Editorial

The interdisciplinary research of ROOTS continues to flourish with recent developments and achievements showcasing our commitment to contribute to an understanding of past human-environmental dynamics.

In recent months, ROOTS has been at the forefront of scientific advancements through conferences, fieldwork activities, international collaborations, and new publications. The “Kiel Conference” in March united over 350 scientists from 30+ countries, fostering interdisciplinary discussions on the intricate connections between the environment, social relations, material culture, population dynamics, and human perception in the past. The “15th International Conference on Archaeological Prospection” showcased ROOTS’ dedication to cutting-edge technology and innovative methodologies, bringing together 120 experts from 20 countries. Emphasising inclusivity, ROOTS organised the “Comparative Guts” conference and workshop, exploring diverse societies’ perceptions of internal organs. The “Comparative Guts” online exhibition allows for continued exploration of this fascinating subject.

International cooperation remains a cornerstone of ROOTS’ endeavours. The JMA Chairholders have played a significant role in fostering collaborations and establishing contacts with renowned experts. In the first half of 2023, ROOTS welcomed five internationally acclaimed colleagues.

Exciting discoveries have emerged from the collaborative efforts of ROOTS and its research partners. Among others, the location of the submerged Rungholt church, lost since 1362, has been identified which has attracted a great amount of attention even beyond the scientific community. The structure was successfully identified using a combination of geoscientific and archaeological methods. This achievement sheds light on the medieval trading centre of Rungholt and its significance for the history of the region. Similarly, the ‘Körös Consortium Project’ has made significant progress in uncovering the remains of a Bronze Age village in Hungary, providing valuable insights into prehistoric population dynamics of the region.

The successful progress of our interdisciplinary initiative is also echoed in an international university ranking, in which the archaeological discipline at Kiel University belongs to the top 15 worldwide. This success is certainly due to the fact that archaeology in Kiel – for example within ROOTS – works closely together with other humanities, natural and life sciences. While ROOTS continues to advance research and foster collaborations, we also need to envision the next application phase within the Excellence Strategy. The consensus among ROOTS members is resounding and the scientific desirability of a second funding phase was unanimously acknowledged during the last retreat.

With the dedication, enthusiasm, and commitment to interdisciplinary exploration displayed by ROOTS members, we anticipate even more significant contributions to our understanding of the past and its implications for the present and future.

Johannes Müller, Speaker of ROOTS
**ROOTS Retreat: The road to ROOTS 2**

More than 90 ROOTS members met for an intensive two-day retreat at the end of April to share scientific findings and engage in discussions regarding the future development of ROOTS interdisciplinary research on past human-environmental connectivity. In a highly constructive atmosphere, a special focus was dedicated to the visions for the next application phase within the Excellence Strategy of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German federal states. In late summer 2024, the proposal for a second funding phase of ROOTS has to be submitted. During the retreat, there was broad consensus, not only among ROOTS members, that this second phase would be scientifically highly desirable. Professor Simone Fulda, President of Kiel University, pledged the full support of the university for the next proposal. “The two days were definitely challenging, but also very constructive and purposeful,” says cluster speaker Johannes Müller. “Some great ideas for new innovative research perspectives were formulated. By fulfilling the aims of our first proposal, we also look into future perspectives that will enable us to expand questions about the past that are relevant to our present challenges.”

**New ROOTS Executive Board**

Since January, the ROOTS Executive Board has been meeting in a new composition resulting from the elections during the Assembly in December. The Executive Board now includes the following members:

**Speaker:** Johannes Müller  
**Co-Speaker:** Martin Furholt  
**Co-Speaker:** Wolfgang Rabbel (until 30 September 2023)  
**Co-Speaker:** Eileen Eckmeier (from 1 October 2023)

**Subcluster 1 - Hazards:**
Eileen Eckmeier (Deputy: Mara Weinelt)

**Subcluster 2 - Diets:**
Cheryl Makarewicz (Deputy: Ben Krause-Kyora)

**Subcluster 3 - Knowledge:**
Andreas Schwab (Deputy: Gerald Schwedler)

**Subcluster 4 - Urban:**
Annette Haug (Deputy: Ulrich Müller)

**Subcluster 5 - Inequality:**
Martin Furholt (Deputy: Johannes Müller)

**Subcluster 6 - Conflict:**
Lorenz Kienle (Deputy: Jens Schneeweß)

**Reflective Turn:** Vesa Arponen (Deputy: Konrad Ott)

**Young Academy:** Tim Kerig (Deputy: Andrea Ricci)

**Platform 1 - Technical:**
Wiebke Kirleis (Deputy: Eileen Eckmeier)

**Platform 2 - Communication:**
Ilka Parchmann (Deputy: Andrea Ricci)

**Platform 3 - Humanities:**
Nils Müller-Scheebel (Deputy: John Peterson)

**Postdoc Representative:** Pawel Cembrzyński

**PhD Representatives:** Benjamin Claassen, Benjamin Serbe

**For Kiel University:** Kiel University President

**For ZBSA:** Berit Eriksen (Deputy: Ulrich Schmölcke)

**Scientific Coordinator:**
Mara Weinelt (Deputy: Andrea Ricci)
Almost 350 scientists from more than 30 countries participated in the Kiel Conference 2023 “Scales of Social, Environmental and Cultural Change in Past Societies”. They spent five days in mid-March at Kiel University presenting and discussing the latest findings and open research questions on the links between the environment, social relations, material culture, population dynamics and human perception in the past. The CRC 1266 ‘Scales of Transformation – Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies’ and the Cluster of Excellence ROOTS organised the conference in the framework of the Johanna Mestorf Academy.

“The atmosphere was great,” said conference chair Johannes Müller, speaker of the CRC 1266 and the Cluster of Excellence ROOTS. “The 30 sessions were also extremely productive. Almost all of them were of highly interdisciplinary nature, which allowed new perspectives on aspects of past societies. At the same time, this helped to identify research gaps that should be filled in the future,” he added.

Among the highlights of the conference were the four central keynote lectures, in which the internationally renowned experts Leonardo García Sanjuán from the University of Seville, Dorian Fuller from University College of London, Carola Metzner-Nebelsick from LMU Munich and Swedish archaeologist Kristian Kristiansen of the University of Gothenburg addressed current issues in research on earlier societies and presented examples of new results.

In addition, Danish archaeologist Anders Fischer, visiting Kiel from January to April as a Chairholder of the Johanna Mestorf Academy, gave a public lecture during the conference on “DNA results and initial archaeological considerations from a study of Danish prehistoric skeletons”.

Another highlight at the beginning of the conference was the presentation of the Johanna Mestorf Award to Iris Nießen for her excellent dissertation on the development of a settlement on the banks of the Danube into a full-fledged part of the medieval city of Regensburg.

“The great interest of our colleagues in the conference as well as the feedback we have received so far show us that the interdisciplinary concept of the conference was fruitful,” communicated Johannes Müller to the participants and added: “In two years we will hopefully all see each other again at the eighth edition of the Kiel Conference.”

Iris Nießen, recipient of the Johanna Mestorf Award 2023
More than 120 experts from 20 countries met at Kiel University from 28 March to 1 April for the “15th International Conference on Archaeological Prospection (ICAP)”, organised by the Institute of Geosciences (IfG) and supported by ROOTS. The participants exchanged information on current developments in various prospection methods, such as georadar, magnetic field measurements, seismics, or lidar lasers, on technical and methodological innovations and on the processing and visualisation of the resulting data.

“Of course, archaeology cannot do without excavations. But geophysical methods can, for example, cover much larger areas with comparatively little effort and thus reveal settlement structures that would otherwise remain hidden in the ground,” said Wolfgang Rabbel from the IfG, conference chair and co-speaker of ROOTS.

ICAP 2023 focused on particularly challenging marine and wetland prospection. “Kiel University has a focus on both marine research and archaeology. Thus, we can learn from each other across disciplinary boundaries,” said Wolfgang Rabbel.

“The exchange with colleagues was very encouraging and we gained diverse impulses,” he summarised after the conference.

What did people of earlier millennia know about the inside of their body? What did they associate with it? How does the perception of inner bodily organs differ between societies?

Two events at the Kunsthalle zu Kiel explored these questions in early June: the three-day international conference “Comparative Guts” and the workshop “The Felt Body”. While the conference was aimed at an interdisciplinary scientific audience, the workshop was organised specifically for people with visual impairments. Both events were organised by a team led by ROOTS member Chiara Thumiger and supported by the Inclusion Fund of Kiel University.

Parallel to the conference, the online exhibition “Comparative Guts” has been launched that shows almost 200 illustrations and photos dealing with internal organs – from Stone Age rock carvings to textbooks on Chinese medicine and to modern art performances.

“The exchange among the experts during the conference, but also the input from and exchange with the blind participants during the workshop were extremely enlightening. Anyone who would like to delve further into the topic is welcome to do so on the Comparative Guts website,” Chiara Thumiger summarises.

By exploring past social, environmental, and cultural phenomena in order to promote an understanding of the roots of current socio-ecological challenges, research with a global perspective is required. International cooperation is therefore essential for ROOTS.

The JMA Chair Visiting Professorships offer a great opportunity to establish and strengthen contacts and foster scientific cooperation. In the first half of 2023, we were able to welcome five internationally renowned colleagues to Kiel. Each of them is an acclaimed expert in his or her respective field. They all have greatly enriched the work of ROOTS with their ideas by giving lectures or by discussing current research questions with us. Our thanks go to:

**JMA Chairholders**

Marcella Frangipane, Sapienza University Rome (Italy), JMA Chair May – July: Her research focuses on the rise and early developments of hierarchical and unequal societies, the rise of centralised economies, bureaucracy, and the state in the ancient Near East. From 1990 to 2019, she directed the excavation at Arslantepe (Turkey).

Leonardo García Sanjuán, University of Seville (Spain), JMA Chair March – June: His research centres on early social complexity, burial practices, megalithic monuments and prehistoric landscapes, with a focus on Late Neolithic, Copper Age and Bronze Age Iberia. He is also interested in topics such as rare rocks, exotic materials, radiocarbon dating and stelae.

Miko Flohr, University of Leiden (Netherlands), JMA Chair May – July: He is a renowned expert on the urban, social and economic history of the Greco-Roman world. In his research, he explores the impact of Roman imperial hegemony on urban communities and everyday life, and the extent to which this shapes the archaeological and epigraphic record.

Anders Fischer, Sealand Archaeology (Denmark), JMA Chair January – March: He is researching the early population history and lifeways of the western Baltic region, combining archaeological with anthropological, genetic and isotope-analytical methods. He has also long worked in the field of archaeological heritage management for Danish authorities.

Axel Christophersen, NTNU (Norway), JMA Chair April – June: He is professor for Historical Archaeology and coordinated the cross-disciplinary project ‘Medieval urban health: From individual to public responsibility AD 1000–1600’ funded by the Norwegian Research Council from 2016–2021.

For more information about past and current JMA Chairholders, please visit our homepage at: https://www.cluster-roots.uni-kiel.de/en/people/jma-chairs-roots-guest-professorships
Lost since 1362: ROOTS contributes to the discovery of the Rungholt church

The medieval trading centre of Rungholt, which is today located in the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, was inundated in a storm surge in 1362. Using a combination of geoscientific and archaeological methods, researchers from ROOTS and Kiel University, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU), the Center for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA), and the State Archaeology Department Schleswig-Holstein (ALSH), have succeeded in locating the site of the Rungholt church. “Our find joins the ranks of the large churches of North Frisia,” says ROOTS member Bente Sven Majchczack. Thus, the team can now finally clarify a much-discussed research question that has been posed for more than 100 years. Two interdisciplinary projects funded by the German Research Foundation, one of them the ROOTS ‘Wadden Sea Project’, have conducted research for several years on the medieval cultural landscape that disappeared in the Wadden Sea. Well-known for its mythically exaggerated destruction, Rungholt is a prominent example of the effects of massive human intervention in the northern German coastal region that continue to this day.

The return to a Bronze Age village in Hungary

In April 2023, the ‘Körös Consortium Project’, led by ROOTS member Paul Duffy and colleagues from the University of Georgia and the Field Museum in Chicago, converged near the small town of Tarhos in Hungary to drill cores and expose Bronze Age houses at the tell cluster of Békés-Várdomb. Békés-Várdomb is a 3m-high tell located on an old river branch (ca. 2100-1700 BCE). The tell is part of a greater site cluster of the Bronze Age and at its height it would have accommodated more than 500 people. It was one of the largest villages in what is today Eastern Hungary.

The research is part of Paul Duffy’s work on population aggregation and resilience in prehistoric times. The work in Békés-Várdomb helps us to gain an understanding of the role that economic complementarity and social inequalities had in dynamics of growth, success, and dispersal of the Bronze Age’s first large population aggregations.

Fieldwork and Activities

A metal frame allows archaeological excavations of one square metre in the tidal flats, which can be excavated and documented during one low tide.

A drone image of two test excavations (2x2m) in the ‘Northern Village’. The tell is in the wooded area on the left.

The team was composed of German, Hungarian, American, and Canadian participants. Although the goal of the season was to focus on Bronze Age houses, medieval burials were also found, since the site was reused during the medieval period by different populations to bury their dead.
Why connectivity matters

When tackling social inequality, climate change, or resolving identity conflicts, major challenges can only be mastered if a large number of actors work together. This is true at the individual level as well as at the level of societies. It applies to every era back to the Stone Age. Working together requires connection and interaction. As we learn from challenges of our time, not only the connections between people, societies and global institutions are important but also the connections between the natural and the cultural environment.

The question of how such human-environmental ‘connectivities’ have shaped fundamental processes in past societies from the Stone Age to historical epochs is the focus of research conducted within ROOTS. A new book titled Connectivity Matters! has been published in the “ROOTS Studies” series. This volume fundamentally addresses the new concept of connectivities in the human past as well as the importance of this concept for research on the topic.

The e-paper version of the book is freely available: www.sidestone.com/books/connectivity-matters

Urban design in Pompeii

Inviting, cosy, relaxed, but also forbidding, cramped, oppressive – cities can convey very different atmospheres. From the municipalities’ point of view, atmosphere is an important location factor, for example, to attract tourists. Urban planning and city marketing therefore try to create certain, preferably positive atmospheres. This is a very old phenomenon. However, how were urban design strategies implemented in earlier eras to create certain atmospheric effects? Annette Haug and her team, funded by the European Research Council, investigated this question using the example of Pompeii.

The results of this work are now presented in their book: Öffentliche Räume in Pompeji (Engl. ed.: Public Spaces in Pompeii), which is now freely available online: www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110988383/html

Roots of Routes

Mobility and how it should be shaped is a highly political and often emotionally debated topic. ROOTS now provides a scientifically sound contribution to the history of mobility and its routes. The new ROOTS booklet, Roots of Routes, edited by H. Piezonka, L. Käppel and A. Ricci, answers questions such as: How mobile were people in the past? For what reasons were certain routes used? What cultural or environmental factors influenced mobility in the past? The booklet is available as a print edition or online in both German and English.
Snapshots of ROOTS activities and events during the 2023 Kieler Woche:

Upcoming Event:

ROOTS Seminar Series with Vesa Arponen on “Case Studies in Philosophy of Archaeology”
11 July 2023 | 12:15 - 01:15 p.m.
Conference room (4th upper floor)
at ZMB Center - Parkplatz, Am Botanischen Garten 11, Kiel

CONTACT
Speaker: Prof. Dr. Johannes Müller
johannes.mueller@ufg.uni-kiel.de
Scientific Coordinators:
PD Dr. Mara Weinelt, Dr. Andrea Ricci
office@roots.uni-kiel.de

ADDRESS
Cluster of Excellence ROOTS
Kiel University
Leibnizstr. 3
24118 Kiel, Germany
www.cluster-roots.org

For more events and updates, visit our website www.cluster-roots.org
or follow us on Twitter https://twitter.com/clusterroots
or on Mastodon https://fediscience.org/@clusterroots