
The Hidden Factor – The socio-political and economic contributions of indigenous hunter-gatherer populations to the Mid-Holocene societies in Temperate Europe

Detlef Gronenborn*¹ and Nicolas Antunes

¹Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (RGZM) – Germany

Abstract

Fostered by the early archaeogenetic studies, narratives about the Neolithic were dominated for about two decades by the idea, that these populations were rather homogenous and had successfully "conquered" at least larger parts of the European continent. If a contribution of surviving hunter-gatherer populations to the Neolithic was considered, it was thought to have been marginal.

However fine-grained archaeological studies from the 20th century and continuous approaches after AD 2000 had revealed an interesting and differentiated pattern of assimilation, acculturation but also cohabitation and parallel existence of mutually exclusive groups of immigrant farmers and indigenous hunter-gatherers. In some cases, the two biological groups seem to have formed new "multicultural" societies. But in others there are indications that hunter-gatherer populations, while co-existing with farmers, nevertheless did indeed play marginal roles in these societies, possibly for millennia.

Some of the dominant farmer societies may have even collapsed because they were unable to successfully manage integration of the two populations.

The presentation will go over the archaeological data of the last decades, review the discussion and suggest possible approaches for further investigations.

Keywords: Mesolithic, Neolithic, assimilation, marginalization, multicultural societies

*Speaker