

Short Biography

In my current work I use physical and chronophysiological tools to pinpoint biological effects of daylight. My approach is to integrate many levels of information, from environmental input and internal state to behavioural functions. My work is characterised by visualising otherwise unrecognised patterns and their connections through time, especially to understand regularity in physiological patterns in relation to real-time environment, arousal and motivational contexts.

Beyond the laboratory work, I find it very encouraging to engage in conversations about science with the general public and to share ideas and be part of projects that connect different disciplines, from the arts to engineering and architecture.

I studied biology at the Free University in Berlin and researched lichens of old-growth forests at the West Coast of British Columbia in collaboration with conservation projects to protect Clayoquot Sound from logging in the early 1990ies (MSc supervisor Prof Leuckert). I returned to Berlin and completed my PhD in chronobiological research in the field of human development at the Charite, Humboldt-University in Berlin in 2001 (supervisor PD Dr Renate Siegmund) and I moved with a Marie-Curie Individual Fellowship to Imperial College London to research abnormal circadian synchronisation and time structures of people with maladaptive behaviours (collaboration with Prof Russell Foster, Prof Derk-Jan Dijk, Dr Benita Middleton). I spent 10 years leading chronobiological and sleep research projects at Oxford University, where I substantially contributed to the establishment of the Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute (SCNi), before I recently moved to Umeå university to combine chronobiology and behaviour with a topic that increasingly interests me - daylight research.

In my early childhood, I liked to watch all kinds of behaviours of wild animals. This likely sparked my interest in behavioural field experiments so that in the 1980ies, my grandma managed to smuggle the then forbidden books from Karl von Frisch and Konrad Lorenz into East Germany and I replicated some of their observations at home, raising jackdaws, crows, wild geese... Having been denied access to higher education for political reasons in the former GDR, I trained in sustainable forestry and assisted for several years in studies at the Animal Sound laboratory of Prof. Tembrock at the Humboldt University in East Berlin.

I am a member of the European Sleep Society (ESRS), the European Biological Rhythm Society (EBRS), board member of the Society of Light Treatment and Biological Rhythms (SLTBR) and member of the Daylight Academy (DLA).

Updated 02/10/2019