

# REASSESSING ROMAN IMPACT

## A Comparative Study on Territories of Imperialism in the Roman West and Beyond

«There have been disappointingly few attempts in the modern period to write wide-ranging accounts of the nature of the Roman Empire from an archaeological perspective» (Mattingly 2011)

### Introduction, Key Concepts and Aims

- The history of the Roman Empire is not solely the history of Rome: We cannot fully explain Roman imperialism without understanding the pre-Roman social structures of the conquered territories.
- The concept of domination and power as defined by Popitz (domination = enduring institutionalization of power) and its gradual transition offers a flexible framework for assessing not only the social impact of the Roman conquest and hegemony (Fig. 1) but also pre-Roman power networks.
- The built landscape (towns, rural sites, roads etc.) is thus framed as components of specific socio-political situations bound in time and space as opposed to static sites and features.
- The projects aims develop a new approach for assessing Roman impact by analyzing and comparing the spatial articulation of internal/external practices of power and domination over chronological periods.



Fig. 1 The imperium romanum as successive spheres of domination and power. In the 1st and 2nd cent. AD, militarized zones (dotted line, «Limes») separate these spheres.

### Source Material and Methodology

- This project chooses a **birds-eye perspective**: Settlement patterns of archaeological landscapes, their configuration and transformation form the starting point of the analysis.
- With open-access monographies/journals, online databases etc., the underlying data (both pre- and post-conquest) is now accessible, opening the door for **cross-regional analyses**.
- **Sources**: Data from different regions is collected and collated. As the data is heterogenous in media, format and content (online databases, cartographic resources, published site reports), it first be normalized to make it comparable (Fig. 2).
- **Methodology**: Once the data has been standardized, the settlement patterns of various regions can be reconstructed both for different chronological phases and practices of power and domination can be identified.

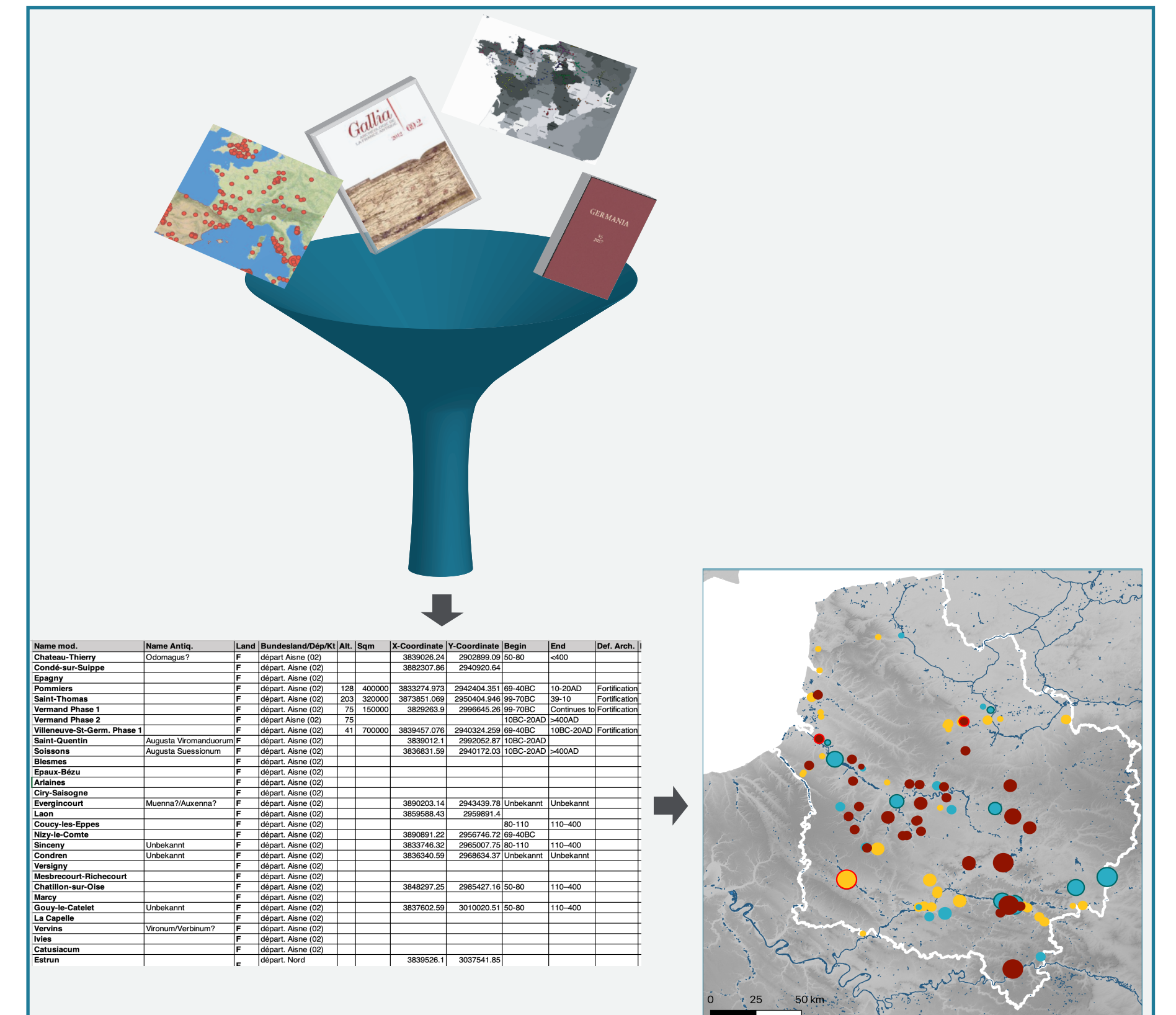


Fig. 2. Despite the widespread use of archaeological databases, the source material still needs to be collated and normalized.

### Discussion and Further Research

- Roman impact did not start with the conquest. Effects of and reactions to Roman power can be identified in the built landscape **in the decades before**; however Roman domination changes the landscape radically (Fig. 3).
- More case studies (Roman Britain, Southern Gaul, „Barbaricum“) will show if these results are constant over different geographical regions and for **varying phases of Roman imperialism**.

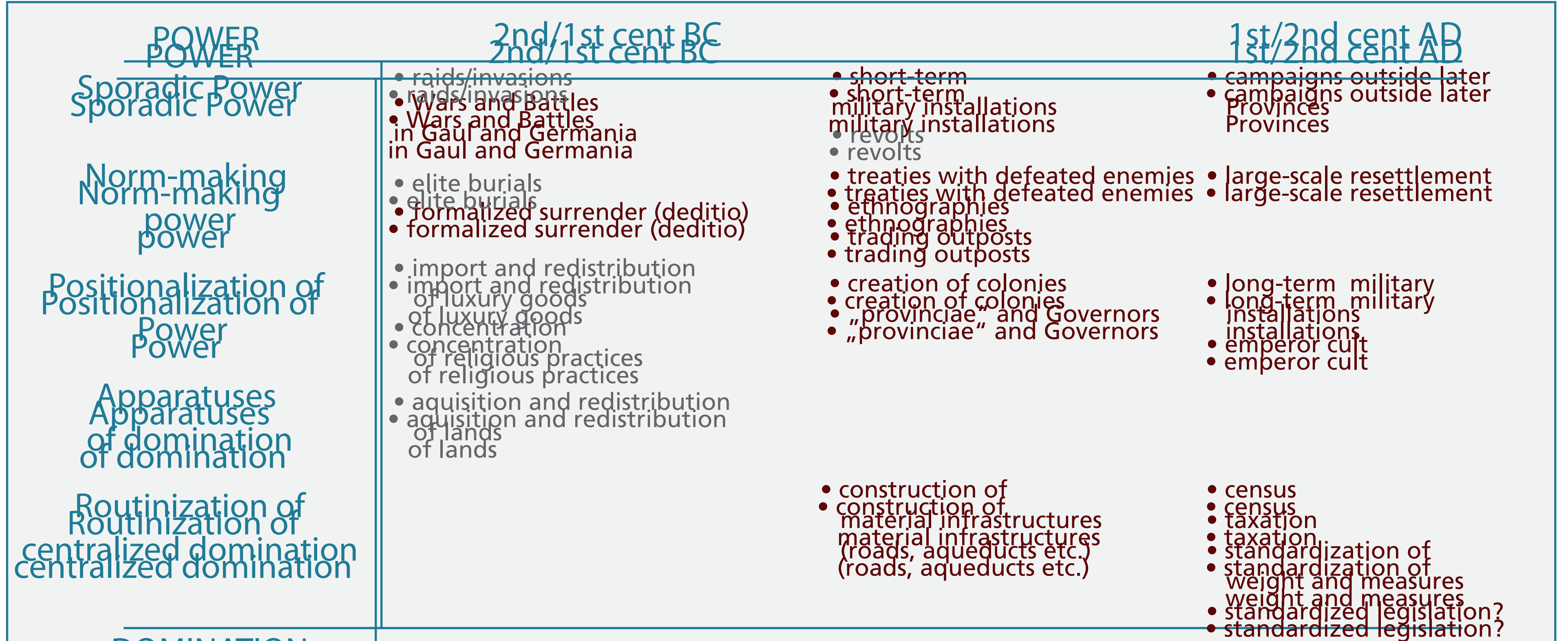


Fig. 3. Scheme illustrating the practices of power and domination (after Popitz 2017) when a region (in this case Gaul/Germanic Provinces) becomes part of the imperium romanum. Grey: internal practices. Red: external practices

### Selected Bibliography

- P. Imbusch, Macht und Herrschaft. In: H. Korte und B. Schäfers (Eds.), Einführung in Hauptbegriffe der Soziologie (Wiesbaden 2016), 196 – 220.
- H. Popitz, Phenomena of Power (New York 2017).
- M. Mann, The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760 (Cambridge 1986).
- D. Mattingly, Imperialism, power and identity. Experiencing the Roman Empire (Oxford/Princeton 2011).
- S. Gonzalez Sanchez/A. Gugliemi, Romans & Barbarians – Beyond the Frontiers. Archaeology, Ideology & Identities in the North. TRAC Themes in Roman Archaeology (Oxford 2017)
- C. R Whittaker, Rome and its frontiers: The dynamics of empire (London 2004).
- G. Woolf, Rome. An Empire's Story (Oxford 2012).