



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Welcome to the dark side - disclosing the invisible stages of medieval urbanisation through the integrated study of European Dark Earths

Third-party funded project

Project title Welcome to the dark side - disclosing the invisible stages of medieval urbanisation through the integrated study of European Dark Earths

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Departement Umweltwissenschaften / Geoarchäologie (Rentzel)

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Project start 01.01.2022

Probable end 31.12.2025

Status Active

Thick, dark-coloured homogeneous deposits, Dark Earths, are a common phenomenon in European towns. They cover large surfaces and are often rich in archaeological remains. Their seeming absence of stratigraphy has in the past resulted in a lack of research or their discarding. Meanwhile, geoarchaeological research has demonstrated that Dark Earths contain highly valuable information impossible to access with traditional methods. For the Early and High Medieval Period, Dark Earths represent some of the least known aspects of town development. Micromorphological data from numerous case studies, primarily in Belgium and Switzerland, are reevaluated in an integrated study in order to answer fundamental questions about medieval towns, through characterisation of human activities, natural processes, and taphonomical changes that shaped them. All data are entered into a novel two-pillar database system - the first online standardised tool publicly accessible to the scientific community. This enables the systematic collection, organisation, storage, interpretation, and sharing of data, and novel statistical analyses. The large amount of comparable data thus created leads to a geoarchaeological synthesis of medieval urban Dark Earths in Europe. Moreover, thanks to this unique open access system and

image reference collection, the project will have a significant and lasting impact on how Dark Earths are studied in the future, preventing further loss of irreplaceable information.

Keywords Geoarchaeology, Archaeological soil micromorphology, Dark Earths, Site formation processes, Archaeostatistics, Early and high medieval urbanism, Taphonomy, Archaeology, Site biography

Financed by

Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

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ID	Kreditinhaber	Kooperationspartner	Institution	Laufzeit - von	Laufzeit - bis
4640921	Ismail-Meyer, Kristin	Wouters, Barbora	Maritime Cultures Re- search Institute, University of Brussels	01.04.2022	31.03.2026