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### **Tripolye – Strategy and Results of an European-Ukrainian Project**

In the late 5<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE in the Trypillya-Cucuteni cultural complex there was observed the emergence of the so-called mega-sites represented today by several thousands of burnt houses arranged in a specific spatial layout, with specialized workshops and highly developed material culture. These settlements, which have been the subject of ongoing discussions, in particular about possible urban characteristics (proto-cities), represent a unique phenomenon in European prehistory, and attract the interest of not only Ukrainian researchers but also other European ones scientists. Since 2011, German-Ukrainian cooperation has been conducted with a view to achieving a deeper insight and more comprehensive understanding of this "chapter" in the European prehistory and Trypillian societies in particular. The main goal of this cooperation is to combine the experience and knowledge of Ukrainian colleagues with the natural-science methods and fresh look of the German team. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we are trying to gain a better understanding of the development and transformation of social relations, spatial behaviour, economics and land use in Trypillian communities.

In order to understand better the trigger and processes of formation and decline of Trypillya mega-sites, on the one hand, it is necessary to apply a diachronic approach to the social processes under study. On the other hand the spatial dimension of the phenomenon needs to be investigated at micro, meso-, and macro-scale. For this purpose, within the large area of the Trypillya -Cucuteni cultural complex three test regions with key sites have been chosen. In each of these test regions an attempt is undertaken to reconstruct and interlink demographic processes, technology, the organization of societies and their ideology.

Starting from large scale geomagnetic prospections on several mega-sites of the Bug-Dnieper region, based on works on the mega-site Maidanetske, a strategy has been developed to combine geophysical and archaeological surveys, target excavations and environmental analyses to gain information on precise chronology, social structures, and environmental developments. This strategy includes systematic sampling in different house rings and segments of mega-sites for 14c-dating, paleo-botanical, zooarchaeological, geochemical and archaeological analysis of find inventories. For Maidanetske, the first analysis of 14c-dates suggest contemporaneity of the different

house rings of the settlement. Chronological differences seems to concern rather between houses within the same rings and-or house clusters.

At the current stage of work on the project, new data are collected and analyzed in order to be able to interlink these local results with the settlement development and population dynamics at the meso-and macro-regional spatial scale. This working stage includes geomagnetic surveys, sampling for dating, scientific analysis, and typo-chronological studies in the key regions. In the Bug-Dnieper interfluve chronological differences in the settlement layout can clearly be correlated with stylistic changes in pottery which are visible on a large spatial scale. Comparison of settlement layout of Ukrainian mega-sites makes it possible to suggest that it is the result of a complex development process with contributions from “Western” and “Eastern” Trypillian regional groups. Since, accordingly, the transformations of Trypillian societies in time and space are the result of complex networks of people, the underlying processes of these changes can only be understand through the interlinkage of different spatial scales.