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Fakultetsstyret ved Det humanistiske fakultet

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## **Protokoll fra styremøtet ved Senter for tidlig sapiensadferd (SapienCE), 11.10.2024**

### Vedlegg

- 1 Protokoll fra styremøtet ved Senter for tidlig sapiensadferd (SapienCE), 11.10.2024



SAPIENCE  
CENTRE FOR EARLY SAPIENS BEHAVIOUR  
UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



Norwegian  
Centre of  
Excellence

Bergen  
23 October 2024

## SapienCE Board Meeting 2/2024 Meeting Minutes

The meeting on 11 October 2024, hybrid session (participants present in person and via Zoom)

### Meeting participants:

#### *Members with voting rights:*

- Chair, Camilla Brautaset, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen, Norway;
- Teemu Ryymin, Head of the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies, and Religion, University of Bergen, Norway;
- Rune Aune Mentzoni, Head of Department of Psychosocial Sciences, Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen, Norway;
- Atle Rotevatn, Head of the Department of Earth Science, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, University of Bergen, Norway (**Absent**);
- Aina Bergen **proxy** for Trond Martin Dokken, Executive Vice President, NORCE Norwegian Research Centre AS, Bergen, Norway;
- Marion Bamford (Director, Evolutionary Studies Institute, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa);
- Martin King, Professor, Department of Earth Sciences, Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom (**Absent**).

#### *Members with observer status:*

- Solange Rigaud (Chargée de recherche, CNRS, University of Bordeaux, France);
- Cosimo Posth (Junior Professor and Group Leader, Faculty of Science, Prehistory and Archaeological Sciences, University of Tübingen, Germany).

#### *Secretary of the Board:*

- Christopher Henshilwood, Director of CoE SapienCE, Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies, and Religion, University of Bergen, Norway.

#### *Observers:*

- Karen van Niekerk, Deputy Director of SapienCE, Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies, and Religion, University of Bergen, Norway;
- Simon Armitage, Deputy Director of SapienCE, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London, UK;
- Filmon Tesfai, Financial advisor to SapienCE, Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen, Norway.

*Minute taker:*

- Zarko Tankosic, Project Manager/Administrative Leader of CoE SapienCE, Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies, and Religion, University of Bergen, Norway.

**Agenda:**

08/24	Call to order.
09/24D	Minutes from the last Board meeting.
10/24D	Director's PowerPoint Presentation and Report, October 2023 – September 2024.
11/24D	Financial progress report for 2024.
12/24D	SapienCE budget 2025 and long-term.
13/24	The future appointment of deputy SapienCE Board members.
14/24	Any other business.

**08/24 Call to order**

Camilla Brautaset welcomed everyone. She particularly welcomed the new voting members Rune Aune Mentzoni and Aina Berg, the proxy for Trond Dokken, and suggested to begin with a round of introductions followed by the meeting proceedings.

**09/24D Minutes from the last meeting**

No comments or issues with the last meeting minutes were raised. The Chair thanks SapienCE Project Manager for detailed minutes that will contribute to the history of the Centre and that of UiB.

*Resolution:*

The Board meeting 1/2024 (spring) minutes were accepted by the SapienCE Board.

**10/24D Director's PowerPoint Presentation and Report, October 2023 – September 2024**

Director's report presented the background and highlights of SapienCE-related research in late 2023 and 2024. A written report from the Centre's Director was distributed before the meeting.

Director reiterated the structure of SapienCE as well as its main research questions and indicated the importance of both inside-UiB and international and national collaborations. The election of two new SapienCE Deputy Directors strengthened the leadership of the Centre. He then pointed to the importance of ECRs and expressed satisfaction with the many new ECRs recently employed (only one postdoctoral position remaining to hire), as well as satisfaction with their gender balance (predominantly female). The ECRs were employed with the needs of the Centre in the following three years in mind. The Centre now includes researchers of 22 different nationalities.

SapienCE successes reflected in the number of publications in the leading journals over the past seven years.

Fieldwork is an essential part of the project, including the one just completed at Blombos Cave (led by Karen van Niekerk) and Klasies River (led by SapienCE PI Sarah Wurz from Wits University). Blombos had its final field season in the spring of 2024 and the Director congratulated Dr. Karen van Niekerk on the successful leadership of the excavations at that site. The importance of Klipdrift Cave/Shelter was explained, with fieldwork there scheduled to resume in 2025. This site is logistically more challenging than Blombos.

The Director provided a summary of current processes within the Centre geared toward focusing SapienCE research in the following years of the Centre's existence as well as possible continuation of SapienCE-related research after the end of the Centre of Excellence in the autumn of 2027. The Scientific Advisory Committee meeting in Rosendal in the fall of 2024 and the SapienCE Team Meeting in Bergen in the spring of 2024 were particularly instrumental in driving this discussion forward. Also useful was the discussion the Centre had with representatives from the Norwegian Research Council (RCN) in the spring of 2024. The reports from the 2024 SAC meeting and the meeting with RCN have been distributed to the Board before the meeting.

The Director outlined the future research plans for the next three years of SapienCE per each research group, as proposed by SapienCE scientists at meetings over the past several months. Emphasis will be placed on data integration, synthesis, and publication as well as on the career development of new ECRs.

SapienCE ECRs have been very active within the Centre and have taken part in or organised many related activities. They are particularly important for Centre's fieldwork in South Africa, which also serves as an opportunity for teambuilding. Director is happy to report that SapienCE has a very content and well-integrated and productive team.

SapienCE teambuilding and outreach activities in both Norway and South Africa have been very successful in the past year, with much ECRs participation. We try to present our research to a wider non-scientific public. This can especially be seen in relation to the 'Early Human Behaviour' Exhibition at the University Museum of Bergen that opened in May 2023 and has been seen by more than 90 000 visitors since. Many SapienCE scientists have taken part in Museum-organised outreach activities in Bergen. SapienCE has two exhibitions in South Africa at SANParks Cape Point National Park as well as in De Hoop Collection Nature Reserve. In addition, in 2024 SapienCE researchers organised and participated in many outreach activities listed in the Director's report. Finally, plans are afoot to create a permanent SapienCE/Blombos exhibition at the Still Bay Museum that is mostly funded by Wits (through Vice-Chancellor funding awarded to the SapienCE Director), the Hessequa Municipality, and the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO funded project based in Riversdale.

C. Brautaset indicated how impressed she is by the SapienCE activities and particularly with the very successful publication record. SapienCE delivers on the aim of being transformative and integrating various scientific disciplines. She especially emphasised the excellent work in integrating ECRs and resolving the previous issues successfully, particularly thanking Simon Armitage, SapienCE Deputy Director in charge of ECRs, for his role in this process.

C. Brautaset invited the Board members to comment on the most recent SAC report submitted to the Board beforehand. In addition to all the positive SAC comments, it is good to see that there are *specific* suggestions for improvement that should be taken seriously and addressed, including at the next board meeting; very important are the data management and social media strategies.

C. Henshilwood indicated that it is also important to be explicit about the connectivity of research across different SapienCE research groups. In terms of recruiting more people of African origin, our positions have been open to all, however we acknowledge some shortcomings in that respect. Nevertheless, SapienCE collaborates with researchers from different backgrounds in South Africa that goes underreported. Since SapienCE does not have any open positions at UiB available, we

are planning to include scholars with different ethnic backgrounds in Centre's research in other ways in the future.

K. van Niekerk adds that SapienCE work is more focused on building the next generation of African scholars through exhibitions and outreach and the collaborative work on South African school curricula.

S. Armitage points out that SapienCE has made significant strides in integrating Centre's researchers with their colleagues in Africa by urging participation in African archaeological fora (previously conference participation focused mostly on Europe-based events). SapienCE also have a constant stream of collaborators from South African universities.

T. Ryymin believes that SAC recommendations are inspiring but also indicates the difference between achieving the realistic goals of SapienCE during the next three years and making good on the promises made versus planning for the potential post-CoE future. He also points out that UiB departments involved with SapienCE have agreed to consider supporting the continuation of SapienCE-related research in the future, under certain conditions. However, it is important to keep the focus on the successful completion of CoE SapienCE. He is delighted to see that ECRs are content with their treatment. Although he appreciates the desire of some SapienCE ECRs to expand their teaching experience, there are some constraints related to the sources of their funding, but the Department is working on addressing them and will help wherever possible.

Z. Tankosic explained that steps are underway to find good solutions for data storage, both operational and long-term: for example, the Centre has hired a database specialist to help with the redesign of the excavation database, which can be expanded to also include the curated objects. Objective difficulties remain, however; for example, the large sets of disparate data collected by different research groups need to be integrated somehow. SapienCE will eventually also involve UiB infrastructures that can help with this, e.g. the IT department. SapienCE Social Media group is active and maintains the consistent presence of SapienCE in the social media outlets.

#### *Resolution:*

The SapienCE Board takes the Director's report into advisement.

### **11/24D Financial progress report for 2024**

Z. Tankosic presented the financial progress report for 2024. He thanked Filmon Tesfai for his help and support with financial matters and informed the Board that SapienCE new financial advisor, Monica Pedersen, is scheduled to take over. The reports containing the relevant information have been distributed to the Board members prior to the meeting.

The total budget for 2024 as approved by the board in October 2023 stands at 29 million NOK, whereof 23,3 m NOK in funding from the Research Council (RCN) and 5,2 m NOK in UiB own funding and 0,5 m NOK own funding NORCE.

The accounts as per 30.09.2024 show the expenditure of 54% of the total 2024 budget. The spending by consortium partners outside of UiB is based on the amounts invoiced as of 30.09.2023. Costs may have been incurred by partner institutions that have not yet been invoiced to UiB, which is the coordinating institution. Regardless, the budget spending is proportionate to the time elapsed in the budget year.

The RCN basic funding has an average spending of 62 % of the RCN basic funding budget and the average spending for the special operating expenses (SOP) is 25 % of that budget item.

Both salary costs and other operating expenses show, respectively, a spending of 65 % and 21 % of the annual budget.

The total own contribution budget is estimated at 5,7 m NOK and consists of own financed positions and indirect costs not covered by the RCN lump sum at UiB and the consortium partner

NORCE. As of 30.09.2024 the accounts show 75% spending. This spending mainly accounts for spending at the UiB, since NORCE has not yet reported on their spending.

C. Henshilwood emphasized a generous contribution of Wits University of almost one million rand this year that will also be used to finance part of the excavation expenses in 2025.

C. Brautaset stated that it is imperative to get the invoices from our partners in a timely manner, which is beneficial for both the host institution and the consortium partners.

*Resolution:*

The SapienCE Board accepts the financial progress report for 2024.

## 12/24D SapienCE budget 2025 and long-term.

Z. Tankosic presented the budget for 2025 and long-term. The proposed budget was distributed to the Board members prior to the meeting.

The proposed budget for 2025 is 26,1 m NOK, thereof 19,5 m NOK in RCN funding, 6,3 m NOK in UiB own funding and 306 000 in other public funding. The 19,5 m NOK in RCN funding includes 2,9m NOK in unspent funding from 2023. In table 1 the RCN budget is shown per consortium partner.

Proposed budget 2024	UiB				Consortium partners					NOK total
	HF	MatNat	Psyk	Unalloc.	Wits	Norce	RH	PACEA	Tub.	
Q1 Henshilwood	913 550				496 469					1 410 019
Q2 Henshilwood	1 932 004									1 932 004
Q3 van Niekerk	567 514									567 514
Q4 Jansen/Dahl		940 544				2 202 335				3 142 879
Q5 Armitage							497 760			497 760
Q6 Henshilwood	258 738									258 738
Q7 Bender			1 086 186							1 086 186
Special Opex	422 048	193 850			1 062 593	88 000	98 000	668 500	196 060	2 729 051
Management/adm	4 934 298									4 934 298
Unallocated				2 942 296						2 942 296
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 028 152</b>	<b>1 134 394</b>	<b>1 086 186</b>	<b>2 942 296</b>	<b>1 559 062</b>	<b>2 290 335</b>	<b>595 760</b>	<b>668 500</b>	<b>196 060</b>	<b>19 500 745</b>

Table 1

The RCN funded budget for 2025 consists of approximately 15,5 m NOK for personnel costs and 3,9 m NOK in other operating expenses. The total own contribution is estimated at 6,6 m NOK and consists of own financed positions and indirect costs not covered by the RCN lumpsum at UiB and the consortium partner NORCE.

The total budget for fieldwork and laboratory costs is 2,7 m NOK. The budget for fieldwork and laboratory costs is 14 % of the total RCN funded budget for 2025.

Increased budget spending in 2025 will be driven primarily by the following factors:

- Arrival of new ECRs (all but one of the planned ECR hiring positions at SapienCE have now been filled) who will begin or continue the data collection stages of their SapienCE-related research, including the need to purchase or rent additional equipment, travel costs, and similar;
- Activities related to the preparation to switch the excavation sites from Blombos to Klipdrift Shelter/Cave in 2025;
- Continued laboratory analyses by both senior and junior SapienCE researchers;
- Increased SapienCE group integration activities, realized through seminars, workshops, and other types of meetings and events.



We do not anticipate overspending in 2025 on any of the currently budgeted funds, especially in light of considerable carryover funds from 2023 and likely 2024.

There have been no changes in the **long-term budget** in comparison to the budget that the SapienCE Board approved in October 2024 other than adjustments to the 2025 budget where a total of NOK 2,9 m in unspent funds from 2023 have been added to the 2025 budget (rollover).

As of 30.09.2024, 62% of the total 10-year RCN budget of NOK 140 m is spent.

C. Brautaset lauds the planning of the budget around the achievable goals. Points out the need for an overview of the budget per different activities.

Z. Tankosic indicated that we do have the breakdown of the budget per activity, e.g. research associated with various SapienCE Questions (Qs) and special operating expenses. The drawback is that most of these represent the sum of both salaries and operating expenses (drift). However, Centre's financial advisor and project manager monitor the spending of the operating expenses in real time, as salaries are less prone to overspending.

C. Brautaset asks for an update at the next Board meeting to assess the unspent funds and the needs of SapienCE until the end of the Centre's existence so the remaining budget can be adjusted accordingly.

C. Posth asked about the plans at Klipdrift and whether they include setting aside resources for analyses and the environmental reconstruction for the periods in question (as they are different than at Blombos). Also, is there a budget allocated to DNA testing of deposits from Klipdrift?

K. van Niekerk replied that Asia Alsgaard will be included in the planning of the Klipdrift research, as the co-excavator, so the plans are not finalised yet. Z. Tankosic emphasized that the Centre has funding available for analyses, whatever they may be, including unspent funding assigned to consortium partners.

S. Armitage replied that some of the climate reconstructions have already been produced that are relevant to Klipdrift. SapienCE will need to dedicate additional funds for various analyses of the newly excavated areas, but we do not see it as a challenge.

#### *Resolution:*

The SapienCE Board accepts the 2025 and long-term budget.

### **13/24 The future appointment of deputy SapienCE Board members.**

C. Brautaset informed the Board that Rune A. Mentzoni was officially appointed as a Board member by the Board of the Faculty of Humanities at UiB. She urges all the Board members to appoint their deputies and inform the chair of AHKR-UiB (T. Ryymin) about their decisions so they can be properly induced. The Deputy Board members should mirror the position of the permanent members that are currently represented in the SapienCE Board.

### **14/24 Any other business**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

C. Brautaset thanked and congratulated the entire SapienCE team on their achievements and thanked the Board for their work.

The date of the next Board meeting in the spring of 2025 was not decided.

**Meeting concluded at ca. 15:00 Bergen time.**

Camilla Brautaset  
Chair, SapienCE Board  
Dean, Faculty of Humanities, UiB

Christopher Henshilwood  
Secretary, SapienCE Board  
Director, SapienCE, UiB

***If no comments are submitted by 7 November 2024, these minutes will be considered approved.***