



Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie  
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[www.leiza.de](http://www.leiza.de)

## Press release

Mainz | 26 November 2025

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### International Conference "Landscapes of Conflict" Explores Approaches to Conflict from Prehistory to the Middle Ages

Mainz. How did violent confrontations—and equally the measures taken to prevent or defuse them—shape interactions between humans and their environments over long timescales? This question lies at the heart of the international conference "Landscapes of Conflict: Archaeological Perspectives from Prehistory to the Middle Ages", held from 26 to 28 November 2025 at the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) in Mainz, Germany.

Conflict has been a defining feature of human communities since their beginnings. Societies therefore began early on to develop institutions and normative frameworks intended to avoid disputes, mitigate tensions, or regulate confrontations. Displays of power have likewise long served as deterrence strategies. Yet when such mechanisms break down, the potential for escalation and violence becomes almost limitless.

"We deliberately aim to look beyond the tangible traces of open violence to examine the often more subtle strategies of conflict avoidance," explains co-organizer Dr Thorsten Lemm of LEIZA in Schleswig, Germany. "While written sources document a wide range of conflicts, archaeological evidence for battlefields or mass graves is comparatively rare. What we do find, however, are numerous traces of boundary zones, fortifications, or ritually marked buffer areas—landscapes purposefully shaped by people as tools of de-escalation." Measures for preventing or preparing for conflict, Lemm notes, are therefore often more clearly reflected in the material record than the conflicts themselves.

"Conflicts shape landscapes—and landscapes shape conflicts," emphasizes co-organizer Univ.-Prof. Dr Dominik Maschek, head of the Roman Archaeology division at LEIZA. "To understand why certain regions repeatedly became sites of violent confrontation, we must consider not only discrete events but also the long-term spatial, social, and cultural processes at play. Our conference brings

together researchers from diverse fields to explore these complex interrelationships."

The symposium centers on fundamental questions, including the strategies past societies employed to de-escalate or prevent conflict. It also asks: How did people prepare for confrontations that seemed unavoidable, and what forms did violent encounters then take? How did strategies, organizational structures, and human behavior evolve over time? The 21 presentations span from the Neolithic to the High Middle Ages, with some excursions reaching into more recent periods. Geographically, the case studies range from England, Scandinavia, and the Baltic to the Mediterranean and the eastern Eurasian steppe.

"Our goal is to understand conflict as a key factor shaping human-environment relations," Lemm concludes. "By examining the many dimensions in which conflict—and its regulation—imprints itself on landscapes, we gain deeper insight into historical dynamics and into mechanisms that continue to influence the world today."

#### Further information and full program

<https://www.leiza.de/kalender/details-veranstaltungen/tagung-landscapes-of-conflict>

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#### Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA)

As a Leibniz Research Institute and Museum for Archaeology, LEIZA studies humans and their development based on material remains that span three million years across time and space. The fundamental insights we gain improve our understanding of human behaviour, actions and the development of societies. In this way, LEIZA enriches our knowledge of humans from an archaeological perspective and creates essential foundations for reflecting on the present and shaping the future. With archaeology, LEIZA views human beings in context and shares the knowledge gained in international

dialogue. LEIZA is active worldwide and has successfully and comprehensively conducted research in various regions of Africa, Asia and Europe. The unique concentration of archaeological, scientific, restoration and information technology expertise, combined with important workshops, laboratories and archives, makes it possible to conduct object-oriented research into the archaeology of the ancient world (Asia, Africa, Europe) from the beginnings of human history to modern times. As one of eight research museums in the Leibniz Association, LEIZA combines excellent science with exhibitions and, with its educational mission, is also a place for dialogue with the public.

Until its renaming on 1 January 2023, LEIZA was known internationally as the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum (RGZM), which was founded in Mainz in 1852 by resolution of the German Historical and Antiquities Societies. Since 2024, LEIZA is represented at four locations in Germany: Mainz, Neuwied, Mayen, and Schleswig. [www.leiza.de](http://www.leiza.de)

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