



SAPIENCE
CENTRE FOR EARLY SAPIENS BEHAVIOUR
UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



Norwegian
Centre of
Excellence

Bergen
20 November 2023

SapienCE Board Meeting 2/2023 Meeting Minutes

The meeting on 31 October 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;
- 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.

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;

Minute taker:

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

Agenda:

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| 07/23 | Call to order. |
| 08/23D | Minutes from the last Board meeting. |
| 09/23D | Director's PowerPoint Presentation and Report, May 2023 – October 2023. |
| 10/23D | Financial progress report for 2023. |
| 11/23D | SapienCE budget 2024 and long-term. |
| 12/23 | Any other business. |

07/23 Call to order

Camilla Brautaset welcomed everyone, especially the new representatives of SapienCE consortium partners, which have been officially appointed to their positions on the SapienCE Board by the Board of the Faculty of Humanities at UiB.

She commended SapienCE on impressive results, including many publications.

C. Henshilwood emphasised the important role that the SapienCE Project Manager played in the preparation of the University Museum of Bergen exhibition and thanked him.

08/23 Minutes from the last meeting

No comments or issues with the last meeting minutes were raised. C. Brautaset commends the Project Manager on detailed minutes, which will eventually form the history of SapienCE.

Resolution:

The Board meeting 1/2023 (spring) minutes were accepted by the SapienCE Board.

09/23 Director's PowerPoint presentation and Report, May 2023 – October 2023

The Director also welcomed the new members of the Board. Director's report presented the background and highlights of SapienCE-related research in 2023 emphasising that SapienCE is now in its sixth year.

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 an overview of future research plans. Director particularly emphasised increased outreach activities by SapienCE and its affiliates. In the presentation the Director was assisted by the two SapienCE Deputy Directors who were present at the meeting.

Director recapitulated the structure of SapienCE for the benefit of the new Board members and indicated the importance of both inside-UiB and international and national collaborations, particularly emphasising SapienCE partners in South Africa. He pointed to the importance of ECRs and expressed satisfaction with the many new ECRs recently employed or soon to join the SapienCE team, as well as satisfaction with their gender balance (predominantly female).

SapienCE successes reflected in the number of publications in the leading journals over the past five 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 Director expressed his satisfaction with the team's achievements.

Fieldwork is an essential part of the project, including currently at Blombos Cave (led by Karen van Niekerk) and Klasies River (led by SapienCE PI Sarah Wurz). The importance of Klipdrift Cave/Shelter was explained, including the significance of work at that site that will continue in the future as part of the second phase of SapienCE. He urges the Board to read the reports by our research group in the written Director's report for details on the scientific activities. He also indicated that some of the resources acquired by SapienCE will drive research at SapienCE for many years to come (e.g. the deep-sea core procured by SapienCE and currently at NORCE).

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. He presented the details of the plans that were formulated and key focus issues for SapienCE in phase II of the centre. SapienCE will particularly focus on data integration, systematisation, and contextualisation, per Research Council of Norway's guidelines, and additional ECRs arriving to Bergen soon will tackle that important task. SapienCE ECRs also took an active role in planning and showed much enthusiasm for increasing their own activities.

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting at Norheimsund took place 2-4 October 2023 and was exceedingly successful. It was a chance for SapienCE researchers to get together and receive invaluable feedback from SAC members, who are all leading scholars in the field. The SAC report based on this meeting has been sent to the Board members. SAC members particularly commended SapienCE work with ECRs and the ECRs involvement in both scientific and outreach activities. This and other similar SapienCE meetings (e.g. in Voss in the spring of 2023) have been instrumental in increasing intra-SapienCE collaboration.

SapienCE outreach activities have increased in South Africa and Norway with much ECRs participation, especially in relation to the very successful 'Early Human Behaviour' Exhibition at the University Museum of Bergen that opened in May 2023. Many SapienCE members have taken part in Museum-organised outreach activities (e.g. Bergen Research Days, Archaeology Day, and similar). Our exhibition in South Africa opened at SANParks Cape Point National Park and has been a resounding success with daily streams of visitors requiring the training of additional guides. A colouring booklet based on 'Mother Africa, Welcome Home' exhibition is published by Wits with SapienCE support and has been widely distributed to schools and tourism hotspots in South Africa. Efforts are under way to attempt to bring the booklet to Norway.

An animation presenting the origins and dispersal of *Homo sapiens* across the world created by Craig Foster and his team has been shown to the Board. The animation will be included in the exhibitions in South Africa. Exact copies of hominin skulls will also enhance our exhibitions there. Finally, in collaboration with De Hoop Collection private resort and Cape Nature, another SapienCE exhibition will open in De Hoop Collections, Overberg Region, Western Cape, in November and will be accompanied by training program for tourist guides from the local community. De Hoop collection will also support SapienCE future research at Klipdrift Cave/Shelter by providing accommodation and storage for equipment.

C. Brautaset thanked C. Henshilwood and the SapienCE team on the presentation and commended the excellent work done by them. She especially emphasised the impressive international collaboration and referred to the SAC statement that this is one of a handful of such projects in the world. She pointed out the Centre's efforts in ECR career development. She particularly congratulated the SapienCE team on their outreach activities.

C. Henshilwood once again pointed out that teamwork is the cornerstone of SapienCE and that all congratulations should be addressed to the team as a whole.

M. Bamford asked what South African postgraduate students are involved with the Centre.

C. Henshilwood replied that SapienCE is working with a number of students supervised by Sarah Wurz and Jerome Reynard. K. van Niekerk added that we currently have our first South African ECR in Bergen, Jasmin Culey.

T. Ryymin: There has also been a public inquiry initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway on the ways that Norwegian educational institutions can contribute to cooperation with African countries. AHKR and SapienCE have contributed to this debate.

C. Brautaset: There have been unfortunate developments in the higher education in Norway initiated by the Government that resulted in the imposition of fees for all non-EU students. Additionally, the universities have been asked to reach income targets, which is not in spirit of Norwegian academia in the past and UiB has taken a clear stance against this. This will inevitably affect international collaboration.

T. Dokken congratulated SapienCE on its achievements and the project progress, especially in light of a stellar SAC report. He is happy to see that climate research is receiving a more prominent place in the project in connection with addressing archaeological questions. He is also impressed with the publication record and asks for the link to the presented animation, which will be provided pending the confirmation that there are no copyright issues.

C. Posth asked about how SapienCE envisions working on integration of all evidence in the future, in light of new ECR hires, and asks about details on ancient DNA work in the future.

S. Armitage replied that ECR with a specific task of working in data integration has not yet been appointed and we are in the process of advertising the position, which will be co-supervised between archaeology and climate research groups. Regarding ancient DNA, there has not been much progress due to poor preservation of evidence, but we proceed with palaeoproteomics work. SapienCE now awaits advances in analytical techniques before resuming ancient DNA work.

Resolution:

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

10/23D Financial progress report for 2023

Z. Tankosic presented the financial report for 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 2023 was 26 million NOK (20,6 million financed by RCN and the rest from UiB's own funding). After the adjustment for the recruitment positions timing, the RCN funded budget stands at 19,6 million NOK. The overall spending in 2023 by the end of September is 55% of the budget. The delayed invoicing from consortium partners likely skews somewhat these numbers, as we expect additional expenses. Looking purely at the RCN budget, it shows an average spending of 50% and the average spending on the Special Operating Expenses (SOP) is 35%. The 60% overspending on UiB laboratory expenses in 2023 does not reflect the carryovers from previous year and it stands at 89% when carryovers are included. Salary and other operating expenses show the spending of 54% and 57% respectively. 1,5 million NOK is funds reserved for recruitment positions. UiB own funding mostly consists of own financed positions with the account spending standing at 3,5 million NOK at the end of 2023.

Finally, in terms of forecast until the end of 2023, there is an increased spending related to more activities at SapienCE as well as in relation to additional recruitment positions and with them connected costs. It is expected to end the year with the total UiB spending of 13 million NOK and a carryover of 0,9 million NOK and in the light of no reported deviations in spending from the consortium partners, we estimate the total spending 17,9 million NOK in 2023.

Resolution:

The SapienCE Board accepts the financial progress report for 2023.

11/23D SapienCE budget 2024 and long-term

Z. Tankosic presented the proposed 2024 and long-term SapienCE budget. The budget proposal with additional information was distributed to the Board members prior to the meeting.

The proposed budget for 2024 is 29 million NOK, of which 23,3 in RCN funding, 5,2 in UiB own funding and 525 000 in other public funding. Of the total RCN funding of 23,3 million NOK, 16 million NOK is funding allocated to UiB activity and 7,3 is allocated to consortium partners. Please note that some potential unspent funding from the years 2021-2022 has been added to the 2024 budget. For 2024 the “unallocated” budget is 2,1 million NOK and is for the recruitment positions. This budget will be allocated to the correct research question once the positions are filled.

The RCN funded budget for 2024 consists of 17,5 million NOK for personnel costs and 5,8 million NOK in other operating expenses. The total own contribution is estimated at 5,7 million NOK and consists of own financed positions and indirect costs that are not covered by the RCN lumpsum at UiB and consortium partner NORCE.

The total budget for fieldwork and laboratory costs is 4,9 million NOK. The budget for fieldwork and laboratory costs is 21 % of the total RCN funded budget for 2024 and higher than the previous three years due to increased activities.

The increased spending of the budget funds in 2024 depends on the planned activity across SapienCE research groups and can be summarized as follows:

- Arrival of new ECRs who will begin 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 and 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, however, anticipate overspending on any of the currently allocated budgeted funds.

At the last meeting the Board requested information on how uncertainties in the currency exchange could affect the financial situation for SapienCE. Following up on that, we report that the Norwegian krone is the official currency in all collaboration agreements with partners based outside of Norway. Hence, as the arrangements stand now, the currency fluctuation risk falls on each consortium partner. In the case that the exchange rate does become an issue in the future, we encourage our partners to raise this issue through the Board so that alternatives for compensating for these discrepancies can be properly assessed.

There have been no changes in the totals of the long-term budget that the board approved in first half of 2023 other than adjustments to the 2024 budget where carryovers have been added.

Resolution:

The SapienCE Board accepts the 2024 and long-term SapienCE budget.

C. Brautaset asked Board members if they had any comments on the SAC report.

C. Henshilwood apologises for the delay in sending the SAC report and informs the Board that in the future there will be changes in the format of the SAC meeting, where the report will be composed during the meeting itself. There are several specific suggestions from the SAC that SapienCE will endeavour to incorporate in its work, and we will also formulate a reply to the SAC comments.

12/23 Any other business

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

Camilla Brautaset thanked the Board members for their participation and especially to SapienCE consortium partners.

The date of the next Board meeting in the spring of 2024 was not decided.

Meeting concluded at ca. 11:30 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 4 December 2023, these minutes will be considered approved.

Ettersendes.