

Mind the Gap

The Westphalian Basin within the context of the resettlement of Europe after the LGM

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The Westphalian Basin lacks evidence of human presence during the Late Upper Palaeolithic (c. 18-14 ka cal BP), which stands in clear contrast to its neighboring regions. To the North, the Hamburgian is present from c. 15 ka cal BP, while the Magdalenian is well known from the Rhine-Meuse and the Elbe-Saale area from around 16 ka cal BP.

The existence of this “No Man’s Land” between the Magdalenian and Hamburgian settlement zones has been argued before but the different factors, which might have led to this situation have never been critically evaluated. Using data from the two bordering Magdalenian settlement zones (Rhine-Meuse & Elbe-Saale), GIS-based predictive archaeological modeling will be applied to investigate the potential for a Magdalenian occupation in Westphalia according to the topographic and economic conditions. It will then be possible to compare the suitability of the region with the inhabited areas and to answer the question if Magdalenian hunter-gatherers avoided the Westphalian Basin because it was less attractive for them than the surrounding regions.

Other factors may also be responsible for the fact that no sites from this time period could be found in Westphalia. Therefore, the occurrence of post-sedimentary processes like modern land use, sedimentation/erosion and activity of avocational collectors in each region will be evaluated and then compared with the predictive archaeological model. These source-filters may dramatically influence site-visibility and skew the archaeological record in the region. By comparison of both settlement pattern analysis and source-filtering we hope to be able to provide better models for explaining the archaeological record visible today.