

## **Roman and early-medieval occupation of a delta: settlement dynamics in the Rhine-Meuse delta (The Netherlands)**

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River landscapes are, since they are cultivated and inhabited by humans, among the most densely populated areas in the world. These landscapes provide fertile substrates, natural resources (e.g. food, raw materials), and abundant water routes for long-distance transport. However, these wet and dynamic landscapes often pose challenges to the people. In the past this sometimes even led to the relocation of production areas and settlements to more suitable areas.

In the fluvial dominated part of the Rhine-Meuse delta, The Netherlands, the late-Roman and early-medieval periods (AD 270 - 1050) are characterized by both cultural changes (e.g. in demography, settlement location) and environmental changes (river avulsions, changes in flooding frequency). In the delta plain, the relatively high and dry natural levees were most favourable for habitation. The extension and relative elevation of these important landscape units has recently been mapped in high detail, exploring the distribution of settlements on these landscape units and the changing patterns of settlements through time is the next step. To perform this, we need to integrate the geomorphological reconstructions with archaeological datasets.

We have applied a multidisciplinary approach by integrating new high-resolution palaeoenvironmental reconstructions with archaeological datasets. Our aims were to: 1) determine the spatial distribution of settlements on geomorphological landscape units, and 2) explore changes in human-environment interactions from the late Roman period to the Early Middle Ages. In this contribution, we present the first results of these analyses. Integrating these datasets is an important step towards further understanding of the relative contribution of (and the interaction between) environmental and cultural factors in determining settlement distribution in the Rhine-Meuse delta.