

Think global, act local!

Bell Beakers in Europe

Bell Beaker Workshop Kiel 2017

Jos Kleijne, Martin Furholt, Johannes Müller (Eds.)

Journal of Neolithic Archaeology

Special edition 4 / 2018



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The Journal of Neolithic Archaeology provides a scientific information platform on the archaeology of the Neolithic period. It aims to communicate new developments and discoveries to practicing archaeologists everywhere. The articles are mainly in German and English, and for all articles English summaries and figure captions are available. The website www.j-n-a.org provides free access to all articles and special issues published since 1999. The 16th volume is the first online version to also be published as a print version.

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Preface of the speakers of the Collaborative Research Centre 'Scales of Transformation in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies'

Wiebke Kirleis, Johannes Müller

The Collaborative Research Centre 'Scales of Transformation: Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies' (CRC 1266) at Kiel University enables bundled presentation of current research outcomes on the multiple aspects of socio-environmental transformations in ancient societies. As speakers, we are pleased that the publication of the Kiel workshop on Bell Beakers was possible as a special issue of JNA.

Our publications are dedicated to the fundamental research questions of the CRC1266 dealing with transformations on different temporal, spatial and social scales, here defined as processes leading to a substantial and enduring re-organisation of socio-environmental interaction patterns. What are the substantial transformations that describe human development from 15,000 years ago to the beginning of Common Era? How did the interaction between natural environment and human populations change over time? What role did humans play as cognitive actors trying to deal with changing social and environmental conditions? Which factors triggered the transformations that led to substantial societal and economic inequality?

The understanding of human practices within the often intertwined social and environmental contexts is one of the most fundamental aspects of archaeological research. Moreover, in current debates, the dynamics and feedbacks involved in human-environmental relationships have become a major issue looking at the sometimes devastating consequences of human interference with nature. Archaeology, with its long-term perspective on human societies and landscapes, is in the unique position to trace and link comparable phenomena in the past, to study the human involvement with the natural environment, to investigate the impact of humans on nature, and the consequences of environmental change on human societies. Modern interlinked interdisciplinary research allows for reaching beyond simplistic monocausal lines of explanation and overcome evolutionary perspectives. Looking at the period from 15,000 to 1 BCE, the CRC 1266 takes a diachronic view in order to investigate transformations involved into the development of late Pleistocene hunter-gatherers, horticulturalists, early agriculturalists, early metallurgists as well as early state societies, thus covering a wide array of societal formations and environmental conditions.

The publication on Bell Beakers includes analyses and interpretations of new contexts and artefacts in relation to the aims of the CRC1266. We are very thankful to Jos Kleijne and to graphic illustrator Agnes Heitmann for their deep engagement on this publication and for organizing the whole publication process.

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Preface

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Jos Kleijne, Martin Furholt, Johannes Müller

“Think Global, Act Local!” was the theme of the conference we held in Kiel between the 17th and 21st of May 2017, focusing on the Bell Beaker phenomenon. This duality of local actions and global ideas is proving to be one of the most poignant themes of the current archaeological research landscape, probably also sparked by current political debates.

Within the Graduate School ‘Human Development in Landscapes’ this theme forms part of the scientific concept, focusing on how cultural environments develop, with respect to both natural and social constraints. Social constraints especially are formed by the aspects of “thinking global” and “acting local”. By studying the adaptation and innovation processes in relation to particular demographic and technological changes the Graduate School sought to inform these constraints and the development of these cultural environments.

Within the Collaborative Research Centre 1266 ‘Scales of Transformation’ this line of research has been deepened further by several subprojects. In subproject C1 the long-term socio-environmental transformations during the Neolithic of Northern Germany are studied, including the pivotal role played by the Bell Beaker phenomenon during the later 3rd millennium BC. Additionally, in subproject F1 the impact of environmental change on Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age societies in the Southern Iberian Peninsula is studied. The Bell Beaker phenomenon as a trans-regional complex, which links local societies with different backgrounds and histories, while at the same time being confronted with Europe-wide impacts of migration processes and climate change, is an emerging field of studies. In our conference, and throughout this volume, we provide an international background and a frame of reference by which we contextualise these research projects with examples from different regional and local backgrounds of the Bell Beaker phenomenon.

Both the conference and this volume received funding from the German Research Foundation (DFG) via the Graduate School GSC 208 ‘Human Development in Landscapes’ and the Collaborative Research Centre 1266 ‘Scales of Transformation. Human-Environmental Interaction in Prehistoric and Archaic Societies’ (project number 2901391021 – SFB 1266). For the practical arrangements of the conference we must thank especially the secretary support from Jirka Menke and Jennifer Schüle (Graduate School), Katharina Fuchs, Carsten Reckweg and Angelika Hoffmann (Collaborative Research Centre) and the practical support from our student assistants Anna-Lena Heyn and Dawid Baumgarten. Specifically for this volume we would like to thank the many anonymous peer-reviewers, the English corrections done by Eileen Kücükkaraca and Sarah Martini, and the incredible amount and quality of work done by layout designer Agnes Heitmann (Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte). Finally the publisher Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH is thanked for the publication opportunity.

