



CASA TAHAI PROJECT

Pacific Research Network

Fundación Mata Ki Te Rangi *“Eyes looking at the sky”*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island, is an island territory of extraordinary uniqueness, covering an area of 164 km² and located in the heart of the Pacific Ocean. It is located at a considerable distance of 3,600 km from Chilean coast and 4,000 km from Tahiti, which is why it is called the most remote island in the world due to its isolation from the continental masses. Since 1888, although administratively part of Chilean State, its cultural essence remains deeply rooted in the traditions of Polynesia, belonging to the sub-region of Oceania.

To date, Rapa Nui, despite its exceptional archaeological, natural, and cultural wealth, faces a notable lack of infrastructure suitable for the development of scientific activities, research and data collection. This deficiency extends to the lack of spaces dedicated to the conservation of the archaeological findings of the area, indispensable elements for a balanced and sustainable development of the territory, in harmony with its historical legacy, its ecosystems and the communities that coexist in it. In-depth knowledge of our history, climatic evolution and the life of pre-existing species is crucial to anticipate future changes, thus fostering the creation of more empowered, resilient, and environmentally conscious communities.

Despite its recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a tangible disconnection persists between transient visitors and the inhabitants of Rapa Nui.

The local inhabitants, at present, maintain a limited or non-existent link with the investigations and knowledge generated in their own environment. This situation is exacerbated by the necessity of transferring the discovered pieces to other places for their study, which leads to a disconnection of the local community with the richness and the material and immaterial heritage of their own territory.

II. CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION

To date, Rapa Nui has a significant lack of facilities dedicated to the development of scientific disciplines, particularly in the areas of botany, ethnography, archaeology, and paleontology. This situation underlines the urgent need to establish a specialized research center, proposed under the name of "Pacific Research Network". This project will be not only a significant milestone in the history of Rapa Nui's knowledge but will also offer tangible benefits for both local community and researchers from around the world.

Easter Island, like other regions, faces complex challenges related to its ecological and cultural diversity. Even though since 2013 the "Rapa Nui Heritage Plan" has been implemented through the Technical Secretariat of the National Monuments Council, there

is a clear need to strengthen and increase the protection of the island's cultural and natural heritage, as current measures are insufficient.

Rapa Nui's most pressing problems, as highlighted by Carlos F. Gaymer in 2022, are related to its high vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. The island faces a remarkable ecological fragility, evidenced by phenomena such as global warming, which causes significant alterations in the climatic and oceanic circulation in its environment. Climate models also warn of additional threats, such as deoxygenation and acidification of the oceans, which could have detrimental effects on Rapa Nui's surrounding waters.

Another critical aspect is the transfer of knowledge to future generations of the island. The absence of institutions of superior education can be attributed to several factors: First, its relatively small population could impede the economic viability and sustainability of an advanced educational institution. Second, its remote location limits access to essential resources, such as qualified academic staff, educational materials, and adequate funding. This leads young people to seek higher education on the mainland, where they can find a greater diversity of educational offerings and job opportunities, as well as access to a wider range of academic programs and scholarships.

In this context, the creation of "Pacific Research Network" becomes a crucial initiative, not only to promote scientific research on the island, but also to establish a tangible link between the local community and global knowledge, ensuring the preservation and enrichment of Rapa Nui's unique heritage for future generations. Because it is also a place dedicated to local community, we intend it to be a place open to all, where elementary and middle school students can attend, work on their own research projects and develop logical and scientific thinking by themselves and with the help of the scientists on duty.

We also hope that samples exhibited there can contribute to local knowledge, in order to disseminate and share with public in general, the findings and knowledge obtained from activities developed on the island. The project is not only intended for floating population of tourists, but also for local actors, who are ultimately the ones who must care for and protect the heritage that belongs to them.

III. FUNDACIÓN MATA KI TE RANGI (*EYES THAT LOOK AT THE SKY*)

Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation, based on Rapa Nui, was established on July 14, 2008. Since its incorporation, this organization has focused its mission on scientific research, social and environmental conservation, promotion of sustainable tourism and promotion of culture.

Dr. Sonia Haoa Cardinali, distinguished as President of the Foundation, holds a PhD in Archaeology from the University of Uppsala. Her unwavering commitment and dedication to preservation of Rapa Nui's legacy is evident in her work. Sonia Haoa Cardinali has played a crucial role in the custody and promotion of Rapa Nui identity, bringing an enriching and broad vision to the conservation and study of Oceania.

Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation, whose name means "eyes that look to the sky", aspires to be a vital interface between scientific research and discoveries made on the island, as well as in the exploration of its territory and culture. Our institution is dedicated to generating and increase the existing knowledge, while protecting the vestiges of both recent and ancient times. The Foundation's main objective is to promote the reconstruction of Rapa Nui's past, ensuring its preservation for future generations.

Under the leadership of Sonia Haoa Cardinali, Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation has established itself as a key entity in the safeguard and study of Easter Island's rich cultural and natural heritage, contributing significantly to the global understanding of this unique region and its impact on the world.

IV. SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT AND ITS PERTINENCE

The Island of Rapa Nui, an enclave of worldwide scientific, cultural, and educational relevance, requires the support of an advanced research center capable of creating synergy between local and international stakeholders. This initiative will not only benefit the Polynesian region and Oceania, but also its indigenous communities and the planet. In this context, the Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation expresses its interest in leading the development of this Research Center, progressively assuming the challenge of strengthening knowledge transfer.

A. Request for Resources - Property Acquisition

For the implementation of the first phase of "CASA TAHAI: Pacific Research Network" project, the acquisition of a property that meets the necessary conditions for its qualification as a research center is required. This property, located in Rapa Nui, would be ideal for academic and educational activities, including lectures, conferences, courses, and events of local, national and international scope. In addition, it should be able to accommodate the international scientific community and promote the exchange of experiences.

B. Chosen property

The property chosen for this purpose is situated in a strategically significant location, close to the Tahai Archaeological Complex. This privileged position offers panoramic views of its three ceremonial platforms and the vestiges of the ancient village that precedes them, including houses (*Hare*), hearths (*Umu*), dwelling caves (*Ana*, *Karava*), canoe ramps and quarries (*puku*, *papa*), all elements of incalculable cultural and ancestral value.

The selected site covers an area of 0.27 hectares, with an existing structure occupying approximately 30% of the total area. This provides sufficient space for future expansion and the possibility of developing a commercial venture that could partially finance or subsidize the Center's activities. The proximity to sites of archaeological and cultural significance will not only enrich the research experience, but also provide an authentic and valuable context for education and cultural promotion.

V. OBJECTIVES OF PACIFIC RESEARCH NETWORK

Currently, Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation is at a crucial point in its trajectory, with the challenging goal of establishing a research center on Rapa Nui. To materialize this project, the Foundation is actively seeking national and international funding, in line with its mission to promote research and conservation of the island's rich cultural and natural heritage.

A. General Objective

Enabling, expansion and construction of an integrated scientific center in Rapa Nui, for the development of research in archaeology, paleontology, ethnography, botany, ecology, zoology, geography, and geology, among others, for the proper transfer of knowledge to both the local community and global community of researchers.

It will be a place of convergence where scientists and explorers can carry out the work inherent to their activities, so that it will not be necessary to take their findings elsewhere, and thus maintain and strengthen the chain of research and collection of scientific evidence. This Center will also be dedicated to the local community, aiming to be a place open to all.

B. Specific Objectives

- a) Continue with the diagnoses regarding the state of preservation of Rapa Nui's archaeological, natural, and cultural heritage, to outline strategies and prioritize actions in the short, medium, and long term.
- b) Facilitate the identification, implementation and evaluation of improvement projects agreed upon with the main stakeholders for the preservation of Rapa Nui's archaeological, natural, and cultural heritage.
- c) Design and implement educational programs aimed at transferring knowledge to schoolchildren and youth, promoting participation and lifelong learning in key areas related to heritage and research, thus strengthening the intergenerational connection with the knowledge and preservation of the island's natural legacy.
- d) Create a comprehensive outreach plan that promotes cooperation among the various actors involved, to publicize the progress of the Research Center.

C. Facilities

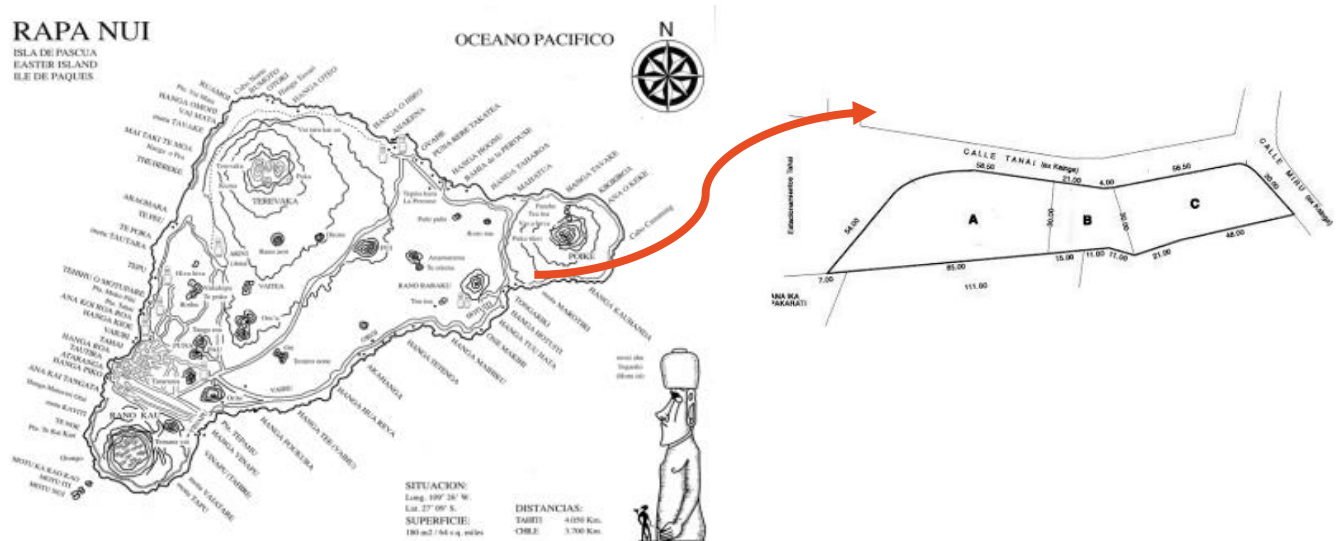
The Pacific Research Network will be a scientific compound, with constructions dedicated to each of its objectives, without being exclusively for one or another group of professionals or visitors.

The buildings that make up the complex are as follows:

1. Tahai House (*Casa Onei*)

The opportunity for this development arises with the offer of a property that, as already mentioned, is strategically located on Rapa Nui. This site, selected for its cultural and historical relevance, is a direct testimony to the rich history and culture of Rapa Nui.

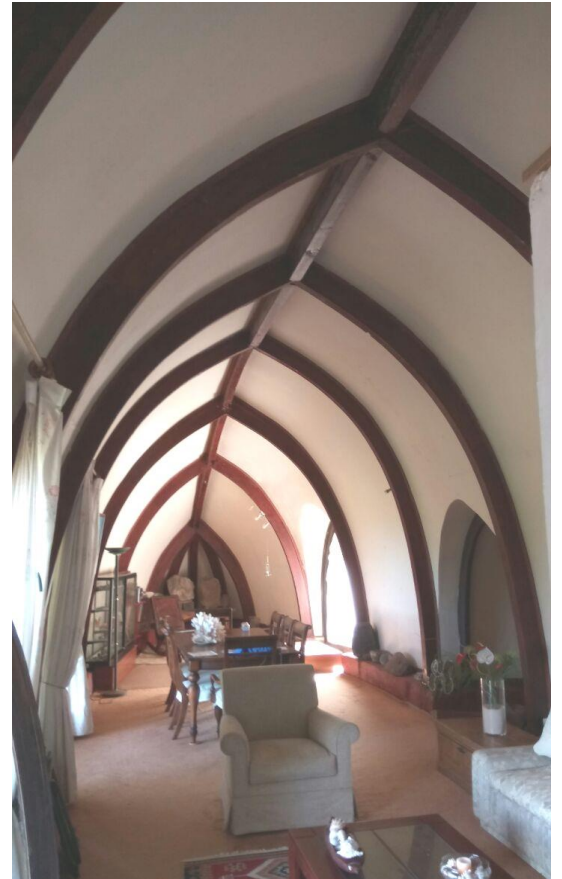
The property has buildings covering 30% of the available land, thus offering ample room for future expansion and construction of the various units contemplated in the plan. Among the existing structures, a main shed with an area of 115 m² stands out. This architectural element is particularly significant, as it reflects the design of the houses of the Rapa Nui elite during the archaeological period, known as Hare Paenga. These constructions, with their characteristic inverted boat shape, are a distinctive element in the cultural landscape of the island, as can be seen in the attached photograph.



Location of the site where the property Casa Tahai is sited



Location of the property and view of Ahu Tahai



Exterior and interior images of Casa Tahai

2. Facilities and equipment

The project for the Casa Tahai Research Center in Rapa Nui focuses on the development of a multidisciplinary space. The structure of the property will be divided into several distinct sections to optimize the functionality and efficiency of the Center:

1. **Main Scientific Work Room:** This area will be dedicated to the cabinet work of scientists and researchers. Equipped with advanced technology and appropriate resources, it will be conducive to research, data analysis, and synthesis.
2. **Manavai Area for Social Interaction:** Inspired by the traditional concept of Manavai, this section will serve as a living and socialization space, providing temporary residence for researchers and visitors. This approach will encourage a collaborative and culturally exchangeable environment.

3. Visitor Center: Designed to display archaeological, paleontological, and biological specimens from the region. The Center will offer a chronological thematic tour, allowing visitors to understand the geological and cultural history of Rapa Nui in a comprehensive and educational manner.

4. Botanical and Fungal Center: This space will be dedicated to recreating the island's natural environment in a controlled setting, enabling the study, conservation, and propagation of native species. The inclusion of the local community in this Center will be essential for an exchange of knowledge and sustainable practices.

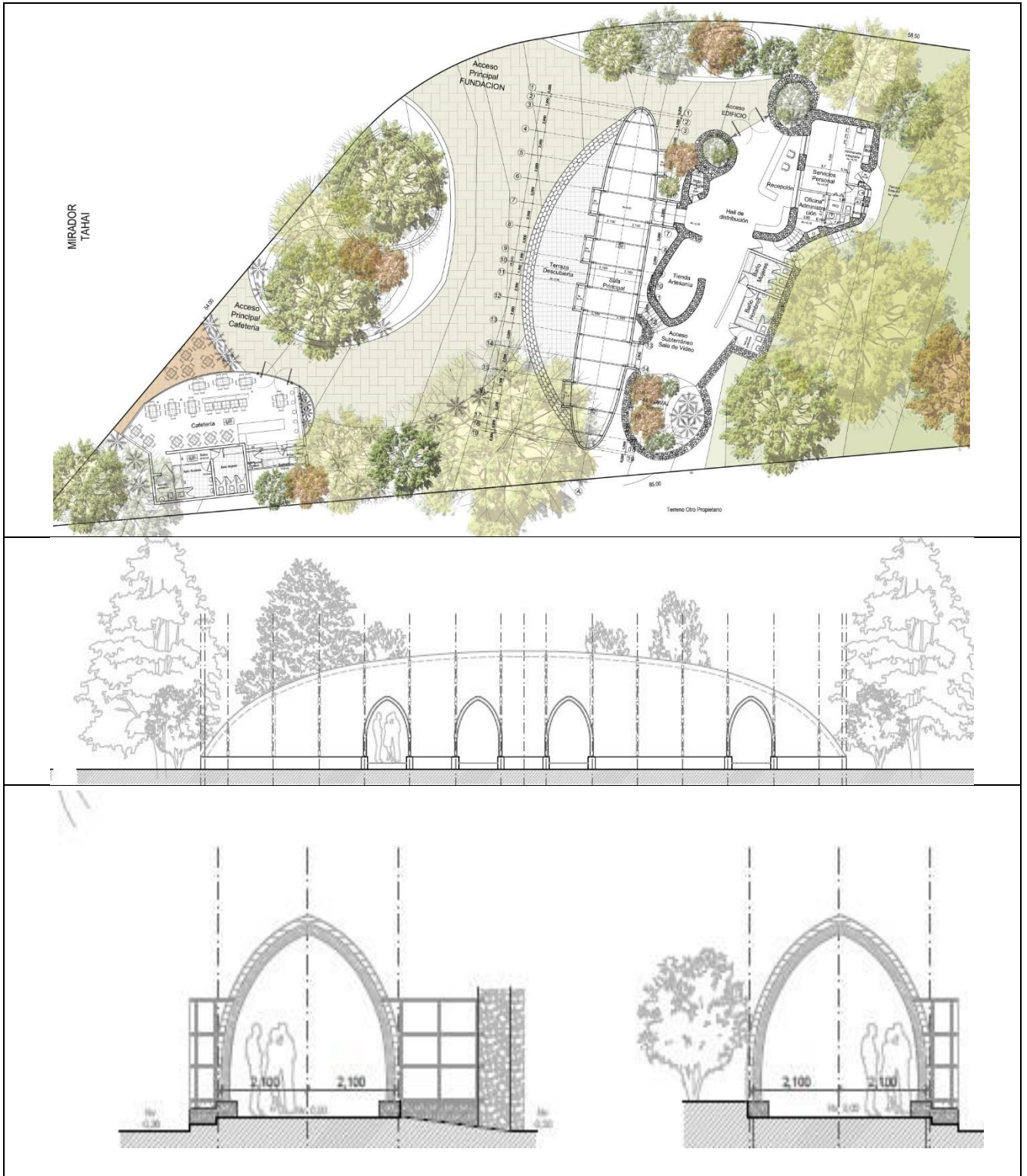
5. Café and Local Handicraft Sales: A commercial venture within the Center, this will not only provide a space for appreciation of local culture but will also contribute to financing the Center's activities.

6. Specialized Modular Laboratories and Paleobotanical Deposits: In a later phase, the acquisition or construction of specialized laboratories and deposits for paleobotanical studies is planned. These spaces will allow more profound research in the areas of botany and paleobotany, providing adequate facilities for the storage and analysis of samples.

7. Accommodations for Scientists and Potential Tourist Cabins: The construction of cabins equipped to house scientists, as well as potential tourist cabins, is contemplated. This will allow a comfortable and functional stay for researchers and offer accommodation opportunities for tourists interested in learning about the work of the Center.

This project represents a significant step towards strengthening research and conservation in Rapa Nui, offering a comprehensive approach that combines science, culture, and sustainability.

3. Images of the project



D. Investigations

Currently, several research projects are being developed under the Foundation's auspices that would benefit from an adequate space and enabling conditions for researchers to stay on the island. Among them are:

- Mycological research: evidence of mycorrhizal and fungal world development in Rapanui.
- Study of the native ecosystem and its impact with the arrival of man.
- Characterization of the natural and environmental setting of the past and its diversity.
- Continuation of the archaeological inventory program with its respective analyses.
- Studies of dating, palynology, geoarchaeology, among others.
- Studies of the effects of climate change on megalithic sites.
- Anthropological migratory studies of Rapa Nui population to the American continent in historical periods (Peru, Mangareva, Tahiti, among others).
- Genetic studies of the population of Oceania.
- The effects of globalization to and from island contexts.
- Megalithic architecture, conservation and archaeological sustainability.

The possibility of implementing "Pacific Research Network" will generate a milestone in the history of knowledge of Rapa Nui.

VI. RECIPROCITY

Uniting Forces in the Creation of CASA TAHAI - Pacific Research Network

By supporting the creation of CASA TAHAI, one contributes to a globally significant scientific and cultural project, backed by an innovative and committed community. This initiative represents a unique opportunity to be part of a collaborative effort aimed at preserving, studying, and promoting the unparalleled heritage of Rapa Nui. Contributions open up various possibilities for collaboration and reciprocity:

- 1. Integration into Our Research and Culture Community:** As a donor, one not only contributes to a valuable project but also integrates into a dynamic community of scientists, academics, conservationists, and culture enthusiasts, closely linked to local human group. Being part of this community allows staying abreast of the latest advances and discoveries, participating in exclusive events and meetings that foster the exchange of ideas and experiences.

2. **Active Participation in Field Days:** One of the most enriching experiences offered is the opportunity to participate in field days in Rapa Nui. As a donor, one has the chance to witness firsthand the scientific work carried out at the Center. These expeditions enable seeing the direct impact of one's contribution and provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and achievements of research in a unique context like Rapa Nui.
3. **Recognition and Visibility:** Support for CASA TAHAI will be recognized through various platforms and events. This visibility highlights the commitment to science and culture, underlining the role in the preservation of invaluable world heritage.
4. **Educational and Cultural Experiences:** Donors are offered the opportunity to participate in exclusive educational and cultural programs. These programs are designed to provide a greater understanding of the history and biodiversity of Rapa Nui, and of the methods and approaches used in modern research.
5. **Building links between Cultures:** By supporting CASA TAHAI, one contributes to building a bridge between various cultures and scientific communities. This intercultural collaboration is fundamental for global understanding and the conservation of cultural and natural heritage.

In summary, supporting CASA TAHAI - Pacific Research Network is not just a donation; it's an investment in knowledge, conservation, and cultural interconnection. We invite you to be part of this exciting journey towards the discovery and preservation of one of the most extraordinary treasures of our planet.

VII. BUDGET

PHASE	ITEM EXPENSES	Benefactors	Cultural Donations Law	Private company	Chilean Competitive Funds	International Funds	Crowdfunding	Other	TOTAL
PHASE 1	Acquisition of Casa Tahai property	\$ 500,000					\$ 20,000		
	Operation Team Foundation	\$ 25,000							
PHASE 2	Habilitation center		\$ 200,000	\$ 100,000					
	Operation Team Foundation	\$ 50,000							
PHASE 3	Administration Center (2 years)				\$ 100,000				
	Overhead (2 years)			\$ 80,000					
PHASE 4	Cafeteria and shop concession (2 years)							\$ 75,000	
	Operation Team Foundation (Year 2)	\$ 50,000							
	Research Internships (2 years)					\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 100,000	
		\$ 575,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 180,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 175,000	
TOTAL FUNDING									\$ 1,310,000
BENEFACITOR APPLICATION									\$ 575,000
OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING									\$ 735,000

Note: All values are in US Dollars.

VIII. TIMEFRAME

PHASE	ACTIVITIES	YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4	
PHASE 1	Acquisition of Tahai House	x							
PHASE 2	Habilitation of the Research Center		x						
	Design of research and educational activities		x						
	Project and resource management		x						
	Signing of agreements with collaborating institutions		x						
	Obtaining authorization from the National Monuments Council to become a depository institution		x						
PHASE 3	Deposit operation			x		x		x	
	Cafeteria concession			x		x		x	
	Research internships			x		x		x	

X. ANNEXES

A. Curriculum vitae of collaborators

ERIKA HAGELBERG

Erika Hagelberg is a distinguished Professor of Evolutionary Biology at the University of Oslo, Norway, with a robust academic background including a B.Sc. in Biochemistry from the University of London (1977), a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Cambridge (1983), and an M.Sc. in History and Philosophy of Science from the University of London (1986). Her academic career spans several prestigious positions, including her current role as Professor in Oslo since 2002, Senior University Lecturer at the University of Otago, New Zealand (1998-2001), and earlier appointments at Cambridge and Oxford, coupled with extensive teaching experience across Cambridge, Otago, and Oslo, including postgraduate courses on "Language and Evolution" and "Scientific Writing".

Hagelberg has played a significant role in additional professional activities, such as her collaboration with A. Jeffreys in the pioneering application of bone DNA typing for forensic identification, and her involvement in major cases like those of Karen Price and Josef Mengele. She has also served as a guest editor for the thematic issue of Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B in 2015 and as a member of scientific committees, including EPLENEA in China (2007-2014) and as the Cheney Visiting Fellow in Leeds (2016-2017).

Her extensive list of publications reflects her influence in the field of evolutionary biology and forensic genetics. Key works include studies on ancient bone DNA, identification of the remains of the Romanov family, and research on mitochondrial DNA variation in ancient and modern humans. She has significantly contributed to the understanding of human evolution and population dispersal, particularly in the Pacific region, with research published in high-impact journals such as Nature, Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, and Forensic Science International.

HELENE MARTINSSON-WALLIN'S

Helene Martinsson-Wallin's professional and academic journey is marked by significant accomplishments and contributions to the field of archaeology. As of July 1, 2017, she holds the position of Full Professor at Uppsala University's Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Campus Gotland, Sweden. Her academic prowess was earlier recognized with her appointment as Adjunct Professor at the National University of Samoa in 2011, acknowledging her long-term pedagogical contributions. In 2008, she was appointed Associate Professor (Docent) at Uppsala University. Her academic foundation was solidified with a Ph.D. in Archaeology from Uppsala University in 1994, where she

presented a thesis on Easter Island's ceremonial stone structures, and a Magister degree in Archaeology, with minors in Osteology, Geoscience, and Art History from Uppsala and Stockholm Universities in 1986.

Martinsson-Wallin's career includes tenure as a Senior Lecturer at both Uppsala University (2013-2017) and Gotland University (2008-2013), as well as a role as Deputy Senior Lecturer at Gotland University (2005-2008). Between 1997-2007, she served as the Chief Curator and Senior Researcher at The Kon-Tiki Museum Institute for Pacific Archaeology and Cultural History, undertaking multifaceted responsibilities ranging from collection management to research administration. Her early career was marked by her work as a Field Director and Assisting Archaeologist at the Museum of Åland, Finland (1981-1986).

Currently, Martinsson-Wallin is involved in several notable projects. From 2021 to 2024, she is leading the interdisciplinary GRASS project at Campus Gotland, focusing on fisheries and coastal development in small island contexts – examining the past, present, and future. Additionally, from 2018 to 2024, she is engaged in the STINT project, which aims at fostering sustainable visits to Rapa Nui through glocal (global and local) perspectives.

CHRISTOPHER M. STEVENSON

Christopher M. Stevenson, Ph.D., is currently serving as a Professor of Anthropology at the School of World Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA, since 2023. His academic journey includes earning a B.A. in both Anthropology and Sociology from Marquette University (1973-1976), followed by a Master's (1976-1979) and a Ph.D. in Anthropology (1979-1984) from The Pennsylvania State University. His doctoral dissertation, titled "Corporate Descent Group Structure in Easter Island Prehistory," was completed at the Department of Anthropology, The Pennsylvania State University.

Prior to his current position, Dr. Stevenson has held significant roles in the same institution. He was an Assistant Professor of Anthropology from 2013 to 2017 and then an Associate Professor of Anthropology from 2018 to 2022 at the School of World Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

Dr. Stevenson's scholarly contributions, particularly focused on Rapa Nui, are noteworthy. He has authored and edited several publications, including significant works such as the article "Architecturally modified caves on Rapa Nui: Post-European contact ritual spaces?" in the Rapa Nui Journal (2019) and the book "The Prehistory of Easter Island (Rapa Nui) Towards an Interdisciplinary Integrative Framework" as an editor, published by Springer Nature, Switzerland in 2022. This extensive publication record underscores his expertise and ongoing research interest in the anthropology and prehistory of Easter Island.

B. Other projects executed by the Foundation

Year of execution	Brief description
2013	Stone Gardens Recovery Project. Funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).
2015	Diagnostic Research on the Conservation State and Inventory of Rock Art 1, Rapa Nui National Park. National Forestry Corporation (CONAF) Easter Island.
2016	Organizer of the International Congress: Early Pacific Migration; Ubud, Bali, November 2016.
2017- 2018	Documentation of Toponymy and Ethnography of Rapa Nui National Park 1, National Forestry Corporation (CONAF) Easter Island.
2013 - 2018	Archaeological Prospection on the Poike Peninsula. Participants include: Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation, Kon Tiki Museum, and National Forestry Corporation (CONAF) Easter Island.
2018	Organizer of the "International Meeting: Rapa Nui, Early Migration, Culture, and Navigation in the Pacific, Easter Island", Chile. Permanent exhibition in Tenerife.
2019	Archaeological Baseline of Mataverí Zone. Participants include Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation and SASIPA Spa.
2020	Archaeological Baseline of Mataverí Zone. Participants include Mata Ki Te Rangi Foundation and SASIPA Spa.