Editorial

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic seems to loosen its grip on our lives. This means for our scientific work that meetings and conferences are possible again in person. The ROOTS retreat with our International Scientific Advisory Board in May clearly showed how indispensable such personal contacts are for our joint efforts. Unfortunately, our relief about this development is obscured by another terrible crisis. The aggression of the Russian government and its military forces against Ukraine is causing immeasurable suffering to the people there. It also disrupts well-established scientific collaborations and friendships with colleagues in Ukraine and Russia.

Many of our colleagues are from the Ukraine and have their relatives there. Moreover, many of our colleagues work in the Ukraine and in cooperation with Ukrainians or they work in Russia and in cooperation with Russians. We are looking for solutions to these specific challenges, while we can only hope that the war will end soon.

The good news is that during the past months, several events took place and work was brought forward. Members of ROOTS organised conferences where they discussed past social, environmental, and cultural connectivity with experts from many fields. Moreover, the statement of the Kiel climate summit was published at the beginning of this year and further publications are in progress.

Soon, new faces will appear. We warmly welcome Carenza Lewis. She is a well-known public archaeologist in the UK. Inspired by her, we had a public archaeology event in Schenefeld. It was the very first event of its kind in Germany and was a huge success. Furthermore, a new cohort of PhDs will take up their studies in Kiel in soon.

During our retreat in May, the International Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) named Kiel one of the world’s leading locations for archaeology and the study of the past in general. This is, of course, a motivation to further advance our scientific work. Implementing the recommendations of the SAB, for example, further strengthening interdisciplinary cooperation, is part of this. I want to thank the SAB for their expertise. As we now can meet again, we happily announce that after a four-year break, the Kiel conference will again be held in 2023, entitled “Scales of Social, Environmental and Cultural Change in Past Societies”. Finally, I want to draw attention to our summer party that will take place on 14th July. Here, we can meet in person and also welcome our new ROOTS PhDs.

In the meanwhile, we now prepare for summer field campaigns. I hope everyone stays healthy and that the field campaigns, museum and library work, and lab investigations will be of great success!

Johannes Müller, Speaker of ROOTS

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Eva Stukenbrock appointed as a member of the French Academy of Sciences

Congratulations to ROOTS member Eva Stukenbrock who was appointed by the French Academy of Science as a new member. With this decision, the Academy recognises her outstanding research on the relationships between plants and microorganisms, the evolutionary genomics underlying them and future applications in sustainable plant protection. In ROOTS, Eva Stukenbrock and her team at the Botanical Institute of Kiel University and at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön collaborate with the aDNA laboratory and archaeobotanists to identify plant pathogens on ancient plant material and to characterise the genetic architecture of plant resistance genes in early domesticated species. The French Académie des Sciences is one of the five French national academies united in the Institut de France situated in Paris, founded in 1666. It appoints excellent researchers from all over the world, including numerous Nobel laureates, as members and thus honours them as outstanding representatives of their field. Eva Stukenbrock is the second scientist from Kiel University to receive this honour since the appointment of Professor Eugen Seibold in the 1980s.

Shelby White-Leon Levy grant awarded to Andrea Ricci

Congratulations to Andrea Ricci, scientific coordinator of ROOTS, who was awarded a prestigious grant by the Shelby White and Leon Levy Program for Archaeological Publications at Harvard University for the project “Zeytinli Bahçe: the 1999-2007 Excavations. The long history of a site at the crossroads of Mesopotamia and Anatolia”.

The grant, awarded together with Marcella Frangipane, will lead to the final publication on the results of the field activities at the multi-layered mound of Zeytinli Bahçe (Şanlıurfa, Turkey) between the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The research conducted at the site under the scientific direction of Frangipane, director at that time of the Missione Archeologica Italiana nell’Anatolia Orientale (MAIAO) of Sapienza University of Rome, documented substantial evidence of a long and complex history from the Late Chalcolithic to the Medieval period.

FURTHER INFORMATION:
https://whitelevy.fas.harvard.edu/
ROOTS assesses mid-term results and discusses future goals

For the first time since 2019, ROOTS members met physically for a cluster retreat on 12 and 13 May. During the event at the Kiel Science Center, the sub-clusters and platforms shared previous results, presented current projects and discussed the future of the Cluster of Excellence with the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). Kiel University’s President, Simone Fulda, also attended the event and provided advice on the development of the Excellence Strategy in general.

The SAB praised the practiced interdisciplinarity in ROOTS. “This broad professional approach is truly unique,” stated Helle Vandkilde, spokesperson of the SAB from Aarhus University (DK). The SAB appreciated the amount of third-party funding that cluster members have raised in recent years. “This makes Kiel one of the world’s leading locations in the field of archaeology,” said Tim A. Kohler from Washington State University (USA).

At the same time, the SAB gave constructive advice on how to communicate scientific results to society even better. In this way, ROOTS should contribute to a better understanding of current crises and identify ways to overcome them.

Other central issues were how to link the various disciplines even more intensively and which focal points a follow-up proposal should address. A letter of intent for such a proposal must be submitted to the German Research Foundation as early as December 2022. “The fact that the ROOTS SAB describes Kiel as one of the world’s top locations for archaeology and the study of the past as a whole naturally makes me very happy. With the Cluster of Excellence, the Johanna Mestorf Academy and the Collaborative Research Center 1266, we have exceptional expertise in this field, which contributes to Kiel University’s special profile,” attested Simone Fulda.

Summing up, Johannes Müller remarked, “There’s a lot of work to be done. But there is great enthusiasm within ROOTS. On this basis, we can raise the study of human societies in the past to new levels for our present and future.”

During the retreat, the ROOTS image film had its premiere (see also page 7). Simone Fulda, President of Kiel University, provided important guidance on the development of the Excellence Strategy. ROOTS members took the opportunity for intensive discussions with the scientific advisory board.
Carenza Lewis, JMA Chairholder

We welcome Professor Carenza Lewis as a JMA Chair from 8 June–3 July (in Schleswig) and from 10 October–10 December 2022 (in Kiel). She is an expert in public archaeology and has provided the impulse for our Schenefeld public archaeology activity.

How did you get involved in public archaeology?
“In 1993, I was invited to join a new UK archaeological TV series called ‘Time Team’. This offered an entirely new approach: instead of showing the viewer what had previously been found, the viewer would follow the process of new excavations from start to finish. People loved this. When I left ‘Time Team’ in 2005, I set up a unit at the University of Cambridge to give members of the public a chance to take part in archaeology. Over 15 years, thousands did this, including more than 8,000 teenagers. Their discoveries threw new light on many historical phenomena, such as the Black Death plague pandemic, but we also saw the positive impact that participation had on people – increasing wellbeing, developing skills, building confidence, changing attitudes, and connecting with the past. In 2015, I moved to the University of Lincoln which increased my scope for interdisciplinary research into these social benefits of public archaeology.”

What did you experience when you met the ROOTS archaeologists?
“I learned about the ROOTS cluster from Prof Claus von Carnap-Bornheim and Prof Johannes Müller at a conference in Moscow in 2019. We realised that the ROOTS programme might offer some potential to conduct public archaeology in Schleswig Holstein as well. But then the COVID-19 pandemic intervened, delaying our plans. Nonetheless, our ideas moved forward. But until the day I arrived in Schleswig to assume a JMA Chair in ROOTS, I had not met most of the people with whom I would be working!”

How do you envisage the cooperation with the Cluster of Excellence ROOTS in this specific context?
“I am very excited about the collaboration. In spring 2022, residents of Schenefeld in Schleswig Holstein became the first members of the public in Germany to carry out archaeological test pit excavations within their own community. We will analyse the unearthed finds to see what they tell us about the history of this settlement, but we will also explore how people felt about taking part and what they gained from it. We will use the Schenefeld insights to make similar opportunities more widely available in the future.”
Digging into the community’s own history

How old is the municipality of Schenefeld in the Steinburg district of Schleswig-Holstein? To answer this question, from 20-21 May and again from 10-11 June, more than 80 Schenefeld citizens have excavated 30 test pits in their home town. They were supported within the ROOTS project by scientists from the Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (IPN), the Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA), the Archaeological Museum Schloss Gottorf (MfA) and the State Archaeological Department of Schleswig-Holstein (ALSH).

“Such a joint project of scientists and citizens is unique in Germany so far,” explains Claus von Carnap-Bornheim, director of the MfA. Inspired by colleagues from England (see page 4), he initiated the project together with the ALSH.

In 2008, employees of the ALSH found traces of two pit houses from the 9th century AD near Schenefeld’s Bonifatius Church. As this church might be one of the oldest in Northern Germany (9th – 11th century AD), Schenefeld might have one of the longest settlement continuities in Schleswig-Holstein.

“To find out more about the early settlement, we must excavate a large area around the church. But this is not possible in the centre of the town,” explains Ilka Rau of ROOTS. The alternative is to conduct many small test pit excavations, in which the citizens could easily be involved.

Preparations started in December and were actively supported by Schenefeld’s mayor, Johann Hansen, the municipal council, and Reinhard Heesch, the Schenefeld town chronicler. The citizen science project, which was funded by ROOTS, also included a visit of the archaeo:lab of the Kiel Science Factory to the school in Schenefeld.

The excavations resulted in a large number of finds from different epochs, among them several sherds that possibly support the thesis of settlement in the 8th or 9th century. “Of course, we now have to examine and date all the finds in more detail,” Ilka Rau emphasises.

After the excavations, the volunteers were asked about their experience. “We evaluate the answers scientifically. In this way, we learn how we can better involve citizens in archaeology,” remarks Katrin Schöps of ROOTS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
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Schenefeld’s Jeadon Taisie works in one of the test pit.

Schenefeld volunteers Doris and Uwe Groth with an early modern potsherd.
Heat waves, droughts and water supply problems: Caused by man-made climate change, the Iberian Peninsula is currently developing into a climate hotspot. A look into the past might help in assessing the consequences and finding solutions for upcoming challenges. In cooperation with researchers from Spain and Portugal, scientists from ROOTS and the CRC 1266 are investigating changes in past societies and connectivities with the environment during climate stress.

In spring, the team took a 19-metre-long drill core from a former lagoon northwest of Seville in order to reconstruct environmental changes over the past 6000 years. A special focus of the project is the period about 4200 years ago, when the largest Copper Age settlement in Andalusia was located there. A natural climate change occurred during this era with distinct traces in the archaeological material. With the new core, the team hopes to gain more precise insights into these developments: “This is possibly the first climate archive ever on the Iberian Peninsula where we can see changes in temperatures, precipitation and plant growth per year,” says Mara Weinelt, one of the project coordinators. The analysis of the core is now being carried out in laboratories in Kiel.

### The ‘Lost Cities’ project is back in Mongolia

For the first time since 2019, the German-Mongolian research project “Abandoned Cities in the Steppe” was able to conduct extensive fieldwork in Central Mongolia in May and June 2022. This year, the focus was on investigations at the monastic city of Baruun Khüree in the Orkhon Valley. Through excavations, remote sensing, and ethnographic interviews, the team collected a wealth of new data to understand the city design, the daily life activities, and the historical significance of Baruun Khüree for the development of Mongolia’s urban network.

Funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation since 2019 as part of the ‘Lost Cities’ programme, the project explores the emergence and perception of permanent settlement structures in Mongolia that evolved during the reign of the Manchurian Qing Dynasty between the 17th and the early 20th century CE. In the process, previously enigmatic pit formations in the Orkhon Valley have already been attributed to Qing Dynasty military activities in Central Mongolia, and the ruins of the garrison town, Uliastai, have been precisely documented for the first time. In addition to ROOTS PI Henny Piezonka, ROOTS Associate Members Jonathan Ethier and Christian Ressel, and PhD student Enkhtuul Chadraabal, the fieldwork team included colleagues from Germany, Mongolia, the US and Canada. ROOTS also co-funded this year’s field campaign.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**
https://tinyurl.com/2235ph84
Complex science in three and a half minutes

In our Cluster of Excellence ‘ROOTS’, we jointly investigate the roots of social, environmental and cultural phenomena and processes that have a lasting impact on human development. In our new image movie, ROOTS members explain why interdisciplinary work is of fundamental importance. In addition, in three and a half minutes, the movie provides a compact insight into various methods and technologies used by ROOTS – from excavations, to the soil laboratory and to sample collection in the bone laboratory.

“Of course, a film of this length cannot cover the entire range of ROOTS research. But it can provide a brief introduction to the topic, highlight initial results and make people curious. That is exactly what the image movie should achieve,” remarks Johannes Müller.

The film had its premiere during the ROOTS retreat in Kiel in mid-May.

FURTHER INFORMATION:
Now it can be seen on YouTube in English: https://tinyurl.com/58nr7fzw
and German: https://tinyurl.com/bdhw636w, with or without subtitles.

Conference on Urban Dynamics in the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages are not only an era of city foundations. Many towns already grew beyond their original boundaries in the late Middle Ages with the construction of new quarters or entire “new towns”. Old cities, gradual city extensions or even “new cities” had to be enabled to functionally interact in light of political, social and economic challenges. Experts from Germany, Poland, Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic met in Kiel from 9-11 June upon the invitation of the Urban ROOTS subcluster to exchange the latest findings on “Urban expansions and urban dynamics in the Middle Ages”. During the three-day conference, key topics included the material “footprint” of these complex processes, such as walls, streets, and buildings, as well as political and legal issues arising from urban expansions. The conference was successful in combining perspectives on the topography, architecture, constitution, economy and everyday culture of the city expansions in an interdisciplinary way. The contributions will be published in a conference volume.
Due to the current SARS-CoV-2 situation, our events might change. Please check our website for more information under www.cluster-roots.uni-kiel.de/en/calendar-events