

- GrassPlot Newsletter No. 3 -

14 June 2018

Dear current and potential members of the GrassPlot Consortium,

It is more than a year since the last Newsletter, thus plenty of things happened or are forthcoming, which we would like to share with you.

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Governance

The most prominent change you already see on top of this Newsletter. During the last year, we received a range of different proposals for logos both from inside and outside the Consortium. In the end the vote clearly was for the logo you see now, which was developed by our Governing Board member Iwona Dembicz. It combines the precisely delimited, nested plots with the enigmatic awns of one of the most widespread grass genera in the Palaeartic (*Stipa*), which at the same time makes the connection to the logo of our mother organisation EDGG.

The second news has a sad and a positive component. The former Governing Board member Viktoria Wagner moved with her family to Canada, where she got a position at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton. Shortly after that, she decided to resign from the Governing Board (but remains a member of the Consortium). We would like to thank Viktoria for her great achievements for GrassPlot during the initial months and wish her well in her new function. According to our Bylaws, the position will only be re-filled in the next regular elections.

Continuous growth of content and first GrassPlot paper published

Thanks to your contributions and the enormous efforts of our database manager Idoia Biurrun, GrassPlot has grown dynamically since its start. The current version 1.00 has **nearly 170,000 plots from 126 datasets and 30 countries**. You can find our current statistics including maps with much more details in the **just published GrassPlot paper #01** (online since a few days,

print issue expected for July). All those of you who had contributed data in time are listed as co-authors. For your information, the paper and its four online appendices are attached.

We also send you the GrassPlot poster on the Macroecology-2018 conference. Up-to-date information on GrassPlot is always available on our website: https://www.bayceer.uni-bayreuth.de/ecoinformatics/en/forschung/gru/html.php?id_obj=139267.

Further papers planned for this year

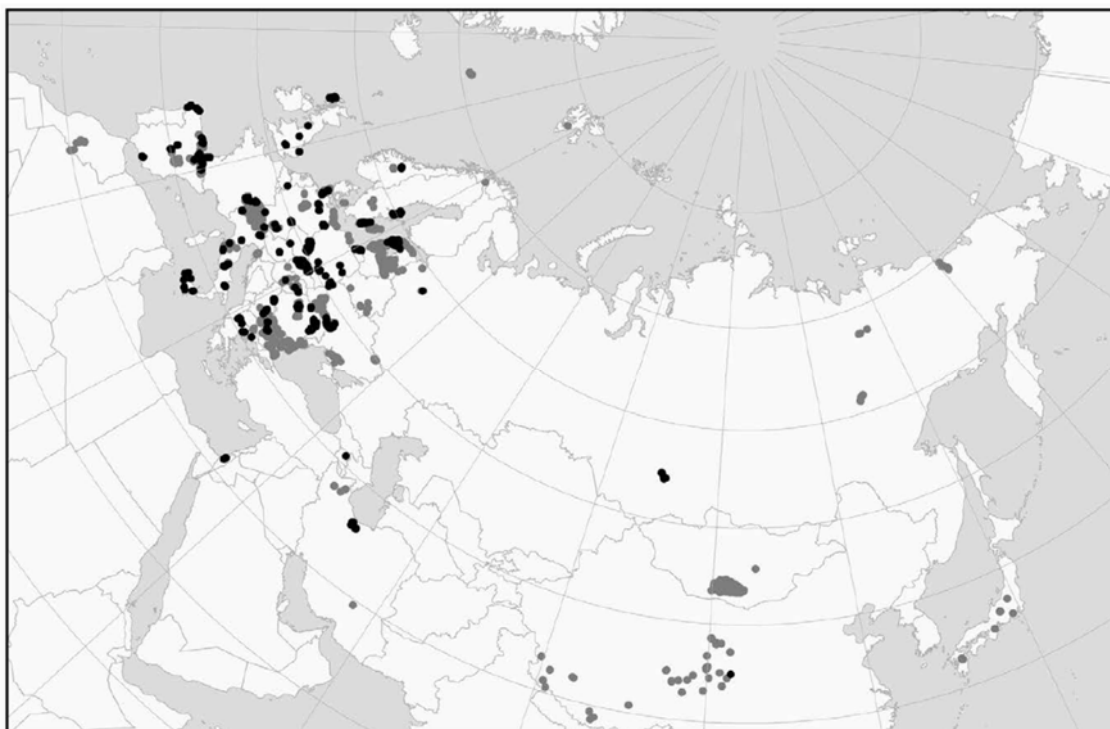
From the various other paper ideas announced in the first Newsletter, we intend to prepare two more this year. Idoia Biurrun is leading the **paper #02 (benchmarking Palaearctic grassland diversity)** and will resume work on this soon, after her very overloaded semester is over.

Additionally, we plan to prepare the **comparative study on species-area relationships (SARs, paper #04)**, likely for a Special Issue of Journal of Biogeography on "macroecology in the age of big data". Jürgen Dengler will lead this paper for which we are well prepared with currently nearly 2,800 nested-plot series with four or more grain sizes.

We will inform the Consortium with more details when these papers are started formally and you will then receive an invitation for co-authorship.

Call for data

As you can see in the maps of the database paper, we have a lot of data, but **there are also still large gaps**, for plots of individual grain sizes (the grey points), but particularly for nested-plot data (the black points). If you have data meeting the GrassPlot criteria that you did not contribute yet or know colleagues who have relevant data, we would greatly appreciate to receive them any time. The earlier we get them, the more papers you could obviously participate in. If you could fill a white spot in our map, please also do not hesitate to send a partial dataset now and the rest later (e.g. some plots now, others later, or the species data now and the soil data later).



You might also consider spending half a day or a day during the next months to **adopt the standardised EDGG nested plot sampling (“EDGG biodiversity plots”) in your preferred grasslands in your region**. Even if you provide only one or a few carefully sampled 100-m² biodiversity plots with their two nested-plot series from a region or grassland type not yet covered by our database, this would be extremely valuable for forthcoming analyses. To this end we attach a detailed methodological description of the sampling. You are, of course, free to modify it according to your needs, but the more similar your sampling to the “standard”, the more useful your data will be for GrassPlot papers.

Call for help

Last but not least we seek volunteers for standardising and managing the compositional data in GrassPlot. Currently only the richness data and environmental information in GrassPlot is readily available for projects. With the compositional data (species names and cover data), we have started the standardisation but are by far not finished. The point is that our nested-plot structure does not allow the efficient use of Turboveg 2, the standard software for vegetation-plot databases. Therefore, we have decided to read all data directly from the source files (mostly Excel files in various formats) into a csv file, formatted in a long table format. In a second step, these data will be subject to a taxonomic standardisation with a set of available tools. Finally we would have a gigantic long table, which can be very effectively used by various R tools. Viktoria Wagner was responsible for that part of the work and she has already done a great job by developing R scripts for the semi-automatized reading and transformation of source files and she has applied them to quite some of our datasets. When Viktoria resigned from her position, this left a big gap in our team. We therefore now seek one or several volunteers who would be willing to continue as her successor(s). Evidently, without this step all the nice paper projects dealing with compositional data cannot be realised. On the other hand, those who make a significant contribution to making the existing data usable can expect prominent positions in the author lists of these papers.

Best regards,

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