatic service in the context of climate and environmental problems. Taking the example of Central Asia, Simonett explains: "In Uzbekistan they have resources and engage in intensive agriculture, in Tajikistan they have water. This has the potential for conflict but in most cases, cooperation prevails. In this domain, we are tiny fish, but we strategically cooperate with larger players, such as the World Bank and the UN and this will have a longer-term impact."

What Simonett is still striving to achieve is a stronger sensitization to the countless mountain regions of the world, and the recognition of mountain issues in international processes: "The people in the mountains suffer disproportionately from climate change. They are doubly affected: they already live in poorer regions, and extreme environmental events increasingly threaten their livelihoods."

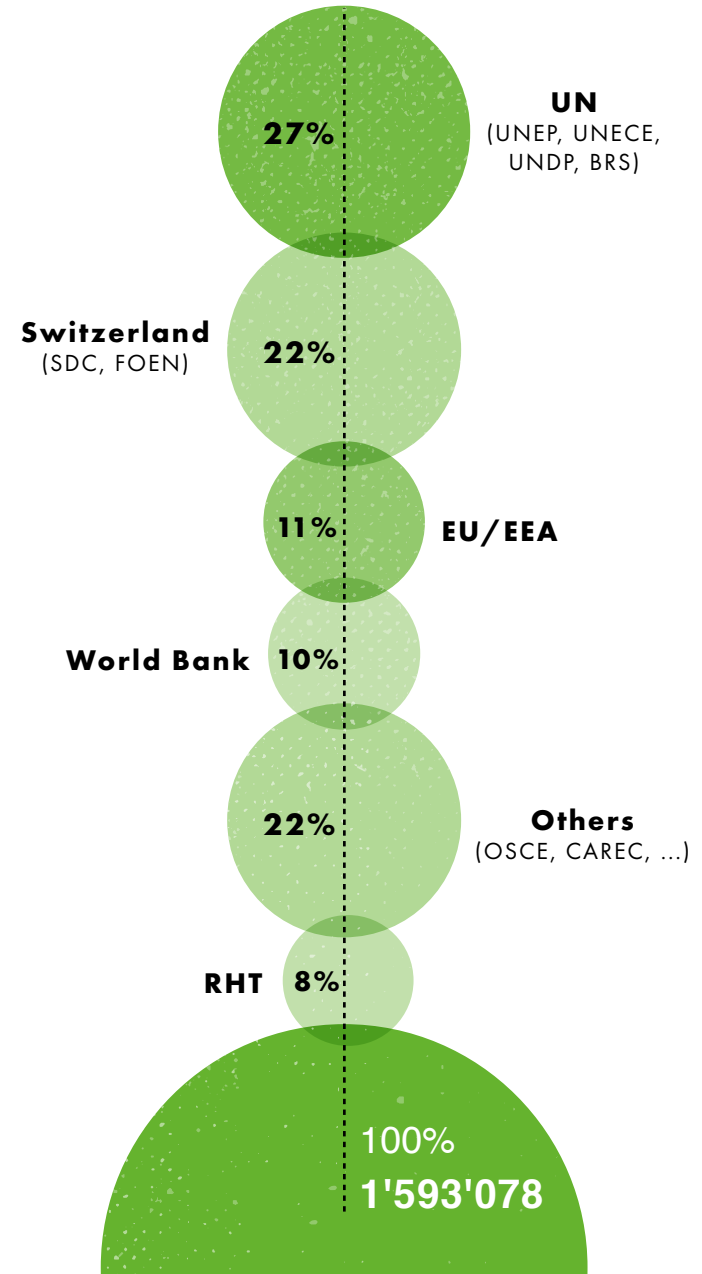
Since its founding, Zoï has been an Alternative Bank of Switzerland (ABS) client – naturally, says Simonett: "As an environmental communications organization, we constantly preach sustainability; hence we also want to have an account with a sustainable bank." In Corona times, Zoï is pleased with the CHF 50,000 credit limit that ABS grants it for the current account, and uses the facility to resolve cash flow issues. And ABS keeps getting closer, even physically, tells Simonett, laughing: "First, our bank only existed in Olten, then in Lausanne, now it has a branch a few metres from us."

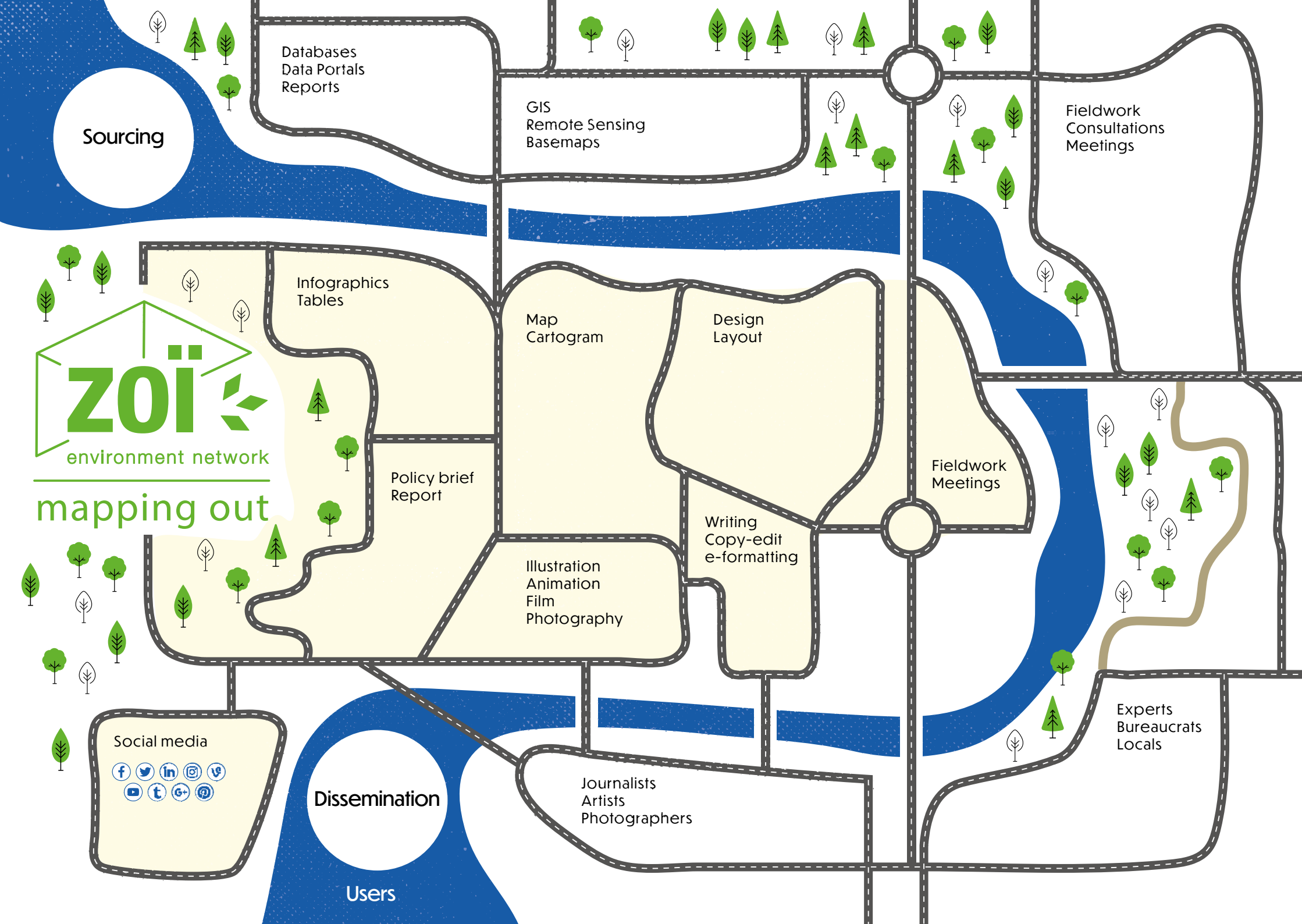
financial statement

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
total revenues	1'441'364	1'392'613	1'405'190	1'564'016	1'593'078
project work in progress	7'208	162'165	82'752	-121'518	11'928
operating expenses					
project expenses	642'670	459'123	564'764	773'927	683'860
personnel costs	678'205	656'537	631'166	728'848	760'157
other operating expenses	113'281	114'788	126'508	182'759	137'134



Funding sources 2020





Sourcing

Databases
Data Portals
Reports

GIS
Remote Sensing
Basemaps

Fieldwork
Consultations
Meetings

ZOI
environment network
mapping out

Infographics
Tables

Map
Cartogram

Design
Layout

Fieldwork
Meetings

Policy brief
Report

Writing
Copy-edit
e-formatting

Illustration
Animation
Film
Photography

Social media



Dissemination

Journalists
Artists
Photographers

Experts
Bureaucrats
Locals

Users

Zoï Impact

when the environment becomes security

When the hijacked jets hit the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, overnight the civilization felt utterly unsafe: what just happened in one of the most advanced economies could happen anywhere. 'Security' became a household word, and the international environmental community came to realize that linkages between the environment and security are real. The pan-European Environment and Security initiative was born with a focus on the huge space from the Baltic and the Adriatic Seas to China and Mongolia. Since the beginning, Zoï co-founders were part of a dynamic ENVSEC team convened by the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The new initiative rapidly deployed a network of experts and engaged with governments and NGOs to map the hotspots in the region and mobilize donor support. The no-nonsense innovative approach raised huge interest among communities as diverse as nature conservationists, the military and diplomats. With this almost impossible combination of actors, some of whom would otherwise hardly talk to each other, ENVSEC produced unprecedented analytical and communication products that establish the connections between the environment and security in places as different as Belarus vs Uzbekistan and Transnistria vs Abkhazia and Nagorny Karabakh. The initiative became a vehicle for effective networking and communication among the participating countries and organizations. And even if the ENVSEC partnership has long passed its peak, much of the methodology has found traction in today's efforts to address the security risks of climate change.

Environmental / resource-use problems can **provoke tensions** and threaten security. Environmental policies can address these problems at source, thus reducing tension.



By **jointly addressing** environmental problems usually unrelated to conflict causes, the conflicting parties can help improve dialogue and strengthen mutual trust.



In armed conflicts, the environment is often a victim of **collateral damage**. By improving the environmental awareness and conduct of combatants, such damage can be reduced.



Produced by Zoï Environment Network, April 2018

Current Zoï work in Afghanistan, Donbas, Palestine and the Red Sea region stems from our ENVSEC experience, which gave rise to our connection with the community of like-minded NGOs. Through an informal Environment and Conflict Working Group, led and inspired by our now long-term partner, the Conflict and Environment Observatory in the UK, Zoï work has appeared in joint blogs and publications, and has helped bring the agenda for environment, peace and security to the centre of global policymaking. Zoï contributions have been present in resolutions of the UN Environment Assembly and in debates at the UN Security Council. We also jointly commemorate every year the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict.

Apart from political reasons, no one any longer seriously challenges the pertinent link between the environment and conflict, even less so with climate change now commonly recognized as a threat to global security, the stability of states and the livelihoods of people. Nevertheless, addressing the environment and security linkages remains challenging, not least because the evidence is not always straightforward and may bear inconvenient political truths. But with our depth of experience, our contacts in the field, and our analytical and communication skills, Zoï Environment Network remains a reliable partner in this difficult area.

Why link environment and security?

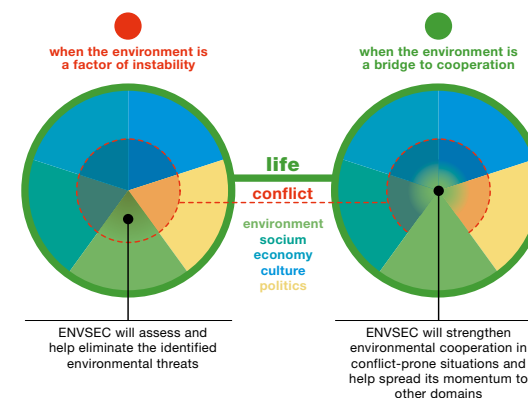
● degradation of the environment is bad for security

Conflicts over natural resources or risks stemming from environmental pollution lead to instability. Often environmental stress is not the major source of political instability, but an important contributing factor. Eliminating environmental problems helps to ease political tensions. By addressing the environmental dimensions of a conflict we can advise how some of the consequences can be avoided (a "conflict prevention assessment").

● protection of the environment is good for security

Working together on solving environmental problems is often the simplest way to longer-term, systematic and fundamental cooperation. Where conflicts occur environmental cooperation may pave the way to broader solutions.

two facets of environment and security



Text: Nikolai Denisov;
Graphics: Petter Sevaldsen (above), Maria Libert (left)

Mongolia

at the Crossroads

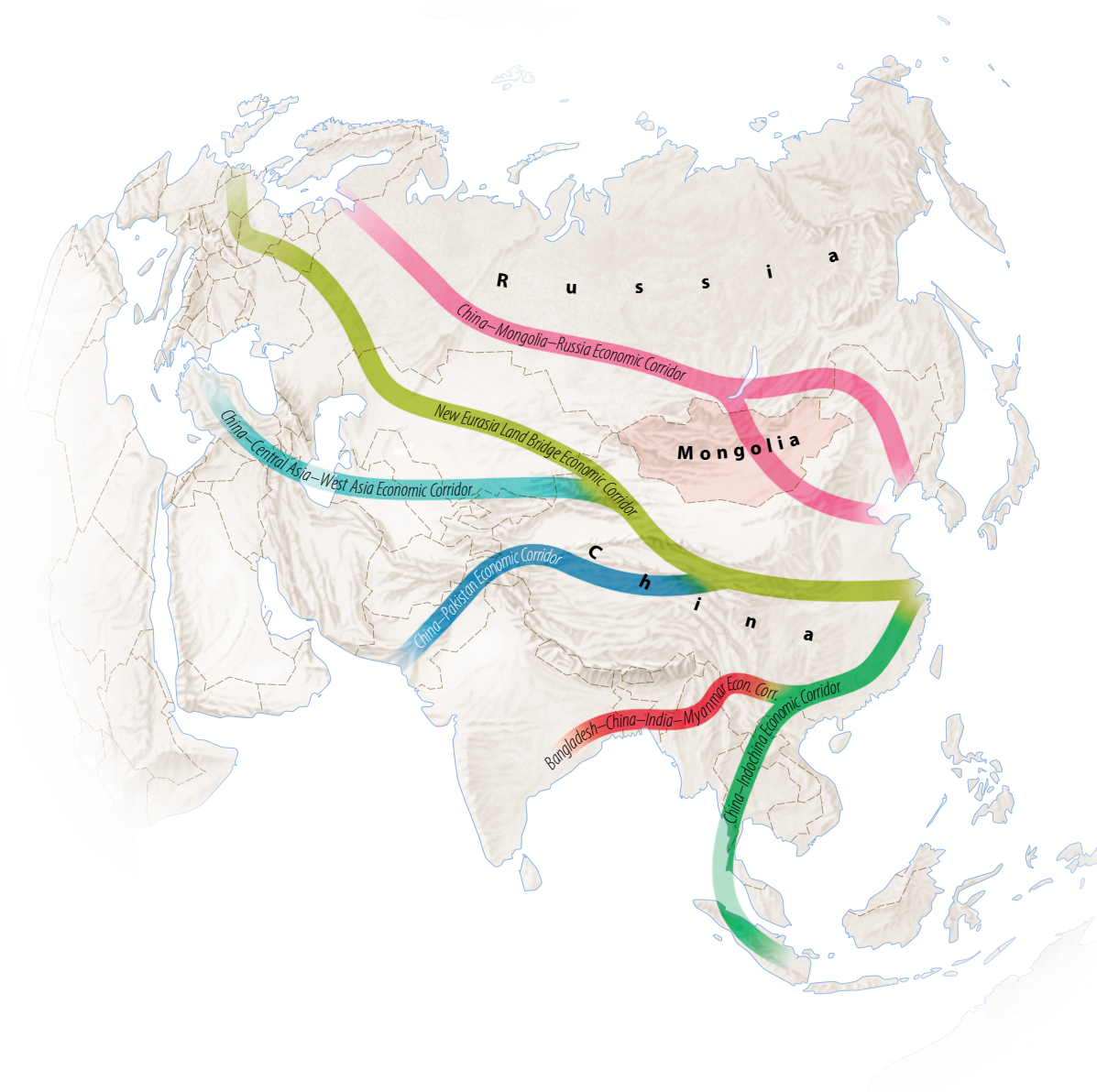
Strategically located between Russia and China, Mongolia is ready to seize an exceptional development opportunity by signing onto a trilateral economic corridor project proposed under the Belt and Road Initiative. As a part of multi-billion-dollar infrastructure investments in railways, roads, energy supply and mines, the China–Mongolia–Russia corridor aims to improve transportation and further expand trade networks among the three countries and across Eurasia.

For centuries, Mongolia's vast steppes and rich natural resources have sustained a unique nomadic lifestyle. With a mining boom and rapid urbanization, the country is facing increased pressure on its land and fragile ecosystems. In this context, the Government of Mongolia set out 2030 Green Development Goals to transform the country's economy from a resource-intensive growth model into one that is climate-resilient and efficient, while preserving its unique environment.

Zoï has engaged with the Government of Mongolia – supported by the Government of Switzerland – to find answers to the pertinent questions coming with this rapid transformation: Will the China–Mongolia–Russia economic corridor incentivize sustainable infrastructure investment towards a green economy for Mongolia? What are the implications of infrastructure development for the environmental sustainability for Mongolia? What are the challenges and opportunities? Our analysis has been distilled in typical Zoï fashion into a visual synthesis that conveys the main messages for policymakers and contributes to better-informed decisions in Mongolia as well as abroad.

At the report's launch in Geneva in October 2020, H.E. Lundeg Purevsuren, the Mongolian Ambassador to Switzerland emphasized the timeliness of the report in creating awareness of the challenges: "large-scale transportation infrastructure tends to generate a wide range of environmental impacts – traffic pollution; landslides and hydrological hazards; and the loss or fragmentation of habitats and biodiversity." The COVID-19 regime has unfortunately prevented a road show in Mongolia and engagement with drivers of change, including civil society. We hope this will happen in summer 2021. Mongolia is in many senses at the crossroads, and business as usual does not really seem to be an option.

Text: Otto Simonett;
Map: Matthias Beilstein



Predicting the weather and climate change

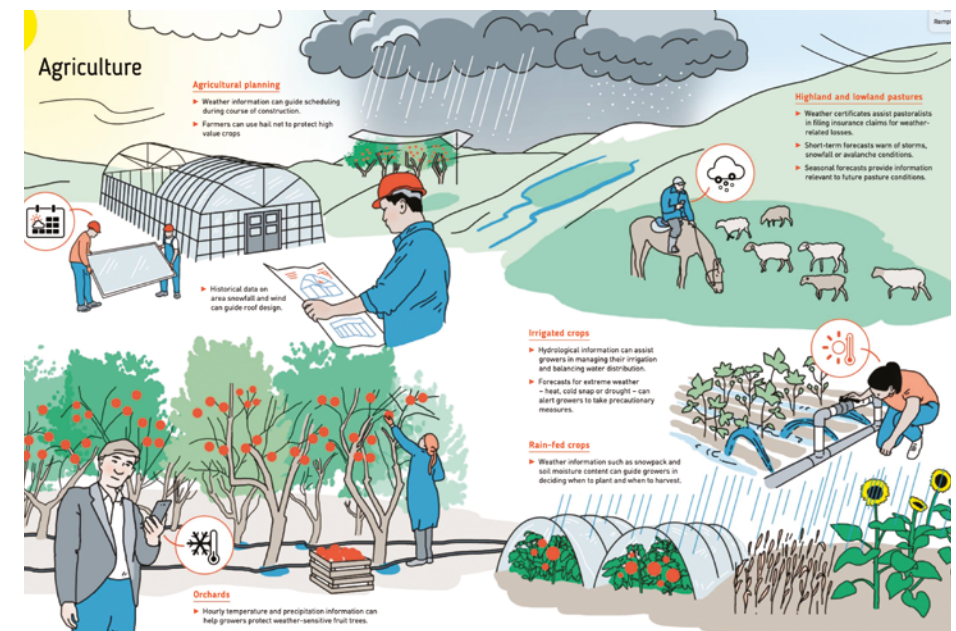
Zoï's engagement with Hydrometeorology

The changing climate is bringing disruptions in precipitation patterns, the melting of glaciers and the rise of more frequent extreme weather events, and planners and managers in one economic sector after another increasingly depend on reliable weather forecasting, and on water and climate information. Their needs run from short- and medium-term weather forecasts and early warnings, to projections of the volume and timing of water flows to the long-term effects of global warming in specific areas. Examples abound.

All levels of government and increasingly the private sector use climate and water information in the development of their disaster risk reduction strategies and emergency response services, and depend on accurate forecasts of extreme weather events. Civil engineers account for climate in their building designs, and municipal authorities use climate information to update their building codes. Water managers need climate information to recalculate expected flows because the historical record no longer forms a reliable basis for future projections. The energy sector needs similar information for hydropower projections and to help build resilience into the energy infrastructure.

The transportation sector needs reliable weather forecasts to respond to unsafe conditions, and uses data on precipitation and temperature averages and extremes for longer-range planning. The tourism and outdoor recreation sectors depend on short- and medium-term weather forecasts, and increasingly on climate information for long-range planning. Finally, of all the economic sectors, none is more vulnerable to the weather and the changing climate than agriculture. The changing conditions in specific locations determines the selection of crops, varieties and species, and early warnings of extreme weather can provide farmers with the opportunity to take precautionary measures. Agrometeorological observations inform food security assessments, help farmers protect their crops and livestock from diseases and pests and help determine the best times for planting, watering and harvesting. Also we as individuals increasingly rely on weather apps in our everyday life, including just to 'talk about the weather'.

Hydrometeorology services are working to provide the right information in a timely manner, and Zoï is doing its part to help. In collaboration with the World Bank, the World Meteorological Organization and others, Zoï provides easily digestible bite-sized morsels of information to explain new concepts, and prepares more comprehensive surveys of the range of services that hydromets can and do offer. Our reach extends to hydrometeorology services in Armenia and Moldova, and to Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Projects in the Balkans are on the horizon. Through our work, Zoï is helping hydrometeorological services develop relationships and dialogues with specific user groups in order to tailor information products across the expanding range of consumers of weather, water and climate information.



Text: Geoff Hughes;
Illustration: Maria Libert

Zoï's Video Portofolio

Production Journey

"If I was having a bet, I would say video, video, video," said Nicola Mendelsohn, Facebook's female vice-president for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, in 2016 about the future of social media and the internet. This is definitely a trend that can be seen at Zoï, where the demand for videos has exponentially grown since our first foray into video production in 2014.

Its success video owes to the fact that it is an incredibly dynamic medium that lets you combine moving and static images, sounds, music, infographics, text, maps and much more all in one place to be consumed in only a few minutes.

In the last seven years we have produced close to 50 videos* in nine languages and with even more subtitles. All of them developed in a participatory manner with our partners and clients – most often international organizations or government departments.

One film at the time we became experts in producing videos for educational, advocacy or marketing purposes all on our quest for more easily understandable and better communication of environmental issues. This is what Zoï can bring to the table: informative videos that showcase environmental challenges and are infused with our geographic and thematic knowledge as well as our artistry.

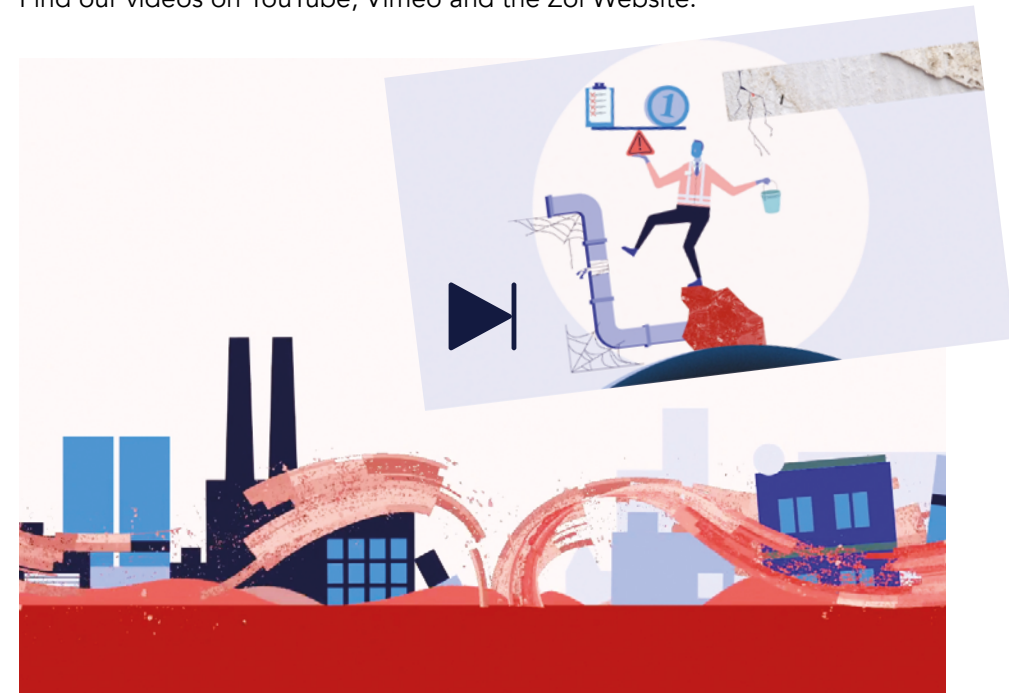
Our topics? Of course, every environmental issue that needs action. Looking back, however, we created the most videos on the topics of climate change, waste and chemicals and water. From a global video on how the UN plans to become more sustainable over a national one on environmental issues in Kazakhstan to videos on the dangers of toxic and persistent chemicals and micro plastic in the ocean – we have done it all.

Our specialty? Videos that blend live action footage with animation. Together with our client we come up with a narrative for the film. Then we start on the voice-over. You know that god-like, disembodied voice you hear in videos? Yeah, that's the one. It is the backbone of any Zoï movie. Once this is done, our artists work their magic – splendid graphic design and detail-oriented animation bring whole microcosmoses to life. Thanks to animated visuals complicated correlations and natural events, such as catastrophes, can be shown emphatically and accurately. Our stories usually end in a happy end, a found solution. If we act now there is still time!

The excitement when a video first sees the light of day is hard to describe. It lets you forget about the hiccups along the way, then of course every project comes with its own set of challenges. Smooth sailing, as universally known, is naturally unheard of in film production. There are always some small things to be straightened out, be it a colour, a banner or the way a voice actor pronounces an acronym.

When all is said and done and we have delivered our video to the client and uploaded it to the internet, we are left with a feeling of achievement. It fills us with joy when we see our video as a curtain raiser at a large conference, even if it is only a virtual one (like most conferences in 2020). Looking at our mission to facilitate access to environmental information for decision-makers and the general public, we might just be on track.

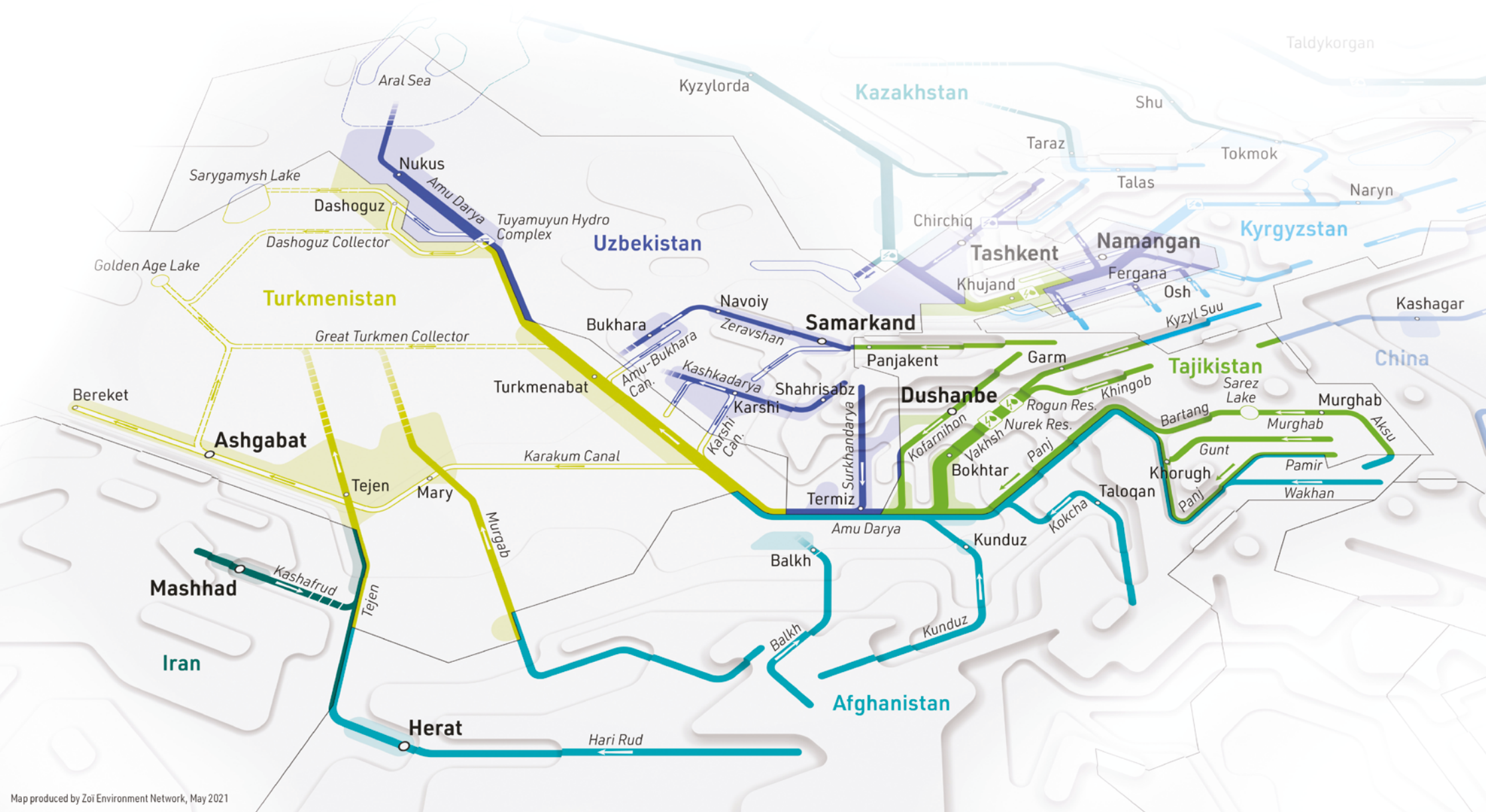
Find our videos on YouTube, Vimeo and the Zoï Website.



Text: Rebecca Jiménez;
Animation still: Joel Rabijns

Water Connects

Metro Map of the Amu Darya River Basin



Staff

Otto.Simonett,
Director
Creative thinking
and leadership



Nickolai.Denisov
Deputy director,
analysis, field and
the EU



Carolyne.Daniel
Graphic design,
data visualization and
web design



Marianne.Gémin
Finance and
Administration



Viktor.Novikov
Project development
and management
Central Asia



Nina.Saalismaa
Global projects
and production
management



Maria.Libert
Illustrations,
graphic design



Beibei.Gu
Project development
and management
China



Alexandra.Mackey
Analysis and
communication



Alexandra.Povarich
Graphic design,
climate and
biodiversity



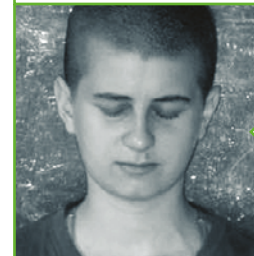
Matthias.Beilstein
Cartography



Rebecca.Jiménez
project management
and communications



Geoff.Hughes
Policy analysis,
writing and editing



J.D
Webmaster and
social media



Christina.Stuhlberger
Film-making
and creative
communication

Lesya.Nikolayeva
Project management
and communication
greater Europe



Firuz.Illarionova
Field and policy
support Central Asia



Emmanuelle.Bournay
Cartography and
statistical analysis



Gianna.Angermayr
Social media



Zoï Board

farewell to Susan – welcome on Board, Hanna!

Susan Boos was on our side as a chairwoman of our board since Zoï's foundation in 2009. As an environmental journalist Susan was never shy to call environmental problems by their names and has accompanied Zoï's activities on difficult terrain: the Ferghana valley and Kazakhstan, Donbas and the Dniester basin, Belarus and Palestine. Likewise important was her advice on issues of governance and management, always to the point and without ado. In 2020 Susan got elected the President of the Swiss Press Council, and with regrets had to step down from our board by the end of the last year. We were lucky and are grateful for having had such a long and fruitful cooperation with Susan, and despite her current busy engagement hope to continue it in one or another form.

Closing the governance breach and looking for new sources of inspiration, the General Assembly has elected Hanna Hopko as a new member of Zoï board. We are proud of having on board the prominent Ukrainian journalist, passionate activist and former parliamentarian from one of our core regions of operation, and look forward to work with her in person once the COVID restrictions are lifted.

The new chair of our board is our seasoned board member Jörg Balsiger from Geneva University. Yvan Rochat, having professionally moved from our municipality of Vernier to Genthod on lake Geneva, completes the troika. Or should we call it zoïka?

On our 2021 agenda is a river rafting trip down the Ruinaulta with all our current and alumni board members on board.



Susan Boos



Jörg Balsiger



Yvan Rochat



Hanna Hopko

Zoï Associates

Adam Begu
biodiversity and climate, Chisinau

Agnès Stienne
cartography, Le Mans

Aigerim Abdyzhaparova
BRI, climate, ecosystems, Moscow

Aleh Cherp
sustainability and energy, Lund

Alexander Shekhovtsov
environmental information, Moscow

Alexander Usov
aquatic biology, Kyiv

Alexandra Sternin
graphic design, Konstanz

Altyn Balabayeva
state of the environment reporting, Nur-Sultan

Amangul Ovezberdiyeva
climate change and biodiversity, Ashgabat

Anvar Homidov
climate change, environment and hydrology,
Dushanbe

Arevik Hovsepian
water and climate, Yerevan

Carolyn Drake
photographer, Vallejo, California

Camille Jaillant
fashion designer Olistic the label, Paris

Christiaan Triebert
digital forensics, Amsterdam

Dasha Mokhnacheva
climate migration, Saint-Jean-de-Luz

Dmytro Averin
environmental information, Kyiv

Doug Weir
conflict and environment, Hebden Bridge

Eoghan Darbyshire
Conflict and remote sensing, Hebden Bridge

Eric Nanchen
sustainable mountain development, Sion

Ecaterina Melnicenco
climate services, Chisinau

Elena Kreuzberg
ecosystems, Ottawa

Eva Giolo
film and media art, Brussels

Fatima Akbari
environment and cooperation, Kabul

Gherman Bejenaru
hydrology and environmental information,
Moldova

Gamal Soronkulov
local development, Chatkal

Jeremy Wates
environment and policy, Brussels

Hanna Khomechko
environmental rights, Lviv

Hansjörg Eberle
deminer, Geneva

Hermine Cooreman
web development, Ghent

Irina Bekmirzaeva
climate change, Almaty

Irina Kolchina
environmental information and reporting,
Karaganda

Isacco Chiaf
interactive design, Brussels

Iskander Beglov
water communication, Tashkent

Jalil Abuduwaili
geography and ecosystems, Urumqi

John Bennett
environmental journalism, New York

John Cole-Baker
mining, Trient

Joel Rabjins
animations, Ghent

Jonas Kaufmann
project effectiveness, Bad Homburg

Kanybek Isabaev
environmental information, Osh

Laszlo Pinter
environmental assessment and reporting,
Budapest

Liz Losos
Duke University, Durham

Ludmila Dolgonovskaya
journalism and communication, Kyiv

Lusine Taslakyán
environmental information, Yerevan

Lyusyena Shum
journalism and communication, Kyiv

Mamuka Gvilava
environmental impact assessment, Tbilisi

Mamuka Khurtsidze
GIS entrepreneur, Tbilisi

Mazin Qumsiyeh
biodiversity and sustainability, Bethlehem

Maria Tarigradean
environmental information, Chisinau

Marina Denisova
copy-editing, Lancy

Mikhail Pencov
water resources and policy, Chisinau

Mikko Halonen
environment and mining, Helsinki

Mila Tessaieva
photography, Berlin

Mohammad Hassouna
environmental engineer, Marseille

Mohammad Najajrah
entomology, Bethlehem

Myriam Steinemann
climate change, Zürich

Nedal Katbeh-Bader
climate change, Ramallah

Neimatullo Safarov
biodiversity and biosafety, Dushanbe

Oleg Lystopad
media and communication, Kyiv

Olena Kravchenko
environmental rights, Lviv

Oli Brown
security and environment, Samoëns

Ostap Yednak
Environment and policy, Kyiv

Oxana Guliayeva
water ecology and hydropower, Kyiv

Pasi Rinne
innovative solutions for sustainability,
Helsinki

Penny Langhammer
key biodiversity areas, Portland

Reena Saeed
molecular biology, Bethlehem

Robert Bartram
editing, writing, Geneva

Roman Kashkarov
biodiversity, Tashkent

Ruslan Valitov
cartoonist, Bishkek

Sabah Nait
cooperation Middle East and Northern
Africa, Vienna

Samual Gardaz
ocean mapping expedition, Geneva

Susanna de Panfilis
physics, Geneva

Svein Tveitdal
climate change activist, Arendal-Froland

Talaibek Makeyev
climate change and water, Bishkek

Tamar Bakuradze
environmental information, Tbilisi

Tamara Kutonova
water, chemicals and information, Kyiv

Tamara Mitrofanenko
Intergenerational learning, Vienna

Vadim Vinichenko
sustainability and translation, Moscow –
Budapest

Vafadar Ismailiylov
environmental information, Baku

Vahagn Tonoyan
water management, Yerevan

Valentina Grigoryan
climate services, Yerevan

Vicken Cheterian
research and journalism, Geneva

Vera Mustafina
waste management, Almaty

Vlad Sibagatulin
cartography and GIS, Bishkek

Vladimir Korneev
hydrology and flow modelling, Minsk

Wim Zwijnenburg
environment and peace, Utrecht

Yaroslav Tartykov
graphic design, Bishkek

Yurik Poghosyan
environmental information, Yerevan

Yusup Kamalov
local development, Nukus

Zurab Jincharadze
Caucasus environment, Tbilisi

Zoï Partners





Launch of the report «Greening the China-Mongolia-Russia economic corridor»

Nickolai of Arabia
Jeddah,
December 2020



School Interns Yara and Naquie watching Zoï videos.

Design & layout by Carolyne Daniel

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Consultative status with UN ECOSOC and accredited with
UNFCCC, UNEA and IOM.

Member of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform, the NDC Partnership and the
BRI International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC).