Connected by Circles

Chronological Perspectives and Diffusion Patterns of Neolithic Enclosures in Central Europe

Prague, 20–21 Nov 2025

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CAS PRAGUE

Czech Academy of Sciences

STRATEGY AV21
Top research in the public interest

General Information

Circular enclosures are one of the hallmarks of the Central European Neolithic. Constructed to delimit specific areas, they were likely intended for communal activities, rituals, gatherings, or other purposes that channelled social interactions. The basic construction elements of ditches, trenches, and ramparts were shaped in various layouts that emerged in particular regions and periods of the Neolithic: palisade enclosures of late Linearbandkeramik, Middle Neolithic rondels, pseudo-ditch enclosures in Alsace, ditched enclosures of Münchshöfen culture in Bavaria, large causewayed enclosures of the Michelsberg and Funnel Beaker cultures, or ditch systems in Carpathian Basin to mention just some of them.

Despite their formal differences, archaeologists engaged in research of these early monuments face the same challenges in studying their detailed temporal and diffusion patterns. Many fundamental questions remain unanswered, which prevents us from moving our research forward.

The conference aims to gather researchers from various backgrounds but connected by interest in "circles" to discuss and share their approaches. We welcome scholars dealing with absolute dating, spatial analyses, experimental earthwork construction, and theoretical approaches to these questions that will help contextualise enclosures in their specific societies. Contributions may explore both local case studies as well as overarching supraregional perspectives.


Czech Academy of Sciences

Venue

CONFERENCE VENUE

Czech Academy of Sciences
Národní 3, 110 00 Prague, Czech Republic
Map available here

How to get there
By tram: "Národní divadlo" stop
By metro: "Národní" station (line B)

COFFEE AND LUNCH BREAKS

Coffee and lunch breaks will be provided directly at the venue. Drinks (coffee, tea, water) will be available from the morning. A small snack will be served during the coffee break.

Lunch will also be served at the venue in the form of a buffet. A vegetarian option will be available; however, for specific dietary requirements (e.g., gluten-free or lactose-free), the selection may be limited.

SOCIAL EVENING

Social evening is scheduled on Thursday 20 November from 19:00 at the U Medvídků Restaurant & Minibrewery (https://umedvidku.cz/en/).

Please note that the restaurant offers only a limited selection of vegetarian and vegan dishes. If you prefer such options, we can recommend several nearby restaurants, and you are warmly invited to join us later for a beer(s) at U Medvídků.

Dinner and drinks are self-funded.

ABOUT PRAGUE

You can find more information about visiting Prague here: https://prague.eu/en

STEERING COMMITTEE

Václav Vondrovský (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague)
Daniela Hofmann (University of Bergen)
Jaroslav Řídký (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague)

CONTACT

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Thursday 20 November 2025

9:00		Registration	Room 205, Czech Academy of Sciences Národní 1009/3, 110 00 Prague
10:00		Introduction	
10:15		Wolfgang Neubauer	Still Open Questions after 40 Years of Research – Investigating Middle Neolithic Circular Enclosures
10:35		Harald Stäuble	Rondels of the First Half of the 5th Millennium BC Revisited. What New Answers Do We Expect to Questions That Have Frequently Been Addressed?
10:55		Petr Květina & Petra Schindlerová	Middle Neolithic Circular Enclosures: Beyond and Before
11:15		Václav Vondrovský et al.	Mapping Neolithic Rondels in Central Europe
11:35		Tibor Lieskovský et al.	The Updated Database of the Neolithic Rondel Enclosures in Slovakia in the Light of Remote Sensing Data
11:55		Discussion	
12:10		Lunch break	
13:10		Mirosław Furmanek & Piotr Wroniecki	Neolithic Rondel Enclosures in South-Western Poland: New Discoveries and Perspectives from Non-Invasive Prospection
13:30		Rajna Sosic Klindzic et al.	One Circle for Everything – Purposes of Neolithic Enclosed Spaces in Eastern Croatia
13:50		Fynn Wilkes et al.	A Neolithic Surprise in Smilčić – The First Neolithic Rondel from Northern Dalmatia
14:10		David Ruß et al.	Magnetic Prospection of Neolithic Enclosures in Austria – New Monuments
14:30		Julia Strassberger & Wolfgang Neubauer	Spatial Analysis of Middle Neolithic Sites in Austria – Still More Circular Enclosures to Find
14:50		Discussion	
15:05		Coffee break	
15:30		Judit P. Barna et al.	On the Edge of a New Era. The Rondel Idea and the Emergence of the Lengyel Culture in the South-West Transdanubian Region
15:50		Wolfram Schier	The Rondels I and II at Quedlinburg (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany). Their Temporality and Construction
16:10		Václav Vondrovský et al.	Parallel or Successive? Chronological Relations of Middle Neolithic Rondels in the Prague Area
16:30		Jaroslav Bartík et al.	The Mohelno Rondels Cluster: Processes of Ditch Infill Formation in the Light of Geoarchaeological Research
16:50		Karin Riedhammer	Connected before Circles: The Early Middle Neolithic Cemetery in Straubing-Lerchenhaid and Its Connection to Bohemian Stroked Pottery
17:10		Discussion	
17:30		End	

19:00		Social evening (U Medvídků, Na Perštýně 345 /7, 110 00 Praha 1)

- Introduction: Framing the enclosures
- Surveying enclosures
- Dating enclosures

Friday 21 November 2025

9:00	Ingrid Kowatschek & Wolfgang Neubauer	The Middle Neolithic Kreisgrabenanlage at Schletz, Lower Austria – From Prospecting to Reconstruction
9:20	Jaroslav Řídký et al.	The Original Appearance of the Neolithic Rondels. The Way There and Back Again?
9:40	Mateusz Nowak	How Much for a Rondel? An Architectural Energetics Approach to the Study of Neolithic Rondel Building in Lower Austria
10:00	Cait Dickie	From LBK Ditched Enclosures to Lengyel Rondels: Comparison of Ditch Function at Vráble and Podhájska, Southwestern Slovakia
10:20	Discussion	
10:35	Coffee break	
11:00	Mirosław Furmanek	Reconstructing the Biography of an Early Eneolithic Ditched Enclosure in Dzielnica, South-Western Poland
11:20	Lech Czerniak	Social and Symbolic Transformations after the Demise of LBK in Lesser Poland: A Case Study of the Circular Enclosure at Targowisko, Site 12-13
11:40	Sidsel Wåhlin & Andreas B. Nielsen	Expanding the Circle(s): Stenildgård Timber Circle – an unexpected monument in the right location
12:00	Bine Kramberger et al.	Hilltop and Lowland Enclosures in the Southeastern Alpine Region: Current State of Research and Preliminary Results of a Multi-Scalar Study
12:20	Discussion	
12:35	Lunch break	

13:40	Thomas Saile	On the Persistence of the Earthwork Phenomenon in the Bavarian Neolithic: Case Studies in Their Cultural-Historical Context
14:00	Daniela Hofmann et al.	Enclosures as Sites of Ritual Innovation in Late Neolithic Bavaria
14:20	Daniel Meixner	Under Construction: The Late Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure of Buxheim (Southern Bavaria) as a Site of Ongoing Building Activity
14:40	Kalina Więcaszek	Defensive or Ceremonial? A Central Settlement of the Brześć Kujawski Culture Surrounded by a Ditch and a Palisade at Osłonki, Site 1 (Kuyavia, Poland)
15:00	Discussion	
15:15	Final discussion	
15:40	End	

- Reconstructing enclosures
- Development of enclosures
- Enclosures after the rondel tradition

THURSDAY 10:15

STILL OPEN QUESTIONS AFTER 40 YEARS OF RESEARCH – INVESTIGATING MIDDLE NEOLITHIC CIRCULAR ENCLOSURES

Wolfgang Neubauer (VIAS-University of Vienna)

After an initial phase of research, when circular enclosures were discovered more or less by chance, the first major excavation projects began, many still ongoing. In the 1980s, parallel to systematic aerial archaeology and the advance of large-scale magnetic prospecting, numerous monuments were added. At the beginning of the 1990s, the term "Kreisgrabenanlage" (KGA) was defined for these specific monuments found throughout Europe. During this period, Bavaria and Austria took the lead in systematically mapping these unique monuments, an approach that was also adopted in neighbouring countries. Numerous targeted excavation projects were set up to resolve questions that had first been raised during a conference in the mid-1980s. We currently know of around 70 KGAs in Austria alone, and in many cases, we are also aware of the associated settlements. On an international level, there are currently over 200 sites, all of which can be linked based on their specific features and dating, even though they occur in different prehistoric cultures. The key questions regarding these circular monumental structures also form the background for this conference. This paper will attempt to elucidate the general questions surrounding these very specific monumental structures (4850/4800 – 4650/4500 BC) against the backdrop of 40 years of research, to contrast the current findings with the numerous questions that still remain unanswered.

THURSDAY 10:35

RONDELS OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE 5TH MILLENNIUM BC REVISITED. WHAT NEW ANSWERS DO WE EXPECT TO QUESTIONS THAT HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN ADDRESSED?

Harald Stäuble (Archaeological Heritage Office Saxony)

Circular ditch systems (germ. KGA) or rondels can be dated to around 4800–4600/4500 BC and are found across large parts of East Central Europe and thus not only in different archaeological cultures but also different epochs. Research into this type of feature is now in its umpteenth iteration. This is legitimate in so far as this constantly revived occupation is usually accompanied by new finds, which are either determined by new methods and/or by the exploration of new landscapes. In this respect, the topics addressed in the invitation are not new, but can and must always be posed from time to time, because every new structure or research into it has the potential to provide new evidence for one or other hypothesis through detailed analyses – and perhaps also fortunate circumstances – or to refute current theories/speculations. Although this only applies to the one or other individual case being investigated, it always expands our imagination, which we need to understand this phenomenon. This contribution attempts to provide a comprehensive answer to the problems and questions raised on the basis of a number of Saxon cases.

THURSDAY 10:55

MIDDLE NEOLITHIC CIRCULAR ENCLOSURES: BEYOND AND BEFORE

Petr Květina (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Petra Schindlerová (Museum of Prague)

The prevailing interpretation of Middle Neolithic circular enclosures, or rondels, emphasizes their function as sites of ritual and communal gathering. These structures, and the activities conducted within them, appear to have been central to Neolithic social and religious life. Notably, rondels emerged as a novel phenomenon that persisted for a relatively brief period. This paper proposes an interpretive model grounded in the principles of social and spiritual behaviour in archaic societies. Emphasis is placed on the role of agency in shaping ritual transformations, particularly through the actions of sacred societies—groups that operated as custodians of ritual practice. In tracing the possible phylogenetic lineage of Middle Neolithic rondels, the paper focuses on the defining concept of spatial separation and concealment within enclosed areas. This perspective also invites a reinterpretation of certain enclosures associated with longhouses in both the Early and Middle Neolithic periods as potentially part of a shared symbolic tradition.

THURSDAY 11:15

MAPPING NEOLITHIC RONDELS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Václav Vondrovský (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Jaroslav Bartík (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Brno) – Kata Furholt (Kiel University) – Mirosław Furmanek (University of Wrocław) – Hrvoje Kalafatić (Institute of Archaeology, Zagreb) – Tibor Lieskovský (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava) – Jana Mellnerová Šuteková (Bratislava City Museum) – Joachim Pechtl (University of Innsbruck) – David Ruß (Natural History Museum, Vienna) – Jaroslav Řídký (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Harald Stäuble (Archaeological Heritage Office Saxony) – Bartul Šiljeg (Institute of Archaeology, Zagreb) – Rajna Šošić Klindžić (University of Zagreb)

Spanning Central Europe in the first half of the 5th millennium BC, Neolithic rondel enclosures mark the inception of monumental building traditions in the area. The steep rise in newly identified sites in recent years makes it difficult to analyse and understand this phenomenon fully. Therefore, we began a collaborative project to revise the existing state of knowledge and map all currently known rondels in Central Europe. Extracted from the literature and supplemented with the newest discoveries, the dataset comprises precise geographical position, key construction elements, and the state of research. Based on that, the paper presents an overview of rondel architecture and explores the main trends. Observing the variety of forms in different regions and contextualising our material with other enclosure types over a broader area, we argue that future research needs to reassess the understanding of rondel enclosures.

THURSDAY 11:35

THE UPDATED DATABASE OF THE NEOLITHIC RONDEL ENCLOSURES IN SLOVAKIA IN THE LIGHT OF REMOTE SENSING DATA

Tibor Lieskovský (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava) – Jana Mellnerová Šuteková (Bratislava City Museum) – Peter Demján (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Jakub Šperka (Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava) – Tomáš Rusňák (Institute of Landscape Ecology, Slovak Academy of Sciences)

We present the current database of Neolithic rondels as well as other rondels in Slovakia, which has increased in the number of new sites compared to previously published lists. We use various sources of information (published data, research documentation, geodata etc.) and a combination of methods in our project, which have different qualities of credibility. The key sources are remote sensing data (from 4 to 5 different types of aerial photography), then Google Earth and specialized visualizations from LiDAR. In the case of the presence of a rondel, we also verify and specify its exact location and size. The result is a geodatabase of rondels containing the method of identification, verification and the degree of credibility of the record as well. We will also present preliminary studies to assess the usability of this dataset for spatial analysis and computer visualisation applications. The aim is to obtain an open database of validated data that can be connected to the databases of rondels from other regions in Europe.

This work was supported by the grant APVV-22-0151: Krajina pod mračnom bodov – potenciál špecializovaného spracovania leteckého laserového skenovania s veľmi vysokým rozlíšením pre ochranu kultúrneho dedičstva na Slovensku and VEGA 2/0031/23 "Analysis and evaluations of the environmental history of selected types of Slovak landscape from the early prehistory to the present".

THURSDAY 13:10

NEOLITHIC RONDEL ENCLOSURES IN SOUTH-WESTERN POLAND: NEW DISCOVERIES AND PERSPECTIVES FROM NON-INVASIVE PROSPECTION

Mirosław Furmanek (University of Wrocław) – Piotr Wroniecki (Montefortino Prospection & Digitalisation)

For many years, it was widely believed that Neolithic rondel enclosures did not occur in Poland. This conviction was rooted in traditional interpretations, which viewed the areas north of the Carpathians and Sudetes as peripheral zones, distant from the cultural centres located to the south. It was assumed that any innovations reached these regions belatedly and in a degraded or impoverished form. A breakthrough came in 1998, when aerial prospection by Otto Braasch led to the discovery of the first such feature at Bodzów. Systematic and long-term aerial surveys conducted over the past several years in south-western Poland, supplemented by the analysis of publicly available satellite imagery, have resulted in the identification of additional rondel enclosures. In our presentation, we aim to discuss the significance, possibilities, and limitations of non-invasive prospection methods in the study of such structures. Furthermore, we will address the formal variability of the rondels, their spatial distribution, settlement contexts, and their broader impact on the shaping of cultural landscapes.

THURSDAY 13:30

ONE CIRCLE FOR EVERYTHING – PURPOSES OF NEOLITHIC ENCLOSED SPACES IN EASTERN CROATIA

Rajna Sosic Klindzic (University of Zagreb) – Kalafatić Hrvoje (Institute of Archaelogy Zagreb) – Šiljeg Bartul (Institute of Archaelogy Zagreb)

We present new results from systematic research on Neolithic circular enclosures in Croatia. Through aerial reconnaissance and satellite image analysis, we have identified approximately 100 enclosures across various regions, with most also visible in LIDAR data visualisations. Geomagnetic prospection has confirmed the presence of 10 enclosures to date, providing detailed plans and supporting their archaeological interpretation. These enclosures exhibit considerable diversity in form and function; detailed analyses indicate they served multiple purposes, including communal gathering spaces, houses and ritual areas. Our findings expand the known distribution of Neolithic enclosures and rondels in Croatia and offer new insights into the spatial organisation and social complexity of Neolithic communities in the region.

THURSDAY 13:50

A NEOLITHIC SURPRISE IN SMILČIĆ – THE FIRST NEOLITHIC RONDEL FROM NORTHERN DALMATIA

Fynn Wilkes (Kiel University) – Henry Skorna (Kiel University) – Kristina Horvat Oštrić (University of Zadar) – Johannes Müller (Kiel University)

This paper presents the initial results of a geomagnetic survey and the first test excavations at a newly discovered Neolithic rondel in Smilčić-Dugače, northern Dalmatia. Conducted in collaboration between the University of Zadar and Kiel University, the research aims to investigate Neolithic structures and landscape organization in the Adriatic region. A particularly unexpected outcome of the geomagnetic survey was the identification of the first Neolithic rondel in Dalmatia, a well-known Central European phenomenon, with the closest potential parallels found over 250 km to the northeast in Slavonia. The Smilčić rondel, with its complex multi-ditch system and apparent association to other enclosures at the site, likely dates to the Late Neolithic. Its discovery significantly expands the known geographic distribution of rondels and offers new perspectives on Neolithic connectivity and cultural expressions in the Adriatic. This discovery shifts the previously known borders of rondel distribution, expanding their spatial range further. The paper will present the geomagnetic plans along with preliminary excavation and coring results from the upcoming summer field season 2025, offering new insights into the construction, use, and significance of this surprising structure on the southern fringe of the rondel tradition.

THURSDAY 14:10

MAGNETIC PROSPECTION OF NEOLITHIC ENCLOSURES IN AUSTRIA – NEW MONUMENTS

David Ruß (Natural History Museum, Vienna) – Fabian Benedict (VIAS-University of Vienna) – Wolfgang Neubauer (VIAS-University of Vienna)

The systematic prospection of Neolithic enclosures started in Austria in the 1980s. They were a focus of systematic aerial archaeology at the aerial archive at the Institute for Prehistory and Historical Archaeology at the University of Vienna. Due to their complex shapes and good prospectability, the Middle Neolithic Kreisgrabenanlagen (KGA) in particular provided the impetus for the development of efficient and high-resolution magnetic prospecting for large-scale application. The massive soil erosion that had occurred throughout the loess soils of Lower Austria was one of the reasons for the development of new systems so that the complete structural design of these unique monuments could be rapidly recorded. After the first monuments from the Middle Neolithic period had been mapped, a systematic survey of all known sites with circular enclosures was carried out for the first time in 2003-2004. With the completion of this project, more than 40 such sites in Lower Austria were documented, mapped and published. Systematic prospecting has continued over the last 20 years, enabling us to locate around 70 circular ditch systems in Austria. In addition to single, double, and triple structures, a quadruple structure was also documented in Austria for the first time. In some of these structures, a continuity of area use from the early Neolithic Linear Pottery culture to the Middle Neolithic painted pottery of the Lengyel culture was documented. The degree to which this also implies a continuity of the settlers themselves is an open question when compared to other contemporary sites.

THURSDAY 14:30

SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF MIDDLE NEOLITHIC SITES IN AUSTRIA – STILL MORE CIRCULAR ENCLOSURES TO FIND

Julia Strassberger (VIAS-University of Vienna) – Wolfgang Neubauer (VIAS-University of Vienna)

The systematic mapping of all Kreisgrabenanlagen (KGA) in Bavaria and Austria using magnetic prospecting up to 2005 has shown that KGAs were rarely built in the area of earlier Linear Pottery settlements. It was also extremely striking that these sites were built at short distances from each other within a short period of time. There are now around 200 confirmed monuments from the entire area where KGAs are found, which makes it possible to analyze their spatial distribution in greater depth. It has been shown that KGAs form distinct clusters throughout the entire distribution area and are not regularly distributed across the loess areas. Individual monuments have now also been documented outside the loess soils. The aim of this project is to define various standard parameters and subject them to spatial analysis. The results show that the selection of settlement areas was very specific and differs significantly from the selection criteria of

the Linear Pottery culture settlers. Since we know of numerous other contemporary sites in Austria for which no KGAs have yet been discovered, we attempted to use predictive modeling to create a probability map of locations where previously undiscovered KGAs are plausible. It has been found that further KGAs are to be expected, especially in forested areas or in areas with well-preserved black earth soils. Initial checks have already confirmed the established models, so we assume, that a number of further monuments, due to the good soil conservation even better preserved, can be found through targeted magnetic prospecting in the future.

THURSDAY 15:30

ON THE EDGE OF A NEW ERA. THE RONDEL IDEA AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE LENGYEL CULTURE IN THE SOUTH-WEST TRANSDANUBIAN REGION

Judit P. Barna (Hungarian National Museum Public Collections Centre National Institute of Archaeology) – Zsuzsanna Siklósi (Eötvös Lorand University) – Gábor Kalla (Eötvös Lorand University) – Emília Pásztor (Türr István Museum) – István Eke (Directorate of Zalaegerszeg Muzeums) – Zita Mária Tokai (Hungarian National Museum Public Collections Centre National Institute of Archaeology) – Tamás Látos (Hungarian National Museum Public Collections Centre National Institute of Archaeology)

At the beginning of the 5th millennium BC, one of the most striking features of the emerging Lengyel culture was the rapid spread of rondel construction. The formation of the Lengyel culture is particularly well documented in the south-west Transdanubian region, due to large-scale archaeological excavations conducted in the early 2000s and the ongoing micro-regional research focused on rondels. This area played a key role in the development of both the Lengyel culture and the concept of the rondel. Our long-term research programme on the Zalaapáti Ridge focuses on three rondels near the villages of Gétye, Ligetfalva, and Bezeréd. These structures differ in layout and construction, and we are investigating the background of this diversity in relation to chronological, social, cultural, and economic factors. We began our programme by studying the simplest of the three, the rondel at Gétye. This enclosure currently represents the earliest known rondel within the entire distribution area based on Bayesian modelling of seven AMS dates. Furthermore, these are also the earliest known dates for the formative phase of the Lengyel culture. Our findings offer new perspectives not only on the interpretation of these three rondels but also on the broader process of the Lengyel culture's formation and the central role the rondel concept played in it.

THURSDAY 15:50

THE RONDELS I AND II AT QUEDLINBURG (SAXONY-ANHALT, GERMANY). THEIR TEMPORALITY AND CONSTRUCTION

Wolfram Schier (Free University of Berlin)

The rondel Quedlinburg II was completely excavated due to road construction work in 2004-05, whereas rondel I, 5 km east of II, was excavated in representative parts by the Free University Berlin in 2010–2016. Both rondels were built during the later phases of the

Stroke Pottery culture, but show considerable differences in their layout and construction details. More than 80 short-lived radiocarbon samples from both rondels have been the basis for Bayesian calibration models, shedding light on the remarkably short duration of rondel I and the much longer use life of rondel II. They also provide evidence for an immediate succession of both rondels.

THURSDAY 16:10

PARALLEL OR SUCCESSIVE? CHRONOLOGICAL RELATIONS OF MIDDLE NEOLITHIC RONDELS IN THE PRAGUE AREA

Václav Vondrovský (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Karel Říha (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Olga Trojánková (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague)

Understanding the Middle Neolithic rondel phenomenon requires detailed examination of their chronological relationships and distribution patterns. Does the archaeological map of rondel sites represent a synchronous network of nodes, or is it rather a palimpsest of enclosures constructed and used at different times? Several models can be considered, ranging from simultaneous emergence and abandonment, a gradual emergence with contemporaneous end, to individualised chronologies spanning a wider period. The paper contributes to the discussion through a case study on three sites in the Prague area – Krč, Ruzyně, and Vinoř – together featuring four rondel enclosures. These sites are not only spatially proximate but also exhibit formal similarities of rondel construction and evidence of structured depositions. Chronological relations are examined using Bayesian modelling of radiocarbon dates obtained from rondel ditches. The models reflect the depositional dynamics by implementing the residuals-rondel-refuse framework.

THURSDAY 16:30

THE MOHELNO RONDELS CLUSTER: PROCESSES OF DITCH INFILL FORMATION IN THE LIGHT OF GEOARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Jaroslav Bartík (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Brno) – Katarína Adameková (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Brno) – Petr Škrdla (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Brno) – Peter Milo (Masaryk University, Brno) – Tomáš Tencer (Masaryk University, Brno) – Jaromír Kovárník (Independent researcher) – Jan Novák (Charles University, Praha) – Šárka Hladilová (Masaryk University, Brno) – Libor Petr (Masaryk University, Brno) – Milan Vokáč (Museum Vysočiny Jihlava) – Martin Košťál (Masaryk University, Brno)

The Mohelno rondels cluster in southwestern Moravia (Czech Republic) represents a remarkable concentration of three monumental Neolithic circular enclosures. This unique grouping, with each rondel positioned on a low promontory and separated by 600–800 m, offers an exceptional opportunity to investigate Neolithic settlement organisation and dynamics, as well as landscape evolution. While a provisional dating to the Lengyel Culture (c. 4900–4300 BC) exists based on surface surveys, their precise chronology and interrelationship are the focus of a current multidisciplinary project. This paper presents a geoarchaeological investigation of the rondel ditch infills, treating them as high-resolution archives of site formation, anthropogenic activity, and local environmental change. We employ a multi-proxy methodology, combining detailed sedimentological and soil micromorphological analyses together with physico-chemical and archaeobotanical data. This is complemented by radiocarbon dating, which allows us to reconstruct the complex depositional histories of the ditch infills. By embedding these analyses within a broader landscape perspective, incorporating geophysical prospection as well as archaeological and regional palaeoecological data, our research contributes to the understanding of transformations in Neolithic landscapes and the dynamic interactions between humans and their environment.

THURSDAY 16:50

CONNECTED BEFORE CIRCLES: THE EARLY MIDDLE NEOLITHIC CEMETERY IN STRAUBING-LERCHENHAID AND ITS CONNECTION TO BOHEMIAN STROKED POTTERY

Karin Riedhammer (Independent researcher)

The cemetery of Straubing-Lerchenhaid, discovered in 2021, fills an important gap in our knowledge of burials in the early Middle Neolithic period in southern Bavaria. It was located on a loess-covered high terrace, on which extensive settlement activity during the Early and Middle Neolithic is known. It is 750 metres away from the settlement area excavated in 1980, which is of the same date. The 30 graves are predominantly cremations. The inventories are very uniform and contain pottery from the archaic phase of the Stroked Pottery. Based on the numerous pottery artefacts, SOB I phase can now be reliably divided into the sub-phases SOB Ia and Ib. There are also burnt stone axes and artefacts made of Abensberg Arnhofen chert. The burial form and the ceramic finds from Lerchenhaid are typical of the beginning of the Middle Neolithic in Bavaria and Bohemia. The closest comparisons can be found in Praha-Bubeneč. Already during the ongoing research it became apparent that the cemetery represents an important source for the relationships between Bohemia and southern Bavaria at the time of the early Middle Neolithic, shortly before the appearance of Middle Neolithic rondels in both regions.

FRIDAY 9:00

THE MIDDLE NEOLITHIC KREISGRABENANLAGE AT SCHLETZ, LOWER AUSTRIA – FROM PROSPECTING TO RECONSTRUCTION

Ingrid Kowatschek (VIAS-University of Vienna) – Wolfgang Neubauer (VIAS-University of Vienna)

The Kreisgrabenanlage (KGA) at Schletz, discovered by systematic aerial archaeology, is the smallest found to date and one of the earliest in Austria. It was investigated in the 1980s through two initial test trenches, which confirmed its Middle Neolithic date. In the mid-1990s, the site was extensively surveyed using magnetic prospecting followed by two targeted stratigraphic excavations, investigating the area of the eastern entrance and a sunken dwelling. The complete analysis of the finds from these excavations was recently completed and the results will be presented for the first time. Based on the detailed excavation plans and comprehensive prospecting, the Schletz KGA was selected in 2005 for the Lower Austrian County Exhibition at Heldenberg. The circular enclosure and associated dwellings were reconstructed at a scale of 1:1 for this exhibition by the experimental archaeology team at the University of Vienna. This enabled studies on the amount of work and resources required to erect such a monument, as well as considerations on the settlement structure and social organization. The results shed new light on numerous general questions and have shaped the image of this period through the museum presentation and the reconstruction model. Parallel investigations of the preceding fortified Linear Pottery settlement of Asparn an der Zaya/Schletz, 3 km distant, have led to new hypotheses about the establishment of KGAs and the related settlements of the following Middle Neolithic period.

FRIDAY 9:20

THE ORIGINAL APPEARANCE OF THE NEOLITHIC RONDELS. THE WAY THERE AND BACK AGAIN?

Jaroslav Řídký (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Petr Vavrečka (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague) – Karel Říha (Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague)

One of the main questions about Neolithic rondels is what they originally looked like. Even after fifty years of research, we still do not know their exact appearance. Which part of the rondel was the most important? How long did the wooden structures inside, which were placed in the ground, last? Is it possible that important parts of the rondel are missing today? How long did it take for the V-shaped ditches to fill up naturally? The best answers to these questions come from complete and fully uncovered ground plans of rondels. However, only a few of these ground plans have been found. One of them is the rondel in Prague-Vinoř, located in Central Bohemia, Czech Republic. This site was excavated between 2022 and 2023. After the excavation, the entire ground plan was left uncovered. This made it possible to document the structure at different times of the year and during different weather. The internal structures, called palisade trenches,

have a different shape at the entrances compared to other rondels. Is this difference due to the current state of research, or was each rondel built differently? Did the inner and outer palisade walls form a circular house? Or were they filled with different materials, as suggested by reconstruction models from the 1980s? This presentation will show several virtual reconstructions of this special building.

FRIDAY 9:40

HOW MUCH FOR A RONDEL? AN ARCHITECTURAL ENERGETICS APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF NEOLITHIC RONDEL BUILDING IN LOWER AUSTRIA

Mateusz Nowak (University of Wrocław)

During the Middle Neolithic, circular enclosures known today as "rondels" became a widespread landmark of Central Europe. Their dense distribution in some regions inspired the interpretations of these structures as focal points for the local communities. Although the architecture of these structures follows the same basic principles, we can still see a big diversity in the composition of their structural elements, as well as their sizes. To understand the effort needed for the construction of those monuments I employed the approach of architectural energetics. In my talk, I will present both its methodology and the results in the form of man-hour values needed for the construction of chosen structures located in the region of Lower Austria. The presented case studies will include features of varying levels of complexity, to better envision the differences between the sites. The acquired data can help us to understand the scale of the challenge that the construction of rondels posed for past communities. It can also be useful for addressing the capacity of Neolithic societies to finish the whole construction in one event – a topic that is still highly debated.

FRIDAY 10:00

FROM LBK DITCHED ENCLOSURES TO LENGYEL RONDELS: COMPARISON OF DITCH FUNCTION AT VRÁBLE AND PODHÁJSKA, SOUTHWESTERN SLOVAKIA

Cait Dickie (Kiel University)

This paper explores the changing function and meaning of Neolithic ditched enclosures in Southwestern Slovakia, focusing on two key sites: Vráble (LBK) and Podhájska (Lengyel). While both sites feature substantial ditch systems, their construction, spatial relationship to settlements, and archaeological signatures suggest differing roles across time. The LBK enclosures at Vráble appear to serve more pragmatic purposes: marking settlement boundaries, managing movement, and possibly offering limited defence. In contrast, the Lengyel rondel at Podhájska, with its formal circular layout, controlled entrances, and absence of domestic occupation, likely served another purpose. By comparing indicators such as community proximity, evidence of conflict, material culture, enclosure design, and labour estimates, this study highlights a broader socio-cultural shift from functional to symbolic landscape use. The increasing architectural complexity and coordination in the Lengyel period suggest the emergence of new forms of social organization, identity expression, and ditched enclosure function. This diachronic comparison contributes to

ongoing debates about the evolution of early Neolithic community structures and the role of monumental architecture in expressing and shaping social relationships.

FRIDAY 11:00

RECONSTRUCTING THE BIOGRAPHY OF AN EARLY ENEOLITHIC DITCHED ENCLOSURE IN DZIELNICA, SOUTH-WESTERN POLAND

Mirosław Furmanek (University of Wrocław)

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the results of comprehensive archaeological research on an Early Neolithic ditched enclosure at Dzielnica, located in south-western Poland. The investigations combined non-invasive methods, including geochemical analysis (phosphate testing), magnetic prospection, aerial photography, and long-term archaeological excavations. One of the primary objectives was to reconstruct the "biography" of the site—its spatial layout, phases of use, and its function. The results revealed the complex, multi-phase character of the site, interpreted as a palimpsest of activities by Neolithic, Eneolithic, and Bronze Age communities. The study identified both continuity and transformation in settlement, economic, and ritual practices over time. The Early Eneolithic ditched enclosure was one key element in this local trajectory of landscape development. Geochemical and magnetic anomalies defined the extent of the enclosure and indicated areas associated with settlement, ritual activities, and potential burial zones. The integration of archaeological and environmental data provided new insights into the relationship between prehistoric communities and their landscape. The Dzielnica case study demonstrates how an interdisciplinary approach enables the reconstruction of complex narratives associated with the function, spatial organisation, and socio-cultural role of prehistoric ditched enclosures across the Neolithic, Eneolithic, and Bronze Age periods.

FRIDAY 11:20

SOCIAL AND SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATIONS AFTER THE DEMISE OF LBK IN LESSER POLAND: A CASE STUDY OF THE CIRCULAR ENCLOSURE AT TARGOWISKO, SITE 12-13

Lech Czerniak (University of Gdańsk)

Regardless of the indications of continuity in the transformation processes that marked the end of the LBK era and the beginning of post-LBK cultures, phenomena of ‚destruction and transformation of traditional worlds of symbols' can be observed ubiquitously. This is evidenced by the relocation of settlements, alterations in house construction and burial practices, the emergence of a new pottery style and especially the construction of rondels as a particular form of circular enclosures. Therefore, even if extraordinary causes for the collapse of the LBK, such as climate change, armed conflicts, epidemics, depopulation, and migrations, were at play, the most intriguing aspect appears to be the resultant social and symbolic transformations. The subject of this presentation is the analysis of a settlement complex located in the Tusznica River valley. The complex consisted of six LBK villages and four of the Malice culture. An exceptional site is Targowisko 12-13,

comprising at least six houses and ceremonial center in the form of a circle consisting of a ditch, palisade, and a house within it. This structure likely embodied the new ideas through which social and religious changes were articulated.

This paper is an output from the NSC Poland project, OPUS20 (2020/39/B/HS3/02529).

FRIDAY 11:40

EXPANDING THE CIRCLE(S): STENILDGÅRD TIMBER CIRCLE – AN UNEXPECTED MONUMENT IN THE RIGHT LOCATION

Sidsel Wåhlin (Vesthimmerlands Museum) – Andreas B. Nielsen (Vesthimmerlands Museum)

Neolithic mega and large structures in the form of causewayed enclosures and connected ritual landscapes are well documented in Denmark. However, late middle and late Neolithic as well as early Bronze Age large-scale monumental structures are currently less documented. In January 2025, a 30m wide circle featuring 45 postholes was unearthed at a large excavation in Stenildgaard, Aars, Denmark. It resembles the timber circles of Britain and the Netherlands, which, in their late phases, seem connected to the Bell Beaker phenomenon. Thus, as the circle looked like a timber circle, we interpreted it as such. However, the first five C14 dates place it in the Danish Early Bronze Age, and thus the function is up for debate. The inner structure of five Neolithic pits indicates that perhaps it is a long-running ritual site, beginning in the 3rd and ending in the 2nd millennium BC. In Danish archaeology, there is a certain resistance against describing a site as ritual or cult connected; a prosaic interpretation is much preferred. Thus, defining a site as 'cultish' is traditionally a last resort. So even if the Stenildgaard Circle mostly resembles the British and European timber circles in size and shape, it is argued by other archaeologists that a hitherto unprecedented symmetrical and large-scale cattle pen is the safer interpretation simply because it would be non-ritual. This presentation will address these reservations, but the authors still interpret the large, very precisely erected structure as ritual and will present possible interpretations in relation to the European phenomenon of circle structures.

FRIDAY 12:00

HILLTOP AND LOWLAND ENCLOSURES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN ALPINE REGION: CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH AND PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A MULTI-SCALAR STUDY

Bine Kramberger (Institute of Archaeology, ZRC SAZU) – Alenka Tomaž (University of Primorska) – Anton Velušček (Institute of Archaeology, ZRC SAZU) – Borut Toškan (Institute of Archaeology, ZRC SAZU) – Tjaša Tolar (Institute of Archaeology, ZRC SAZU) – Alenka Jovanović (Arhos d.o.o.) – Gojko Tica (Tica Sistem d.o.o.)

Since the 1990s, research has established that the earliest fortified hilltop sites in the Southeastern Alpine region date back to the 5th millennium BCE. Investigations by the Institute of Archaeology have shown that some of these sites were enclosed by stone

walls and were intermittently occupied during distinct periods from the Late Neolithic to the Copper Age. In 2009, the first – and so far only – known fortified lowland site in the Southeastern Alps was identified at Dolenji Leskovec. This site, associated with the Sava group of the Lengyel culture (Late Neolithic), features an activity area with pits containing material culture, enclosed by a double circular palisade. Despite these significant discoveries, the functional and chronological relationships between fortified hilltop and lowland sites remain poorly understood, as do the motivations behind fortification. No architectural remains have been found within the enclosures, and the duration of individual occupation phases, as well as the dating of the fortifications, remain unresolved. This study presents the current state of research on enclosures in the Southeastern Alps and aims to shed new insight into these questions through preliminary results from comprehensive analyses conducted at Dolenji Leskovec, including pottery analysis, archaeobotanical and archaeozoological studies and radiocarbon dating.

FRIDAY 13:40

ON THE PERSISTENCE OF THE EARTHWORK PHENOMENON IN THE BAVARIAN NEOLITHIC: CASE STUDIES IN THEIR CULTURAL-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Thomas Saile (University of Regensburg)

Several earthworks were constructed over the course of a millennium as outstanding joint achievements on a large Neolithic settlement site in the north-western Gäuboden (Upper Palatinate). An enclosure of the Linienbandkeramik was replaced by a Middle Neolithic complex, which was followed by multi-phase ditch rings of the Münchshöfen culture. The ditch systems on both sides of the middle course of the Pfatter had a rather short-lived and transient character. What is remarkable, however, is the persistence of the idea to construct monumental enclosures in the region over many generations. There is also evidence of such earthwork complexes at other significant sites in the Neolithic settlement landscape. They are of particular importance as venues for performative practices in the context of symbolic communication. It was here that Neolithic communities presented their value systems, collective orientations and interpretations of the world in rituals and ceremonies.

FRIDAY 14:00

ENCLOSURES AS SITES OF RITUAL INNOVATION IN LATE NEOLITHIC BAVARIA

Daniela Hofmann (University of Bergen) – Márton Szilágyi (Eötvös Loránd University) – Ludwig Husty (Kreisarchäologie Straubing-Bogen)

The second half of the fifth millennium BC in central Europe is a time of great changes: new prestige goods like jade and copper begin to circulate, potentially leading to greater social inequalities, and new kinds of ritual expression and burial customs are introduced. Not least, the period sees the establishment of new kinds of enclosures in a variety of shapes. But what is their role in facilitating wider social processes? Looking at the case study of Riedling, a Münchshöfen enclosure in Lower Bavaria, we investigate who the builders and users of this monument may have

taken place here, and what role this (potentially rather short-lived) site played in the new kinds of political and social negotiations at the start of the Copper Age.

FRIDAY 14:20

UNDER CONSTRUCTION: THE LATE NEOLITHIC CAUSEWAYED ENCLOSURE OF BUXHEIM (SOUTHERN BAVARIA) AS A SITE OF ONGOING BUILDING ACTIVITY

Daniel Meixner (University of Regensburg)

Causewayed enclosures of the Late Neolithic Münchshöfen culture in Southern Bavaria display considerable variability in layout, ditch configuration, and completeness—suggesting a range of possible functions. At the very least, these enclosures appear to have served as gathering places for activities involving one or more groups. The site of Buxheim, located at the northern fringe of Southern Bavaria, was fully excavated between 1996 and 1998. Excavations revealed a rectangular causewayed enclosure, with ditches containing pottery from both the local Münchshöfen culture and various epi-Rössen groups from Northern Bavaria, the Nördlinger Ries, and possibly the Upper Danube region. Remarkably, around 600 kg of plate chert—sourced from nearby deposits—were recovered, suggesting the site functioned, at least partially, as a production and distribution center for pre-formed chert cores. These cores were likely processed into blades elsewhere. The enclosure consisted of up to five distinct ditches, positioned adjacent to and overlapping one another. Each ditch was segmented, variably shallow or deep, and exhibited signs of repeated recutting. Radiocarbon dating indicates a usage span of approximately 100 years, during which the site appears to have remained in a near-continuous state of construction. This pattern suggests that the significance of the enclosure may not have resided in its completed form, but rather in the act of construction itself—as an ongoing, communal activity that promoted social cohesion. An alternative, or perhaps complementary, interpretation is that the builders' focus may not have been the ditches themselves, but rather now-lost ramparts, which were periodically raised by digging new ditches.

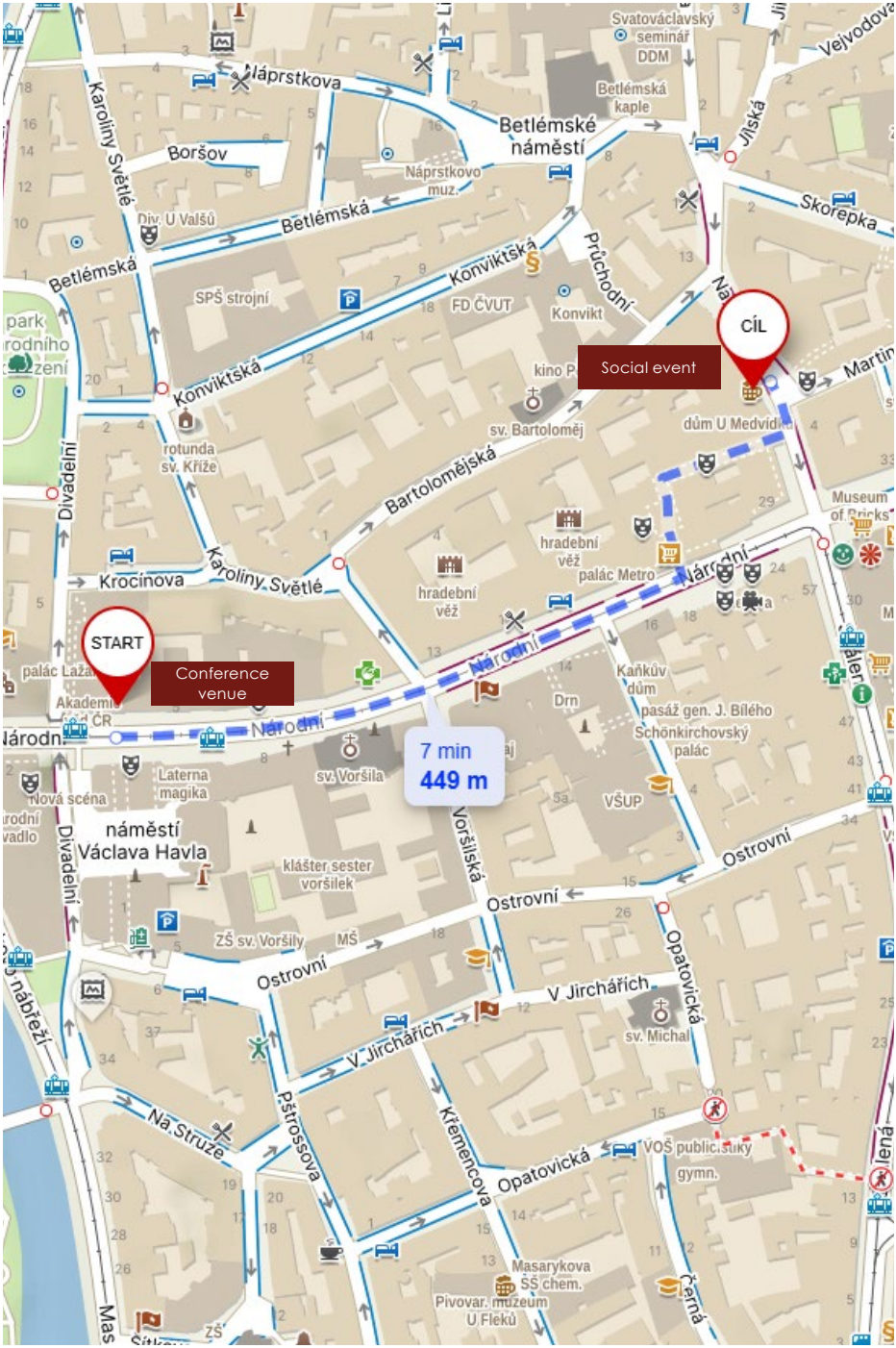
FRIDAY 14:40

DEFENSIVE OR CEREMONIAL? A CENTRAL SETTLEMENT OF THE BRZEŚĆ KUJAWSKI CULTURE SURROUNDED BY A DITCH AND A PALISADE AT OSŁONKI, SITE 1 (KUYAVIA, POLAND)

Kalina Więcaszek (University of Gdańsk)

By the second half of the fifth millennium cal. BC rondels were already a memory of the past, but ca. 4400/4350 cal. BC new types of enclosures began to appear south of the Lowlands, i.a. in the Lublin-Volynian culture, Jordanów and Schiepziger culture. The main focus of this paper is the central settlement of the Brześć Kujawski culture (4350-4000 cal. BC) at Osłonki, which was surrounded by a ditch and a palisade. Their construction, in its architectural concept, seems to be closer to the idea of rondels and Rosheim-type enclosures than to those that were built at a similar time in nearby areas. The author rejects the interpretation of the ditch and palisade at Osłonki as defensive

architecture, but instead analyses its ceremonial function and considers the possibility of the BKC community using the older tradition of enclosures used in the first half of the 5th millennium or perhaps even in the late LBK. The ditch with a palisade was built to give the settlement at Osłonki new functions, distinguishing it from the neighbouring central settlement at Brześć Kujawski 4.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