



The Dark Age of the Lowlands in an Interdisciplinary Light: people, landscape and climate between AD 300 and 1000

Rowin J. van Lanen (1,2), Harm Jan Pierik (1), and Marjolein T.I.J. Gouw-Bouman (1)

(1) Department of Physical Geography, Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands, (2) Landscape department, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Amersfoort, the Netherlands

The late-Roman period (AD 270-450) and Early Middle Ages (AD 450-1050) in the Netherlands witnessed major changes in landscape, economy, demography and also climate. Archaeological evidence throughout north-western Europe, including the Netherlands, indicates changing settlement patterns and severe demographic decline in the late-Roman and post-Roman periods. To fully understand the processes behind these changes, a multi-disciplinary approach is necessary, combining data from archaeology, geomorphology, vegetation and past climate.

The Dark Age of the Lowlands in an Interdisciplinary Light project focuses on analysing and reconstructing the complex and dynamic interplay between cultural, landscape, vegetation and climate changes during these periods in the Netherlands. These reconstructions take place within three complementary PhD-projects, in the realms of archaeology (A), physical geography (B) and palaeoecology (C). Integration of results between these projects is assured through the use of interdisciplinary research approaches and complementary research questions to analyse processes during these periods.

In this contribution we will present the first results of our analyses on: changing settlements patterns, Roman and early-medieval route networks and palaeogeographical, vegetation and climate reconstructions. The project greatly improves our understanding of the Dark Age and strongly enhances the scientific framework for future research to this key period.