



SAPIENCE
CENTRE FOR EARLY SAPIENS BEHAVIOUR
UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



The Research Council of Norway

Bergen
09 June 2023

SapienCE Board Meeting 1/2023 Meeting Minutes

The meeting on 31 May 2023, 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;
- Torbjørn Torsheim, 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;
- Trond Martin Dokken, Executive Vice President, NORCE Norwegian Research Centre AS, Bergen, Norway (**absent**);
- Marion Bamford (proxy for Bruce Rubidge, Interim Director of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence in Palaeosciences, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa);
- Klaus Dodds, Professor, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway University of London, United Kingdom (**absent**).

Members with observer status:

- Solange Rigaud (proxy for Bruno Maureille, Senior Scientist, PACEA, University of Bordeaux, France);
- Cosimo Posth (proxy for Sireen El Zaatari, Researcher, Department of Palaeoanthropology, 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;
- Mari Knudsen, Financial Advisor, Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen, Norway;

Minute keeper:

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

Agenda:

01/23	Call to order.
02/23D	Minutes from the last Board meeting.
03/23D	Director's PowerPoint Presentation and Report, October 2022 – May 2023.
04/23D	Financial progress report October 2022 – May 2023.
05/23	SapienCE plans until the end of the Centre following the cancellation of the midterm evaluation by the Research Council of Norway.
06/23	Any other business.

01/23 Call to order

Camilla Brautaset welcomed everyone, especially the new representatives of SapienCE consortium partners.

She also congratulated everyone on the new SapienCE exhibition that just opened at the University Museum of Bergen and a successful cooperation between the two teams.

C. Henshilwood emphasised the important role that the SapienCE Project Manager Z. Tankosic played in the exhibition preparation and thanked him.

02/23 Minutes from the last meeting

No comments or issues with the last meeting minutes were raised, including minutes from the last regular Board meeting in October 2022 and the minutes adopted by circulation from April 2023.

Resolution:

The Board meeting 2/2022 (fall) minutes and extraordinary Board meeting by circulation (April 2023) minutes were accepted.

03/23 Director's PowerPoint presentation and Report, October 2022 – April 2023

Director's report presented the background and highlights of SapienCE-related research as well as the summary of the principal achievements of SapienCE scientists in the first phase of the Centre of Excellence (2017-2023).

A written report from the Centre's Director was distributed before the meeting. The Director gave a PowerPoint presentation on the activities of SapienCE since the last board meeting, including the summary of the first phase of SapienCE and an overview of future research plans. In this, the Director was assisted by the two SapienCE Deputy Directors who were present at the meeting.

The importance of fieldwork as process that underpins most of SapienCE research was emphasized.

SapienCE successes reflected in the number of publications in the leading journals over the past 5 years were mentioned. International collaborations, of which there are many, were emphasized, especially those in South Africa, including governmental and non-governmental agents. The diversity of its researchers is important for SapienCE success and the team now consists of researchers from 15 different nationalities. SapienCE employed additional early career researchers and there are imminent plans for further team expansion, also thanks to support from the participating UiB departments and the director thanked the Faculty of Humanities for accelerating the hiring process.

The director indicated the increase of SapienCE funding, which shows the confidence in the Centre of Excellence. Some of the sources of funding were particularly mentioned in the presentation.

The excavations at Blombos Cave in South Africa successfully continued in 2023 and K. van Niekerk summarised the results. AHKR and Wits University MA-students participated, like in 2022. The season also included limited geological and archaeological surveys and many outreach activities in the Hessequa and De Hoop (where Klipdrift Complex and Bloukrans Cave are located) regions. PI Sarah Wurz from Wits University also continued her excavations at the Klasies River site. The work on the analysis of the collected data continued in the Buitenkant Wits/SapienCE satellite lab in Cape Town with the assistance of Francesco d'Errico as well as AHKR and Wits University students. The Cape Town lab is crucial for SapienCE research. Fieldwork will continue and expand in the future and will likely switch from Blombos Cave back to the Klipdrift Complex in 2025, according to current plans. Fieldwork also plays an important role in SapienCE teambuilding and outreach.

The Director provided a summary of extensive internal evaluation and planning taking place in SapienCE in 2022/2023, especially at the meetings in Bergen in October 2022 and at Voss in May 2023. Details plans were formulated and key focus issues for SapienCE in phase II of the centre have been identified and agreed upon. SapienCE ECRs also took an active role in planning and showed much enthusiasm for, and initiative in, increasing their own activities.

SapienCE outreach activities have increased in South Africa and Norway. A booklet based on 'Mother Africa, Welcome Home' exhibition is published by Wits with SapienCE support and will be widely distributed to schools and tourism hotspots in South Africa. The same exhibition is about to re-open in the SANParks Cape Point national park under the name 'Origins of Early Southern Sapiens Behaviour', after moving from Johannesburg. It will have a major role in the visibility of Wits, SapienCE and UiB, as it will be accessible to the hundreds of thousands of tourists visiting the Cape Point national park. Another exhibition, in collaboration with Cape Nature, is planned in De Hoop Collections, Overberg Region, Western Cape, soon and will be accompanied by training for tourist guides from the local community.

The SapienCE exhibition titled 'Early Human Behaviour' successfully opened at the University Museum of Bergen on May 25 to a resounding success. The Director thanks all those involved in the preparation. SapienCE plans several outreach activities in the future centered on this exhibition and is collaborating with the Museum's educational department on planning.

C. Brautaset thanked C. Henshilwood on the presentation and congratulated SapienCE on their impressive work-record. She also thanked the SapienCE project manager for his contribution in strengthening the SapienCE team. The ability of the SapienCE team to come together following the Covid-19 disruption was also commended. She also believes that having SapienCE exhibition at the Museum leading up to the celebrations of that institution's 200th anniversary emphasises well the importance of archaeology for the Museum.

Resolution:

The Director's report is taken into advisement.

04/23 Financial progress report October 2022 – May 2023

Z. Tankosic presented the financial report for 2022 and the financial progress (spending) report for the period January-April 2023. He thanked Mari Knudsen for her help and support with financial matters. The reports containing the relevant information have been distributed to the Board members prior to the meeting.

The total SapienCE budget in 2022 was 24 million NOK (17 million financed by RCN and 7 million from UiB's own funding). The overall spending in 2022 was 73% of the budget, as expected due to latent Covid-19 effects. There has been some deviation (ca. 400 000 NOK) caused by delayed invoicing from partners. Looking purely at RCN budget, it shows spending of 96%. The overspending by NORCE is explained by a delayed 2021 invoice. The Special Operating Expenses (SOP), where most lab- and fieldwork costs are accounted, shows spending of only 16% of the budget, which is a deviation best explained by inactivity during Covid-19 times.

Finally, the salary budget assigned to the Department of Earth Science shows an overspending of 860 000 NOK due to delays in allocating funds to cover previously promised extension of a postdoctoral fellowship.

Resolution:

The Board accepts the financial report for 2022.

The 2023 SapienCE budget approved at SapienCE Board meeting in the fall of 2022 is in total 25 million NOK, of which 18,9 million in funding from RCN. Following a decision to reallocate funds between two departments at UiB that was made during the Board session by circulation in April 2023, that budget was increased to 20,6 million NOK. The reallocation was done between unspent budget for salary of administrative positions in year 2021 and the funding needed for the extension of two recruitment positions year 2022-2023.

At the end of April 2023, the accounts show 22% expenditure of the total budget, although some costs incurred by SapienCE partners may not have yet been invoiced by 30 April 2023. There is an 'unallocated' amount in the budget reserved for recruitment position that have yet to start. SOP part of the budget shows a 44% progression.

There are several expected costs in 2023, which were listed in the written report and are mostly connected to SapienCE research and team-building activities. This includes the costs of distribution of the newest Annual (glossy) Report of the Centre. The centre Director and the Chair of the Board congratulated the editorial team of the report on successfully completing this task.

C. Brautaset commented on the fluctuations in the value of the Norwegian krone and the current economic situation in Norway and acquainted the Board members with the likely causes. This affects the centre since most accounting is done in NOK. She asked M. Knudsen and Z. Tankosic to clarify the effects of this on the budget.

M. Knudsen replied that most of the risk of currency fluctuation lies on international partners due to NOK-based accounting. There is a possibility for re-budgeting if this burden becomes too difficult to bear.

C. Brautaset urges taking this into account when budget plans are made for the next Board meeting. There is an expectation of somewhat stronger Norwegian currency from August 2023.

Resolution:

The Board accepts the financial progress report for 01 January 2023-30 April 2023.

05/23 SapienCE plans until the end of the Centre following the cancellation of the midterm evaluation by the Research Council of Norway

The Centre Director presented the key priority research goals that SapienCE scientists have outlined on the last two team meetings. The goals are presented per research group (archaeology, climate, cognition) with the overarching goal to integrate the results of the three groups into a coherent narrative, where possible, and publish them jointly. The plans include the details on the topic of research, scientists assigned to lead the work, and funding sources. He was assisted in the presentation by Sapience co-Deputy Director S. Armitage, who presented details on the research plans for the Climate group, and Sapience co-Deputy Director K. van Niekerk, who did the same for Cognition and Archaeology.

T. Ryymin commented on the richness of SapienCE's data pool and the number of interesting lines of inquiry and asked how SapienCE plans to use the 10-year period of the project to produce a large narrative that integrates the different strands of research.

C. Henshilwood replies that this task is still ahead of us but is achievable, especially with the pool of researchers with which SapienCE collaborates. Bringing these people together in joint open discussion is vital to this task. It is still uncertain if there will be a book-size publication at the end of SapienCE that will bring all this research together or if we will choose different presentation forms and outlets.

S. Armitage pointed that our integration plans can also be seen in our staffing strategy for phase II of the centre, where we aim at hiring postdoctoral level researchers that can reach across disciplines. ECRs will play a sizeable role in this process. He added that there are also examples of sui generis integration on the initiative of some of our current researchers. In relation to this, C. Henshilwood emphasised SapienCE's ability and success in attracting international talent to the centre.

A. Rotevatn asked where SapienCE sees the contribution from Dr Eoghan Reeves, who recently joined SapienCE from Department of Earth Science. C. Henshilwood replied that E. Reeves will be mostly involved with the work on leaf waxes where his abilities and access to appropriate facilities will be best suited. He will be assisted in this task by a person in a future postdoctoral position to be based at and funded by the Department of Earth Science.

Resolution:

The Bord takes into advisement SapienCE plans for phase II of the centre.

06/23 Any other business

C. Brautaset wished to remind the Board that the guidelines for the 4th generation of the Centres of Excellence (SFF-IV) adopted by UiB are the only ones relevant for SapienCE. She also wishes to dispel the confusion that guidelines for previous SFFs have any bearing on the centre. Further, she urges everyone to familiarise themselves with these guidelines. Moreover, she reiterated that the contract between UiB and RCN also guides the SapienCE's Consortium Agreement, which is multilateral. She emphasises that all obligations from those agreements and guidelines have been prolonged by RCN until the end of SapienCE congruent with the decision to abolish plans for midterm evaluation on SFF-IV Centres of Excellence.

SFF-IV guidelines will be sent to all Board members attached to the meeting minutes.

The date of the next Board meeting in the fall of 2022 has not been set.

Camilla Brautaset thanked the Board members for their participation and especially to Christopher Henshilwood, Karen van Niekerk, Simon Armitage and Zarko Tankosic for the excellent work of SapienCE and for their presentations.

Meeting concluded at ca. 12:15.

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

Christopher Henshilwood
Secretary, SapienCE Board
Director, SapienCE, UiB

If no comments are submitted by 24 June 2023, these minutes will be considered approved.