

ROOTS – Cluster of Excellence presents:

Public Lecture Series by JMA-Chairs*

at Kiel University / CAP3 / Hörsaal 3 / Christian-Albrechts-Platz 3 / 24118 Kiel

*This new Lecture Series provides novel research perspectives to unveil interwoven past social, environmental, and cultural phenomena, shedding light on the 'roots' of current socio-environmental challenges and crises. Leading international experts joining the Cluster of Excellence as guest chairs (Johanna-Mestorf-Academy-Chairs) give insight into their research, enhancing ROOTS large interdisciplinary initiative.

6 FEBRUARY 2023
starting 04:00 p.m.



Image: Main Plaza at Monte Albán, Oaxaca, Mexico (photo: Linda Nicholas).

» How History Matters: Rethinking Premodern Governance and Inequality «

We have learned a lot empirically in archaeology over the last 50 years, but our concepts and presumptions about human groups and how we organize politically stem from the mid-20th century and, in a sense, the century before that with focus on two big ideas, classification and evolution (progress), as well as a strong emphasis on uniformity and linearity. Now, we have collected enough data to reassess and evaluate our long-standing tenets and assumptions. We now recognize that humans can be both selfish and highly effective in affiliations with non-kin, so cooperation is situational and contingent, hence variable in space and time, not simply an outcome of our specific nature. We no longer can model premodern political organization as a black box or presume that the agency of people in the past was restricted to the elite few. Rather, as we have begun to define under-conceptualized axes of variation,

recognize the prevailing openness of our interpersonal affiliations, and see that the path of history is not linear, it is time to probe and assess the temporal relationships between governance, well-being, and persistence through new conceptual lenses. The formulation of new frames, tenets, indicators, and research questions that leverage the analysis of variation to foster syntheses of the human career has the potential to provide probabilistic lessons to help understand the present and guide our futures.



Gary Feinman
Field Museum of Natural
History in Chicago, USA

INFO: www.cluster-roots.uni-kiel.de/en/calendar-events