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Between mountains and frontiers: the Roman settlement system in the provinces of Germania Superior, Raetia and Noricum

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Propositions

Between Mountains and Frontiers. The Roman settlement system in the provinces of Germania Superior, Raetia and Noricum

(Karolien Pazmany)

1. Before the Roman conquest a complex and dynamic settlement system had already developed in North-West Europe.
2. Based on recent archaeological research it can be argued that most areas within the northern Alpine region were still inhabited during the Late Iron Age. Changes in the settlement system might have created the illusion that large areas of the region were abandoned around that period.
3. Rome's administrative policy was responsive and locally orientated, allowing regions to develop differently, resulting in a kaleidoscopic settlement system. Within the Roman settlement system of the northern Alpine region, at least four zones with different settlement histories can be distinguished.
4. The three provinces of Germania Superior, Raetia and Noricum were frontier provinces, also in the sense that the presence of the Roman army had a big impact on the region's development during the first three centuries AD, in terms of urban and rural life.
5. A heritage management in which the public has been given an active role does not have to stand in the way of the concerns and recommendations of the professional heritage sector.
6. Because everything that is related to heritage is closely connected to social relationships, the 'public' which ought to be targeted by the heritage sector will always be defined differently by different stakeholders.
7. The existence of the city of Alexandria (Egypt) shows that the economic catchment areas of some ancient cities extended far beyond their administrative territories.
8. The shapes of rank-size graphs representing the urban systems of particular provinces of the Roman empire are a good starting point for discussions about levels of economic integration, but are often compatible with multiple reconstructions of the economic structures that underpinned these urban systems.
9. In the everyday lives of the populations of many parts of the Roman empire 'secondary settlements' fulfilling a variety of central-place functions were a more important form of 'urbanism' than settlements which had the juridical status of 'city'.

10. History is a perfect example of the concept of 'catagenese' as described by T. Homer-Dixon in his book 'The Upside of Down' (2006). For example, the shift from agriculture to sheep and goat breeding that took place in the region of Pisidia in the 12th century AD caused high levels of erosion resulting in the complete burying of the ancient town of Sagalassos, thereby creating favourable conditions for modern archaeological explorations.
11. Since the past does not exist anywhere outside our own heads, understanding it is an incredibly difficult task. (*After M. Johnson, 2000, Archaeological Theory. An Introduction, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p 10.*)
12. One will always be questioned about that what one knows less well rather than about topics which one really masters.
13. Enjoying a journey is more important than arriving at the destination.