



Second Circular

Welcome to the Dark Side: Urban Dark Earth –
A state of the art and perspectives

Round Tables

Tuesday 19 May 2026, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels (Belgium)

Thursday 11 June 2026, University of Basel, Basel (Switzerland)

• **Open registration** •

RATIONALE AND AIMS

Urban Dark Earths – thick dark coloured homogeneous deposits often rich in archaeological remains – are a common phenomenon in European towns. Their seeming lack of stratigraphy has in the past resulted in a lack of research or even their discarding. Recent microscopic approaches, however, have convincingly demonstrated that Dark Earths contain an abundance of valuable information that can directly be related to important questions about towns and their formation. The aim of the present Round Table is to assemble (geo-)archaeologists, historians and archaeoenvironmental specialists to discuss the implementation of these research techniques in the archaeological field work and how they have permitted to advance our understanding of town development.

PROGRAM

Preliminary programs of both events are attached to the second circular and can also be viewed on <https://darkearth.eu/roundtables>.

FAQ

The Round Tables will give the opportunity to discuss the following main themes:

1. The integration of new methods and tools to investigate urban Dark Earths into the archaeological practice;
2. Recording, storing and sharing of data;
3. Recent case studies (Medieval urbanisation processes; landscape history);
4. How can the study of Dark Earth contribute to the narratives on past urban development?

We would be pleased to address any questions or comments you may have regarding urban Dark Earth or related topics you would like us to discuss during the Round Tables. Please send your questions, ideas, topics, comments or pictures to geoarchaeology@unibas.ch.

REGISTRATION

The registration for both Round Table in Brussel and/or Basel are now open and can be completed under following link: <https://darkearth.eu/roundtables>. The registration deadline for both events is the **1st May**. Please note that Brussels has a maximum capacity of 75 participants, while Basel can host 35 people. Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. In order to encourage discussion, we would appreciate your participation for the entire day.

FEE

No participation fees will be charged for the Round Tables.

ORGANISATION

The Round Tables are part of the WEAVE project *Welcome to the dark side - disclosing the invisible stages of medieval organization through the integrated study of European Dark Earths*. They are organised by the geoarchaeology teams of the Archaeology, Environmental Changes & Geo-Chemistry Research group (AMGC-Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and the Integrative Prehistory and Archaeological Sciences team (IPAS-University of Basel) with the support of FWO and SNSF.

Further information: <https://darkearth.eu/roundtables>

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ARCHAEOLOGY, ENVIRONMENTAL
CHANGES & GEO-CHEMISTRY
RESEARCH GROUP



University
of Basel

IPAS

fwo



Swiss National
Science Foundation



Welcome to the Dark Side:
Urban Dark Earth –
A state of the Art and Perspectives
Round table
Brussels, 19 May 2026

Provisional Program

9:00-9:30: *Welcome*

9:30-9:45: *Introduction* (Yannick Devos & Kristin Ismail-Meyer)

9:45-10:10: *Dark earth and the urban genesis of Antwerp (Belgium): a state of research*
(Tim Bellens)

10:10-10:35: *Revealing the Past: The Role of Dark Earth in Interpreting Brussels' Archaeological Record* (Ann Degraeve)

10:35-11:00: *Another Dark Earth. The taphonomy of a medieval road surface in Ghent (Belgium, 10th - 12th c. AD)* (Anton Eryvynck et al.)

11:00-11:20: Break

11:20-11:40: *Discussion*

11:40-12:30: *The Soil Micromorphology of European Dark Earth with special reference to Late Roman Britain and Late Antique examples from Roman Europe*
(Richard Macphail)

12:30-13:30: Lunch break

13:30-14:10: *Deciphering Medieval Dark Earth in St. Ursanne Vieille Ville (Switzerland): A multiproxy approach* (Christine Pümpin, Lucia Wick, Astrid Röpke, Mónica Alonso-Eguiluz, Karine Marchand, Ursule Babey, Kristin Ismail-Meyer)

14:10-14:35: *Phytolith contributions to the study of urban Dark Earth in Belgium* (Luc Vrydaghs, Mónica Alonso Eguiluz & Yannick Devos)

14:35-14:50: *Open spaces are not empty! - Multi-proxy micromorphological insights into Dark Earths from Oudenaarde (Belgium)* (Meihui Li et al.)

14:50-15:05: *(peri-)urban Dark Earths in Brussels, Belgium* (Lucrezia Buoli et al.)

15:05-15:15: Discussion

15:15-15:35: Break

15:35-16:00: *Together into the Future: Collecting, storing, and sharing geoarchaeological data through the newly developed databases I-GEOARCHrec and I-GEOARCHive* (David Brönnimann & Sarah Lo Russo)

16:00-16:25: *From Roman Ruins to Marketplaces: Exploring Daily Life in Cologne's Dark Earth* (Astrid Röpke, Christine Pümpin & Richard Exaltus)

16:25-16:50: *Tracing the suburbs of medieval/modern era towns - Dark Earth (garden soil) in Wrocław (SW Poland)* (Mateusz Krupski)

16:50-17:15: *Final discussion and Quiz*



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Round Table
Basel, Thursday 11 June 2026
University of Basel (Switzerland)

Provisional Program

09:00	Welcome
09:15	Introduction
10:00	Break
10:30	Talks (different perspectives on the topic)
12:00	Lunch break
13:00	Thematic workshops (in smaller groups)
14:30	Break
15:00	Joint discussion in the plenary session (results of the workshops)
16:30	Final discussion and conclusion
17:00	End of the round table Basel