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Two new Assistant Professors and one promotion to Professor

Appointments in neurobiology and developmental biology • Sylvia Cremer promoted to Professor

Thomas Henzinger, President of IST Austria, today announced the names of two new professors. Developmental biologist **Anna Kicheva** and neurobiologist **Sandra Siegert** join IST Austria as Assistant Professors and bring the number of faculty to 39. **Sylvia Cremer**, an evolutionary biologist, has been promoted to Professor at IST Austria. Henzinger: “The appointments show that IST Austria continues to attract outstanding young scientists. And Sylvia Cremer’s promotion demonstrates that the institute provides them with the environment in which their research can flourish.”

Anna Kicheva is a developmental biologist, born in 1980 in Sofia, Bulgaria. Her focus is on establishing and using quantitative approaches to study the mechanisms of growth control and tissue patterning during development.

Kicheva studied Cell Biology and Applied Computational Sciences at Bennington College, USA. She performed her doctoral studies in the lab of Marcos González-Gaitán from 2003 to 2008, first at the MPI of Cell Biology and Genetics in Dresden, Germany and then at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. During her PhD, she worked on the formation of morphogen gradients and growth control during the development of *Drosophila* wings. Using live imaging, she studied how the morphogen Dpp spreads through the tissue and measured the kinetics with which it forms a concentration gradient. For her postdoc, Kicheva joined the lab of James Briscoe at the National Institute for Medical Research, London, UK, in 2008, where she investigated the relationship between the establishment of patterns of gene expression and growth in the developing spinal cord of mouse and chick. Her work revealed that the gene expression pattern does not

scale with changes in the overall neural tube size and that anisotropic tissue growth contributes to the establishment of pattern. Anna Kicheva will join IST Austria in November 2015.

Sandra Siegert is a German neuroscientist, born 1980. Her research is driven by the question of how genetic defects lead to disease. In particular, Siegert seeks to understand the function of microglia, a type of immune cell, in disease. At IST Austria, she will use the retina as a model system to study the relationship between neurons and microglia during development, aging and disease.

After her undergraduate studies in Biology at the Johann Wolfgang-Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, Siegert joined the lab of Botond Roska at the Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research in Basel, Switzerland, from 2005 to 2010 for her PhD. In her doctoral work, she elucidated the morphological and electrophysiological characteristics of different cell types in the mammalian retina. For this groundbreaking work, which showed that each retinal cell type expresses a unique set of genes, Siegert received the 2013 SWISS OphthAWARD in the category of “Best experimental work”. Since 2011, Siegert has been postdoctoral researcher in the lab of Li-Huei Tsai at MIT. In her research, she defined how micro-RNA-137, a risk gene for schizophrenia, impacts the transmission of nerve signals. Siegert also focused on a model system for studying the function of microglia in brain disease. Sandra Siegert has joined IST Austria beginning of August 2015.

Sylvia Cremer has been promoted to Professor at IST Austria. This is the result of a tenure evaluation, a compulsory evaluation according to the institute’s performance-orientated career model for scientists. Sylvia Cremer is an evolutionary biologist interested in behavioral ecology and evolutionary immunology in ant societies. Social insects, living together in densely populated colonies, are at high risk of disease transmission. Cremer studies how insect societies fight pathogens through individual and cooperative disease defenses. In her research, she combines behavioral observation, physiological and molecular measures of immunity, and chemical analyses. Cremer studies all three pillars of collective disease defenses: sanitary behavior, use of antimicrobial compounds, and modulation of the social interaction network to minimize disease spread.

Sylvia Cremer, born in 1973, studied Biology at the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany. Cremer performed her doctoral studies in the group of Jürgen Heinze at the University of Regensburg, Germany and obtained her PhD in 2002. She joined the group of Jacobus J. Boomsma at the University of Copenhagen for her postdoc. In 2006, Cremer established her own research group at the University of Regensburg, where she also habilitated in 2010. She received an ERC Starting Grant in 2009 and is Member of the “Junge Kurie” of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Sylvia Cremer joined IST Austria as Assistant Professor in 2010.

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