



# newsletter special issue



human development in landscapes  
GRADUATE SCHOOL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KIEL

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## EDITORIAL

### Graduate School and Johanna Mestorf: the experiment continues on a high level

On June 15 the results of the new round of the German Excellence Initiative were announced. The highly competitive selection procedure implemented by the DFG and the German Council of Science and Humanities placed "Human Development in Landscapes" among the top level graduate schools out of 63 applications in this funding line. From all the submitted proposals and renewal proposals, 45 Graduate School initiatives will be funded from autumn on for a period of five years. Apart from Clusters of Excellence and Institutional Strategies, Graduate Schools particularly aim at promoting young scientists and researchers by providing them with excellent conditions, thus advancing the initiated research profiles. The current excellent ranking provides the GS at Kiel University with funding amounting to more than 11 M €, which will empower the GS to successfully continue and expand graduate research in a truly interdisciplinary perspective. As a result, structural and scientific plans formulated in our renewal proposal can be fully realized. The positive evaluation also marks a milestone for the further development of the Johanna-Mestorf-Academy, last year still a rather vague vision of a sustainable research center.

In the forthcoming five years, roughly two new generations of PhD students, three new junior research groups, and an array of postdoctoral fellows will enrich research in the GS. New perspectives will be introduced through a modelling research group, which will simulate complex interactions of social, cultural, and environmental variables. It is anticipated that this group will take a highly integrative role in the GS. General patterns of human development will be identified and assessed through the design of new quantitative proxies. These will serve to better constrain and to measure patterns of past societal change at the root of and possibly still inherent to modern societies. Future research efforts will focus on assessing societal constants and variables and relate them to well-established environmental factors. Cultural theory and theory of material culture will complement the comprehensive approach.

The success of our renewal proposal results from intensive discussions and cooperation within the GS and with our international partners. The infrastructure within the university has been improved and appropriately upgraded for the analytical needs of the GS, as in the case of aDNA, Archaeobotanical, Archaeozoological, and stable isotope labs. An extension of these facilities is necessary, particularly in the case of the aDNA lab. Important conferences and workshops on topics such as social-environmental change or Myths at the Olympus were organized and publications followed. Joint doctoral projects were organized, for example on relevant archives of the Peloponnese, and in regions such as Bosnia, the Odenwald, and Northern Germany. The German Archaeological Institute is a fundamental partner in our joint projects from Easter Island to Scandinavia.

The Excellence Initiative provides us with the unique chance to expedite and advance our experiment of cooperation between the Humanities and the Natural Sciences. The experiences of the last years have shown how impulses can be followed and evolved. An enhanced integration of Economic Sciences will certainly contribute to a more in-depth reconstruction of ancient societies. Perspectives which include cultural theories of societal development and the role of material culture can provide entirely new insights. Our concept of inquiry learning and research-based teaching („lernenden Forschens und forschenden Lehrens“) has proved to be a model of success and shall be extended.

### LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE BEYOND 2017

As a long-term milestone, the CAU Kiel will celebrate its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2065. Based on the initiative of the Graduate School, the Johanna-Mestorf-Academy has been established as a central, ongoing university institution in order to continue high-grade, interdisciplinary research over a long-term perspective. This academy, comparable to the Berlin Antike-Kolleg, will bundle and transparently convey competences in the areas of landscape archaeology and socio-environmental change. Johanna Mestorf was the first female professor in Germany. She researched as an archeologist taking spatio-temporal perspectives into account. Due to her role in the 1848 revolution, she emigrated to Sweden for a time where she laid the foundations of her anthropological studies. Her persistent work should be a good omen for us in order to advance the development of the Johanna-Mestorf-Academy as an international teaching and research center.

### Is there a secret to success?

Our success is certainly carried by our enthusiasm for research. Scientific success is also always directly linked to personal well-being. Therefore, research institutions also have the responsibility to provide their researchers with the chance to align their careers with their private lives. In this respect, we will continue to foster the continuity of individual research perspectives.

In this sense we are looking forward to the next 5 years...

Speaker  
Johannes Müller



## PLANS FOR PHASE 2 / STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Since 2007, the Graduate School pioneers research on "Societal, Environmental and Cultural Change" at CAU Kiel. The GS has become a role model for interdisciplinary cooperation among the Natural Sciences and the Humanities, which is indispensable to jointly address questions of complex interactions between humans and their perceived and physical environments. Main efforts in this respect are directed towards the reconstruction of socio-environmental changes in ancient societies and the use of landscape archaeology. Social anthropological theory and hard scientific results are used to comprehend past human behavior and to associate it with current and future changes. To sustain this and related research perspectives beyond the second funding period, the newly founded Johanna Mestorf Academy (see adjoining article) will accommodate and continue the excellent structures for research and cooperation created within the Graduate School.

In phase 2 from 2012 to 2017, these structural achievements will be further developed. First, current plans include the continuation of our successful doctoral programme. We also aim to foster the independence and career development of many young researchers by establishing a post-doctoral programme open to the smartest heads in the emerging field of socio-environmental change.

In order to advance integrative research on "human development in landscapes", three new Junior Research Groups (JRGs) will be established within the Graduate School. The new professor for "Ancient Socio-Environmental Modelling" shall integrate and validate complex data from ancient societies for quantitative modelling processes, while his/her colleague for "Social and Economic History" will contribute expertise in economical processes, particularly concerning pre-modern societies. Last but not least, a new professor for "Ancient DNA" is going to advance research on ancient genetics. An overall task for new and old academic staff members will be to enable the validation of multi-disciplinary theories, hypotheses, and reconstructions. Four new post-doctoral positions affiliated to the JRGs will be created, concentrating on the development of archaeobotanical and archaeological proxies, as well as on socio-cultural theory. In the latter case, emphasis will be placed on the material culture and on concepts of identity and the environment of ancient societies.

Another aim of phase 2 is to advance the already existing infrastructural resources and analytical expertise of our three research platforms. Besides acquiring new instrumentation for filling current gaps, we also want to add expertise in the analysis and identification of organic molecules, thus opening the possibility to explore the prospects of "archaeological chemistry".

## JOHANNA-MESTORF-ACADEMY

The Johanna-Mestorf-Academy for Landscape Archaeology and Socio-Environmental Research was founded on December 15, 2011 as a central institution of Kiel University (CAU). The academy was officially institutionalized on March 3, 2012. As a link between university and non-university research, the research institute and educational center connects the competences of numerous university institutes, Schloß Gottorf, and the Center for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology in a vigorous scientific effort. The academy is the first interdisciplinary center of the CAU and the first intentional interdisciplinary academy in Germany which includes the fields of Archaeology, Antiquity Studies, and Natural Sciences. With a focus on socio-environmental research, a fundament for the future transparency of cultural sciences and scientific research has been laid with an added value for society.

Within the academy, research foci will be developed and the infrastructure for various PhD programmes will be provided. The description of research "hot spots" as a dynamic process of interdisciplinary work is a novelty, which has been and will continue to be developed within the Graduate School. Comparable to the Berlin Antike-Kolleg, we envisage the participation of diverse cooperation partners. Thus, it can be stated that Schleswig-Holstein will become a forerunner of interdisciplinary developments induced by the Excellence Initiative.

The aims of the JMA are:

- to strengthen interdisciplinary research within the CAU and with national and international partners;
- to develop joint projects;
- to enhance cooperation between university and non-university research;
- to focus on research and education competence;
- to develop and advance research-orientated academic training for young scholars;
- to support PhD students, including career advice;
- to develop, setup, and maintain research infrastructures and technical platforms;
- to gather mutual information on research projects and results;
- to promote knowledge transfer and public outreach.

CAU employs a sophisticated infrastructural scheme in which resources and expertise supporting research are organised in platforms and governed by the research foci. The new JMA will therefore steer the further development of the infrastructures and the GS on a long-term perspective.

