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Insights into the role of geology in human occupation strategies in Bronze Age Sardinia (Italy)

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The geological substrate and its landforms, as main providers of natural resources, have a clear influence on landscape management practices. The landscape evolution of the island of Sardinia (Italy) during the Holocene has strongly influenced the populations settled there, especially during the Bronze Age. We constructed a map of the land units in the southwestern corner of Sardinia and compared them with the distribution of known Bronze Age megalithic towers called nuraghes. Our aim is to understand which factors represent relevant criteria for settlement and try to infer possible causes.

The vast majority of nuraghes are located in proximity to river networks at low and mid elevations. Most densely settled areas also show the highest landscape diversity with a variety of land units much higher than the rest of the territory. Another potential factor affecting the location choice for nuraghes is the presence of elevated outcrops, which provide the advantage of a raised position and of stable foundations. The interaction of human dispersal patterns with landscape features can provide useful information on the sustenance strategies of past communities. It can therefore be interesting to consider the combined effect of geodiversity and landscape diversity in order to build more accurate dispersal models.