Exploring the social villa. A human approach to villa development

The preceding chapter explored long-term developments as well as more radical changes and transformations in both the organisation of settlement space and house building, predominantly from a spatial-morphological perspective. Space and time, both essential elements within this analysis, were approached as abstract, measurable entities. However, we should not forget that, ultimately, archaeology should be about people. In the end, people organised settlement space and built houses, and people broke with existing trends and traditions. Therefore, in this chapter, I will study villa development from a social or ‘human’ perspective, branding the human being a central element to this chapter’s main research question: how can we understand people changing their direct living environments in the often quite radical ways they did and how can we understand the marked heterogeneity within the research region? People are here thus regarded as active and creative agents, who actively and consciously changed their direct living environments. These human agents were continually creating and reproducing society within the constraints of behaviour learnt and understood within that society. Material change, then, should be viewed as an ongoing social discourse that emphasises diversity and the continual reworking of social relations and identities through the material world.345

Our key objective is once more to understand the explored developments on the level of the settlement and, consequently, on the level of the local communities. Still, however, we cannot and should not attempt to deny the relationships between these local communities and the broader outside world. As Webley argues: ‘Household relations are not insulated from the external world, nor do they respond passively to externally imposed changes. Rather, they can themselves play an important role in maintaining or renegotiating wider social relations’.346

Especially in continental studies, villa development has too often been regarded as the logical and unproblematic adoption of new settlement forms and replacement of simple wooden traditional houses by Roman-style ones. In this chapter, I would like to have a closer look at these developments, studying the backgrounds and implications in more detail and using social theories and models in an attempt to develop more insight into the complex processes of change in rural settlements within the context of the developing Roman provinces.

Before taking such an approach, a number of presumptions need to be explored in brief. Settlement and house are both (along with semi-fixed and mobile material elements) essential elements of the material world that people create directly around themselves, as their direct living environment. It is within this context that relationships -within families, between families and with the broader outside world- are being created and recreated on a day-to-day basis.347 Settlement and house as material culture are thus indissolubly interwoven with the people that produce it; in fact, they are mutually constituting.348 The house takes a particularly central position, as it is at the heart of social and cultural life, constituting ‘culturally significant space of the highest order’.349 Viewing settlement, house and space as essentially social, it follows that the developments, as reconstructed in the previous chapter, were highly socially significant as well.350 In this chapter we will thus focus on the changing ways in which social relationships were created by means of the reorganisation of settlement and house space, monumentalisation, the creation of new lifestyles, new symbols and new identities in a changing world. In social studies on house

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345 Taylor 2001, 47.
346 Webley 2007, 455.
347 See also Gerritsen 2007, 155 and Rapoport 1989, XIII. Houses represent close indicators of habitus; the very way in which we live in the world, how we view the world, but also how we act. Habitus could be viewed as a modus operandi (Bourdieu 1977, 79), or, in ontological terms, even as a way of ‘being in the world’ (Rippengal 1993, 93; Heidegger’s concept of ‘dasein’). We should caution the separation of people and their environment. As Lawrence-Zuniga (2001, 171) states: ‘Humans tend to experience and live in their immediate environments, in the totality of their material and social, fixed and movable dimensions, as continuous and whole both in use and conception.’ People design their immediate environment in relation to environmental factors as well as to take a place in the human world. As such, the built environment as a whole constitutes -and reflects- the social order (DeMarrais 2007, 121-122).
348 Gerritsen 2003, 32; Tilley et al. 2006, 440.
350 A human perspective will thus be combined with a temporally-sensitive approach, often absent in social studies on house and development (Gerritsen 2003, 37).
and settlement, the general trend has been one towards integrated perspectives on the material, social, ideological, and political significance of the built environment. In this study we will also attempt to take such an integrated perspective.

First of all, I will present a short overview of existing studies on the social dimension of villa settlement and their development as well as position the present study within this context. Subsequently, I will shed some light on the basic ‘demographic’ scale of rural settlement; how many families were living in the various types of rural settlement? A larger section will then approach the developments reconstructed in the previous chapter from a human perspective. Several themes have been defined: the reorganisation and structuration of space, the break with traditions, monumentalisation and the creation of new lifestyles. Furthermore, among others by discussing the anthropological concept of ‘peasant’, I will also attempt to elucidate the lower echelons of society, which too often have remained underexposed in studies tackling the villa.

4.1 The social study of villas

The objective of understanding the villa in social terms is by no means a new one in archaeology. However, through time, insights and approaches have nevertheless developed and changed considerably. As observed in the introduction, the earliest studies reconstructing the development of traditional wooden houses towards multi-roomed houses on stone foundations date back to the first half of the 20th century. In relation to this discovery, it was suggested for the first time that native people lived in these Roman-style houses. From the 1960s onwards in particular, linked to the growing number of large-scale excavations, socio-economic approaches on the villa developed. Scholars like Rivet and Percival looked at the written evidence from classical authors such as Columella and Varro to shed light on socio-economic relationships in villas on the provincial countryside. Within this view, the existing agricultural system in the provinces was assumed to have developed towards an Italian one, including the development of latifundia and contractual tenure of the Italian type. This approach, labelled the ‘Italic Model’ by Jan Slofstra, was later criticised for transferring the Italic situation to the provinces too simplistically. Instead, Slofstra suggested, anthropological models could help us understand social relationships within what he branded the ‘villa system’. His approach demonstrated pronounced neo-Marxist influences and focused on asymmetrical social relationships, thereby also introducing the peasant concept. Asymmetrical relationships and peasants were also discussed by Wightman, in this case on the basis of Early Medieval Irish law texts.

From the late 1970s, another social approach on the villa developed within British archaeology, initiated by J.T. Smith’s “The villa as a key to social structure”. In this research, Smith attempted to reconstruct social structure on the basis of villa plans, his basic conclusion being that the existing pre-Roman ‘Celtic’ social structure of the extended family continued into the Roman period, also when new villa houses were being built. Although Smith’s rather simplistic approach has indeed been criticised, quite a number of publications linked to this theme have further developed his basic argument.

In more recent work the socio-cultural dimension of the villa featured as a prominent theme. A number of authors have argued that the villa could best be viewed in terms of changing styles of consumption; developing tastes for new styles, materials and techniques. Martins emphasised that not only new tastes, but also new ways of consuming in much more conspicuous, individual ways, did indeed

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351 Gerritsen 2007, 155. This kind of approach to the house is rooted in ethnological studies such as that of Claude Levi-Strauss, describing the house as ‘a corporate body holding an estate made up from both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods, and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or affinity and, most often, of both.’ (Levi-Strauss 1982, 174; see also Amerlinck 2001).

352 Slofstra 1983, 84.


354 Wightman 1978, 98.

355 Slofstra 1983.


357 Smith 1978.


Hingley argued that, through the elaboration of spatial form, architectural details, decoration and furniture, the house became the locus for the symbolism of social inequality. Its architecture and elaboration were obsessively concerned with the creation and display of social distinctions, including the complex relationships between master and mistress, slaves and servants and patron and client. As such, the monumental represented an architectural statement about identity and aspirations. Contrary to the British archaeology, such approaches have not really caught on in the continental study, however.

Even more generally speaking, it must be emphasised that only few of the above mentioned theoretical, interpretational considerations are rooted in the continental archaeological study or have in fact exercised any influence at all. A considerable number of studies on villas and rural settlements have remained at the level of straightforward publication of excavation data; plans, material culture and chronology. In other cases, the Italic model has been used for simplistic and generalised interpretations of villa settlements. The processes behind the developments exposed in many large-scale excavations have thus continued to be unexplored. One of this study’s key objectives is to connect the continental villa study with theory-informed interpretational frameworks of British archaeological studies, architecture studies, material culture studies, anthropology and sociology.

### 4.2 Variation in settlement scale

Before entering into a discussion on social structure, evolving social relationships and community, we first need to pose the basic question concerning the ‘social scale’ of rural settlements. How many people were actually living on these settlement compounds and did they belong to one or several families? Moreover, exactly how substantial is the variety between settlements and between regions?

Unfortunately, aside from being fundamental, this question is in many cases considerably difficult to answer as well. First of all, relatively few settlements have been excavated entirely, so that each building could be studied. Secondly, the functional interpretation of these buildings is generally problematic, as no or only few indications can be deducted from its architectural form, interior elements or associated material culture. With regard to a residential purpose, the most straightforward indication, a hearth, is only documented in a minority of cases.

Notwithstanding these cautionary remarks, several settlements enable the construction of a general idea of their size (fig. 4.1). A first category of settlements entails the small compound settlements with one or two houses. Here, besides the best recognisable and generally most monumental house, another, less monumental building could sometimes also be interpreted as residential. In many cases, however, these secondary houses remain hypothetical, as functional interpretations are problematic. Examples of settlements in this category include Pulheim-Brauweiler, Hambach 516, Hambach 59, Frimmersdorf 129, Jüchen-Neuholz, Hordain-La Fosse-a-Loups, Onnaing-Toyota and Bohain-en-Vermardois. If the interpretations are correct, these small settlements were inhabited by one or two families. At some other settlements, the (partial) monumentalisation of a secondary house made the interpretation as a residence easier: Hambach 66, 69, 127, 403, Rheinbach-Flerzheim, Nideggen-Wollersheim, Neerharen-Rekem, Rochefort-Jemelle and Seclin. With regard to housing and estimating settlement population it must be kept in mind that, possibly, buildings could have had more than one function, combining residential with agricultural purposes, making them more difficult to recognise.

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361 Hingley 2005, 88.
362 Mattingly 2006, 373.
363 As an exception, the studies by Courbot-Dewerdt (2004, 2005 and 2006) could be mentioned. She has approached French rural settlements using insights from the field of social studies.
364 Jan Slofstra’s work may be identified as most influential of these (Slofstra 1983, 1991).
Fig. 4.1 Roman period rural settlements within the research region; variations in settlement size and form. The phases shown can be dated to the later 1st or 2nd century AD. Buildings with grey shading are the monumentalised main houses.
Regarding a category of larger settlements, more families were seemingly living on the settlement compound. At the settlements Kerkrade-Holzkui, Hamois-Le Hody and Bruges-Refuge, apart from the main residence, between three and five contemporary houses could be documented. Settlements in the northern sand and clay areas, such as Oss-Westerveld, Hoogeloon-Kerkakkers and Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden, also consisted of quite a number of contemporary houses, generally between three and seven.

The same applies to the axially organised complexes. At most of these, several houses seem to have been situated on the working compounds, arranged in two opposing rows on both sides of the central axis. At Limé and Famechon-Le Marais, where only part of the working compound was excavated, three or four houses were documented. If these excavated sections can be taken to be representative, then even up to between ten and fifteen houses could have been situated at these large axial complexes. Such a pattern could perhaps also be distinguished at the large complex of Anthée. Unfortunately, no detailed interpretations of the secondary buildings of this complex are available. At the settlement of Champion we find seven Alphen-Ekeren type constructions on the working compound. It is seems that several of these had at least partially residential functions and, consequently, the settlement was inhabited by several, even up to eight families.

The population of a limited number of settlements has been estimated in terms of absolute numbers. For the settlement of Hambach 59, for example, Hallmann-Preuss reconstructed an extended family of three generations and a dependent family, resulting in a total number of between 30 and 35 inhabitants.365 Hinz, studying the German Bergheim region, estimated between 35 and 50 people per 100 hectares of land, which he took as a regular number per settlement.366 Furthermore, with regard to another small compound settlement of around 1 hectare, the calculations came to 20 inhabitants.367 A larger number, between 50 and 100 people, could be expected to have lived on axial complexes, where several houses were situated on the working compounds.368 For the northern regions, a settlement like Tiel-Passewaaij had between 20 and 40 inhabitants and Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden up to 26 persons (four houses with an average number of 6,5 inhabitants per residence).369

4.3 The reorganisation of space: constructing new social realities

Domestic space is the central and essential context of the daily routine practices that shape people’s lives. It does not simply facilitate these routines, it actually shapes them. This close relationship between dwelling and routine practice is underlined by the close similarity of the words used for both: ‘to inhabit’ (in other languages: habiter, habitar, wohnen, women) and ‘habit’ (in other languages: ‘habitude’, ‘habiito’, ‘Gewohnheit’ and ‘gewoonte’). As Giddens argues, ‘It is daily life and its routines that both constrain people within these [social] structures and enable them to either reproduce the existing structure or change it through new behaviour’.370 Domestic space being so intimately related to people and the way that social relationships are created, the considerable changes in its organisation, as explored in the previous chapter, must have had significant backgrounds and implications. This section will explore how people constructed new social realities by reorganising space, both at settlement and house level. The creation of a new spatial habitus will have produced and reinforced new domestic practices and suggested social ways that will eventually have been taken for granted as culturally proper and self-evident.371 Power is a significant aspect. By controlling the (re)organisation of space, it became possible to exercise influence on the way that social relationships were constructed, thereby also fixing social institutions.

365 Hallmann-Preuss 2002/2003, 401-402; Furthermore, she states that in harvest times, probably between 8 and 12 external (seasonal) workers will have been needed.
366 Hinz 1969b.
368 Roymans /Habermehl in press.
369 Heeren 2009, 227; Vos 2009, 213. Vos used an average settlement size of sixteen people for his demographical calculations.
371 Robben 1989, 583. ‘The patterns of daily life in a rectangular stone-built structure were quite different from those in a round wattle-and-daub house, not to mention the smells, sights and sounds in the two cases’ (Tilley et al. 2006, 439).
### 4.3.1 Reorganizing settlement space

A principal development trend, clearly identified in the previous chapter, entails the enclosure of settlement space in the northern part of the research region during the 1st century AD and in the southern parts as early as the later Iron Age. How can we understand this broad development towards the enclosure of settlement space from a social perspective?

Settlement enclosures – ditches in the majority of cases – defined the settlement within the broader landscape. In social terms, they defined a settlement community, simultaneously including and excluding people, by clearly marking the communities boundaries. Viewed in this way, enclosures were both physically functional as well as symbolically significant. As such, they could have played a role in the construction of a collective identity. As Courbot-Dewerdt states, the enclosure was ‘…one way for Gauls to relate to space and to express their feeling of identity and belonging in different aspects of their life’.372 In addition, Hingley emphasises that enclosures reflect the ‘…isolation of the local social group from the wider scale community’, and that ‘… social relations of production are reflected in small-scale, independent social groups which control and appropriate territory independently of one another’.373 From a more anthropological perspective, similar interpretations were made by Thomas, who associated enclosure development with social contraction linked to agricultural intensification and the increasing pressure on land. Social groups started connecting themselves to land in more concrete ways, striving to preserve it among the local group.374 A firmer sense of place developed, establishing a lasting association between the family, the house and the land on which the settlement was located. Local communities consequently became increasingly closed, as family ties and inheritance became more important means of gaining access to agricultural land: sons or daughters remained in their native household after marriage. It is seems plausible that the development of stable and enclosed settlements within the research region reflected such processes. With regard to northern France at least, where the enclosure trend already started during the later Iron Age, agricultural intensification was indeed documented for this period.375 For the northern regions, the above-made interpretations link up with Gerritsen’s observations regarding the Late Iron Age MDS-region, where he reconstructed the reorientation from the wider community towards smaller social entities such as the household or nucleated settlement.376 Furthermore, botanical studies and the disappearance of the Celtic field system suggest changes in the production system, agricultural intensification and evolving social relationships. In these northern regions, however, settlements were generally not being enclosed until the 1st century AD. In that period, pre-Roman developments, affecting the way that people settled the landscape, continued and were even significantly amplified by the rapidly increasing demographic pressure, the large-scale demand for food, the increasing pressure on land and the changing power relationships and patterns of proprietorship.

This enclosure trend was linked to the reorganisation and increasing structuration of internal settlement space (fig. 4.2). As has been observed in the previous chapter, many settlements in the northern regions of the research region (but also in the German loess region) consisted of open and loosely structured clusters of buildings during their early phases (up to around the middle of the 1st century AD). Later on, mostly around the middle of the 1st century AD, they were reorganised quite radically, towards enclosed and relatively well-structured squarish settlement compounds, where the buildings were constructed along the enclosure ditches and around an open space. In the southern regions, settlements were enclosed as early as the later Iron Age, although internal settlement space was not yet rigidly structured in this period. From the earliest phases of the Roman period and perhaps as early as during the latest phase of the pre-Roman period, space at some sites was subject to considerably radical changes, again resulting in well-structured settlements, of which the axial complexes were the best and most striking examples. The aforementioned spatial reorganisation involved the introduction of new organisational concepts such as geometry, symmetry and axiality, which were not used for the organisation of settlement space during pre-Roman times. By using these concepts, well-structured and coherent settlement complexes were created. This had a number of backgrounds and implications that I will now continue to explore.

First of all, with the reorganisation of settlement space towards a coherent, organised whole, some form of spatial hierarchy was created. Certain houses were positioned at prominent positions within the

372 Courbot-Dewerdt 2005, 56.
373 Hingley 1984, 25; see also Bowden/McOmish 1987.
374 Thomas 1997.
375 Haselgrove 1996.
376 Gerritsen 2003.
structure of the settlement. At some larger compound settlements, such as Kerkrade-Holzkuil and Hamois-Le Hody, the main house, inhabited by the dominant family, was situated at a central, prominent position, with its back against the enclosure ditch. As noted before, it is remarkable that this spatial structure already existed before the main house was monumentalised. The reorganisation and structuration of space, and thus the creation of a spatial hierarchy, preceded architectural changes in house building. The same phenomenon can furthermore be located at axially organised complexes such as Verneuil-en-Halatte. The axial lay-out was created as early as during the Augustan period, when the main house, centrally positioned at the top of the main axis, was still constructed in traditional fashion. This use of axiality was a particularly powerful way of creating a hierarchical spatial structure. What is more, in architectural studies axiality is generally associated with authoritarian power. Often, the ‘axis’ leads to the symbol of power. This was certainly the case at the axial complexes where the axis led straight up to the centre of local power: the residence of the dominant family who exercised power over people and production. But axiality and symmetry, as new spatial concepts, were not exclusively used in the very large and very rigidly organised axial complexes. At the settlements of Hambach 59, Hambach 127 and Brugge-Refuge, for example, the main residence was located at one end of the settlement compound, the secondary buildings being organised on both sides of the compound in front, in fact creating a corridor leading up to the residence (see fig. 4.2). In this way, a spatial layout was created within which the main residence took a prominent and central position. In some cases, hierarchy took an even more concrete shape when a dividing element separated the main house from the rest of the settlement. Again, we find the best example in the large axially organised complexes. In many of these settlements, a wall or ditch divided the main residential compound from the rest of the complex. This way, the distance between the main residence, the centre of power, and the other dwellings – where dependant families were living – was further increased and monumentalised. However, this did not apply to all axially organised settlements. At Champion-Le Emptinne and Monchy-les-Preux, for example, a dividing element was not documented. For the settlements in the most northerly parts of the research region, the use of symmetry and axiality for the creation of spatial hierarchies cannot be documented, however. These settlements were not as rigidly structured as the above-described examples. Nevertheless, some of these settlements do suggest the existence of spatial hierarchies as well. As described in the previous chapter, at Oss-Westerveld and Hoogeloon-Kerkakkers, enclosed compounds were created within the settlement, separating a single house from the rest of the settlement. The architectural character of the house in question as well as the material culture with which it was associated underlined the special position of its inhabitants. They physically and symbolically created a larger distance between themselves and the rest of the local settlement community. The spatial layout of the settlements of Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden and Geldermalsen-Hondsgemiet could possibly be interpreted in a similar way. 377

377 At Geldermalsen-Hondsgemiet, one farmstead with a large house (house 20) was enclosed separately and had an entrance marked by posts, indicating its importance. Furthermore, the material culture associated with this farmstead underlined its special position (Van Renswoude/Van Keckhove 2009, 467). For the Wijk bij Duurstede-Horden see Vos 2002, 2009.
Fig. 4.2 Examples of the structuration of settlement space, the use of symmetry and axiality and the control over access, movement and experience. The buildings with grey shading are the monumentalised main houses.

By using these organisational concepts, movement and experience were controlled as well. We can imagine the experience of entering a large axial settlement like Anthée at the bottom of the complex and on the central axis. With entering the courtyard, an impressive long courtyard stretched out, characterised by two opposing rows of buildings forming a sort of corridor leading to the far end of the complex where a large monumental house loomed, a wall and gate protecting it from free entrance. Movement and vision were clearly directed towards the end of the axis, while on both sides of the view field dependant families lived and worked. They literally took a peripheral position while clearly being physically dominated and controlled monumental residence, overlooking the working compound whilst being physically separated from it at the same time. This spatial structure in fact acted as a social metaphor, breathing the asymmetrical relationships of domination and control.378 But also at some smaller settlements, strategies were used to control movement and experience. By positioning the entrance of the settlement opposite the main house, one would immediately be confronted with the monumentality and dominance of this house within the settlement. For even more specifically directing movement, paths were constructed, leading from the entrance straight up the main residence. Such paths were documented at for example Hambach 127, Hambach 488 and Voerendaal-Ten Hove (see fig. 4.2).

In conclusion, it becomes apparent that the adoption of new organisational concepts was not a simple adoption of Roman ideas on organisation but a conscious and active strategy to create and fix new social relationships within the context of the settlement. Such well-structured and coherently organised settlement complexes did not develop organically or gradually. Instead, they were laid out as well-structured, planned settlements, implying centralised power over the organisation of space. This reflects the changed power relationships within the rural sphere. Certain families acquired enough social power to restructure settlement space, create newly structured and coherent settlement complexes and break with

378 On socio-spatial metaphors, see Huijbers 2007.
existing patterns of settlement organisation. By controlling access, movement, experience and by creating spatial hierarchies as metaphors of dependency and dominations, they were able to construct and fix new social relationships within the settlement. These were a-symmetrical relationships, whereby the degree of dependency and the character of the relationships, as reflected in the spatial structure of the settlements, seem to have varied considerably. Control is a central concept in this context. Indeed, a leader’s status is indicated by his control over others and architecture is an effective way to shape control within the physical context of the day-to-day life.379

4.3.2 Reorganizing house space

Domestic space also includes space inside the house. The previous chapter featured a reconstruction of a general development involving the transformation of traditional post-built houses towards multi-roomed houses on stone foundations, often including baths, hypocausts and rooms decorated with painted walls. With this development the domestic spatial structure also changed considerably. Quintessentially, the same trends can be recognised as with the organisation of settlement space - structuration, hierarchisation and segmentation-, albeit on a different scale and in different ways. With the construction of multi-roomed houses, in fact a new spatial habitus was created, significantly affecting the daily social practices and routines. Different spaces could relate to different functions, different social meanings, different spheres of living (private or public) or different relations towards the outside world.380

Traditional houses included relatively small multi-purpose living areas lacking physical barriers subdividing space into functionally or socially differentiated areas. The subdivision of space seems to have been predominantly conceptual. In well-preserved byre houses at for example Ezinge in the north of the Netherlands and in Jutland in Denmark, an impression of such living spaces can be gained.381 Only part of the long-rectangular byre house was intended for habitation. The byre was separated from this residential space by an entrance section, generally situated at the centre of the house with entrances on both long sides. The hearth was an important element within the living space, generally taking a central position. The storage, processing and consumption of food were generally located at the front or rear part of the living space.382 With regard to Britain, Hingley has reconstructed the use of space in traditional roundhouses according to a structuralist model, defining a basic opposition between the central space around the hearth, where communal domestic life took place, and the peripheral areas of the house associated with more private use, such as storage and sleeping.383 Perhaps, the use of space in traditional houses within the research region could also be understood in these terms.

379 Also see Wilson 1988, 126.
380 Robben 1989, 582.
382 Webley 2007, 461-462.
383 Hingley 1990; Sharples 2010, 182-183; see also Taylor 2001, 49-50.
With regard to developments in house building and domestic spatial structure, the continuity versus discontinuity issue constitutes one of the most basic questions. Should we regard the development of multi-roomed houses as a break with existing patterns or simply as a translation of existing patterns regarding the use of space into new forms? Within the British villa study, a relatively extensive debate on this topic has been raging, initiated by J.T. Smith’s influential article ‘Villas as a key to social structure’. In short, Smith argued that a basically pre-conquest ‘Celtic’ society, structured around the extended family, continued to exist behind the Roman-style facades. Following Smith, Hingley also reconstructed basic continuity between the socio-spatial structure of traditional roundhouses and multi-roomed rectangular houses (fig. 4.3).

In these latter houses, the central large room or hall contained the hearth and was consequently the location at which collective life took place; where people were cooking, eating and meeting. The smaller rooms revolving around this central hall could then be interpreted as sleeping rooms, private guest rooms and storage rooms. According to Hingley, basic existing spatial patterns were thus translated into new forms. Although Smith’s study represents a valuable move in a new direction, his views are generally criticised for the unproblematic and simplistic equation of house plans with society, such that we may simply look at the plans and ‘read off’ the social form. According to Rippengal, Smith fails to examine the relationship between ‘society’ and ‘architecture’ itself.

Examining the multi-roomed houses within our research region, it becomes evident that, when documented, hearths are also situated within the large central room within the house (see fig 4.4). In line with the previous, it seems likely that collective domestic life took place at this spot, centred around the hearth as a source of heat and a place for preparing food. The smaller rooms around the hall had different, potentially more private or specialised purposes.

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384 Smith 1978, 170-172; Rippengal 1993, 80; Clarke 1999.
386 Rippengal 1993, 83; Scott 1990.
387 Rippengal 1993, 83.
Nevertheless, even when following Smith’s and Hingley’s interpretational course emphasising the basic continuity in spatial structure, we should take care not to overlook the fundamental changes that took place in the organisation of domestic space as well. In order to explore these changes, we need to focus on the way in which domestic space was structured, particularly with regard to the way that social relationships were shaped and maintained within the house and household and between the household and the outside world.

First of all, the creation of separate spaces, physically divided by means of walls had significant implications with regard to the social relationships within the household. The various elements of day-to-day life such as eating, meeting and sleeping could be separated in more distinct ways, while the creation of individual rooms increased the possibilities for creating privacy. Taylor regards this development as a shift in discourse towards the spatial segregation of domestic and productive activities. Furthermore, access and exclusion were now more explicitly and monumentally controlled, as the physical and social distance and distinction between people increased. In relation to the development of a more complex domestic spatial structure, we encounter development of a more complex symbolic-spatial structure. Multi-roomed houses were the locus for the symbolism of social inequality, domestic space becoming the cultural language of domination. As Hingley states, the architecture and elaboration of these houses were obsessively concerned with the creation and display of distinctions of social rank, including the complex relationships between master and mistress, slaves and servants and patron and client. Within the house, such a symbolic-spatial structure was created by means of fixed (walls, hypocausts), semi-fixed (mosaic) floors and painted wall plaster) and non-fixed (objects, furniture) elements. In this way, new behavioural patterns, and thus new social realities were created and fixed within the household. New socially significant patterns of meaning were created by means of the spatial organisation (again, the control over movement and experience), access and exclusion, colours, textures and representations. Certain parts of the house, even particular rooms, were to be seen as high-status and exclusive, allowing access to a select few, while others could be branded more general spaces that were more accessible.

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388 Hingley 2005, 88-89.
390 Hingley 2005, 88.
391 Rapoport 1994, 460-462.
392 Hingley 2005, 88-89.
Not only did the distance between the members of the household increase, so did the distance between the household residing inside the house and the outside world. A number of authors have argued that the portico that fronted almost all multi-roomed houses could be interpreted as a barrier between the outside world and the inner house, and that the creation of such porticoes reflected the desire to create a distance between the private home and the public outside world. Scott has suggested that this wish could have developed in reaction to the development of a more formal and impersonal economic reality. Rippengal, however, stated that it is more favourable to examine the changing relationships between people within the local community. This latter interpretation can be linked to observations made in the aforementioned, concerning the increasing distance between people within the context of the settlement. Just like social relationships within the household were re-negotiated by means of space, so were relationships between the household and the outside world.

Parallel to the reorganisation of settlement space, organisational concepts such as symmetry and axiality were also used for the spatial organisation of the house (fig. 4.5). Again, rather than already being used in traditional house building, these constituted new introductions. Symmetry was particularly obvious in the house’s facades, but also extended to the house’s spatial structures beyond. Especially in the larger houses, symmetry and axiality will have been employed to create a spatial hierarchy within the house, the position of certain rooms acting as a metaphor for their social importance. Once more, the people that had the power to construct such houses also had the power to affect the way in which social relationships were constructed, by controlling movement, access and exclusion as well as the symbolic ways in which social messages were communicated and experienced.

![Fig. 4.5 The use of symmetry and axiality in multi-roomed houses. Matagne-La Petite and Basse-Wavre.](image)

The line of reasoning presented here implies that we should thus not simply regard the size and appearance of these houses as a reflection of the degree of wealth of its inhabitants. Between rural houses, not only the luxury of houses varied greatly – the presence or absence of hypocausts, bathing sections, *triclinia* and mosaic floors – but also the degree of complexity in which social relationships were constructed within the household. How large was the distance between the members of the household (fig. 4.6)? Were they still taking part in collective life in a multi-purpose central room around the hearth or was domestic space more differentiated, strictly separating people from each other by means of different levels of access and limited encounters, facilitated by a differentiated organisation of domestic space and a complex symbolic system? Examining monumental houses within our dataset, it becomes evident that, in contrast to the generally uniform way in which traditional residential spaces were organised, the new organisation of domestic space, and thus the way in which people created a new spatial *habitus* and constructed new relationships of power and control, was much more varied in terms of character as well as scale. In some cases, houses chiefly consisted of a hall that was still largely multi-functional, lacking segmentation and reflecting a relatively simple socio-spatial structure (such as the timber framework house and the simples houses on stone foundations, see fig 4.6). In these houses the household probably was still much like that in the pre-Roman period. The distance between people, physically as well as socially, probably was relatively small. In other cases, we find that small rooms were attached to such a central hall. Here a first step towards a more complex socio-spatial structure is taken, as certain people could

393 On such barriers between the house and street see Robben 1989, 582 ff.
394 Scott 1990, 164-165.
395 Samson 1990b.
potentially distance themselves from the rest of the household. And in the larger houses a considerable
variety of rooms and spaces can be found, creating a more pronounced and formal functional as well as
social differentiation. Hypocausts, baths, floors, mosaics and painted plaster were in fact instrumental in
the creation of this structure. The variety in socio-spatial complexity can probably also be associated with
the changing composition of the household. In the larger houses, it is likely that at least several people
living there, servants for example, were not a member of the actual family household. Consequently, these
people were kept at greater distance and social relationships were rather more formal instead of close and
personal.

Fig. 4.6: Houses reflecting various degrees of socio-spatial complexity. Social relationships within the household were
constructed in different ways within these houses, probably also related to the way the household was composed.
From top left to bottom: a traditional two-aisled Alphen-Ekeren house at Oss, a single-aisled framework house at
Jüchen-Neuholz, a simple house on stone foundations at Broichweiden-Würselen, a house on stone foundations
with a number of separate rooms and a portico-risalith facade, and a large, complex and highly differentiated house
with projecting wings at Anthée.

With regard to the general development from simple multi-functional residential spaces towards
segregated domestic space, as with the development of multi-roomed houses, a cross-cultural study by
Kent is of particular interest. In this study, Kent argues in favour of the existence of a link between
spatial segregation in architecture and the socio-political complexity of broader society. In this light, it is
significant that space in rural houses became increasingly segregated from the 1st century AD onwards, the
period during which native communities became integrated into the Roman Empire, representing a
society and imperial organisation that was socio-politically highly complex, especially when compared to
the situation prior to the conquest. Certain members of the indigenous communities became directly

396 Kent 1990.
involved in the developing provincial organisation of the empire and thus became integrated in new, complex socio-political networks, eventually also affecting social relationships on the level of the local settlement and the individual household. That this was not a development typical for the Roman period is well illustrated by a study on the Greek transition from Early Iron Age to Archaic period. In this period, cities started developing, along with political institutions and markets. Society developed towards a much more complex form, becoming socially ranked and institutionalised. Different spheres were becoming increasingly spatially separated, eventually also affecting families’ private residences, developing from small and simple, multi-functional houses towards multi-roomed houses with a courtyard that served as a transitional zone between the inner house and the outside world. In this example we also see that the development of more complex social and economic systems eventually affected the way that people built their houses, structured domestic space, and thus how they interacted with each other within the context of their house and settlement. Increasing Segregation, differentiation and control were prominent in both cases.

Developments in house building could thus be regarded as reflecting both developments within the local community as well as within the household. The house was in fact an active way in which new relationships were created, monumentalised and symbolised both vertically and horizontally. Vertical relationships were established by connecting -in various degrees of directness- to urban lifestyles, networks of the provincial organisation and arenas of power as well as by impressing and dominating people lower on the social ladder, while its horizontal counterpart came into being by linking up to newly emerging rural elites that formed communities of peers on the provincial countryside.

Fig. 4.7 Distribution of houses according to their size, measured in number of rooms.

397 See Lang 2007.
4.3.3 Contextualizing change: the North American case

In Roman archaeology, the development of the ‘Roman villa’ sometimes tends to be regarded as a specific, if not unique development. Taking a broader and less specific perspective and redefining the theme to changes in settlement origination, house building and consumption within a dynamically changing world, it becomes apparent that some interesting anachronistic parallels are indeed available. Could such parallels offer additional insights into the (relative) importance of different factors in processes of change or into the changes itself? A first example, looking into Greek archaeology, was already presented in the previous section. One other interesting case suitable to this objective is the development of rural habitation in America between the 16th and 20th century, discussed in this section.

In his overview of American farmstead archaeology, Groover reconstructs several specific as well as broader development trends in the spatial organisation of farmsteads, the construction of houses and the use of mobile material culture, which he links to social and economic development trends.398 The communities inhabiting America prior to the 18th century can be characterised as pre-industrial with vernacular or folk cultures organised by the concept of tradition. Cultural practices were maintained over relatively long periods of time. The farms within these communities were largely subsistence-oriented, self-sufficient operations, predominantly using human and animal labour and intending to sustain individual farming households. In this period, houses were built in vernacular fashion, by means of post-building techniques. At the site of Kingsmill, for example, people of all segments of the population lived in such post-built houses.399 In some cases, simple stone foundations were used in order to support wooden framework constructions, lengthening the lifespan of the house structure considerably. While houses that were built during this period were still considerably traditional, industrially produced items such as glass bottles, tobacco and pipes were already dominating material culture.

A very important process that caused considerable changes to the lives of people was that of industrialisation that took off from the earlier 18th century. It affected the material culture used by people in the historic past in profound ways. In addition, the development of markets, cities and infrastructure will have had a significant effect on the rural farmstead communities as well. Industrialisation caused significant social change and also affected traditional ways of settling and building greatly. During the earlier phases, changes in mobile material culture became visible first. It is not until after the second half of the 1800s that the complete brunt of industrialisation became fully apparent in the archaeological record. The development of consumerism and popular culture was initiated within the upper classes in North America during the Colonial period. Consumer goods were used as status objects that served to set their owners apart from lower and middle segments of colonial society. Many aspects of daily life were affected: domestic architecture, furnishings, dress and food. Furthermore, the new food-related activities associated with this development should not be overlooked: drinking tea, smoking tobacco and the many new ways of dining and consuming wine. From around the later 18th century, and continuing into the 19th century, some general developments in the organisation and construction of farmsteads and houses took place. As Groover describes it, ‘Spatial organisation within many colonial farmhouse lots became structured, standardized, organised, and often symmetrical or balanced. Dwellings were also increasingly built of brick or wood with brick foundations to last longer than the lives of their owners.’400

This brief case study demonstrates how a large-scale broad development such as industrialisation eventually causes significant changes to the farmsteads, houses and, ultimately, the daily lives of people themselves. New consumption patterns were first adopted by the higher echelons of society, profiling themselves against the lower and middle classes. Subsequently, farmsteads were reorganised and new architectural ideas were adopted. In several ways, these processes of change can be compared to those that we are exploring in this study. New consumption patterns developing in the Roman period were indeed linked to some form of industrialisation of production as well; for example the massive production sites for terra sigillata in southern and central Gaul. The higher echelons of society were the first to apply new consumption patterns, new lifestyles. And similarly, it is not until during a later phase that new architectural ideas were adopted.

399 Groover 2008, 53.
4.4 Breaking with the old and building the new: social strategies in a changing world

After having focused on the changing ways that social relationships were constructed within the context of the settlement and house by means of the reorganisation of space, I will now continue by focusing on the break with or transformation of existing traditions and the construction of new ones. New building practices developed, new symbols were adopted and new ways of consuming and behaving entered traditional societies. This chapter is chiefly concerned with the question why people broke with traditions that existed for centuries so radically. Furthermore, it will venture to explore in what way new elements were used to construct new relationships and identities.

A number of themes will subsequently be discussed:

- The break with traditional ways of building
- The durability and monumentality of the house
- The symbolic construction of the settlement community
- The construction of new lifestyles and symbols

4.4.1 Breaking with tradition: vernacular architecture, change and local community

In the previous chapter we observed that changes in house building involved the adoption of new techniques, materials, forms and concepts. In many cases, traditional post-built houses were replaced by multi-roomed houses on stone foundations in the course of a single generation. How can such a radical break with long existing traditions and its implications be comprehended?

House building according to local traditions is generally referred to as vernacular architecture.402 Such architecture is ultimately local, corresponding to local factors, circumstances and choices. Residences found within the research area, like the post-built byre houses and the smaller houses without byres, were built using local materials (wood, loam, thatch), local knowledge -passed down from father to son and transferred by practical learning and imitation- and local workforce. In other words, house building was highly embedded in local communities. Created within the community itself, houses probably even acted as symbols for the coherence of community, for the identity of the group.403 This is underlined by the general uniformity of houses within rural settlements, something indicative of the traditional character of these communities. Such communities tend to be homogeneous, constraining the behaviour, activities and lifestyle of their members. This is achieved by using the pressure of social conformity and homogeneity, dedicated to preserving the same social order.404 In other words, these communities were relatively closed, stressing their community identity and tabooing expression of individual identities in an ostentatious material way.405 Deviations from standard architecture were not accepted, the house being a supreme symbol of community membership and continuity between past and present.406

Traditional house building being an important and embedded part of local community, the break with these traditions must have had significant social implications, stimuli and motivations. With regard to the changes in house building, the introduction of new building materials first of all involved the use of non-local materials from more or less distant quarries and specialised ceramic building materials produced in workshops situated outside local communities. Secondly, the newly adopted architectural forms and concepts did not relate to local traditions but were adopted from external sources, in most cases likely to have been the towns or army camps. Thirdly, the knowledge and workforce for building the multi-roomed houses on stone foundations will have moved towards specialists, again from outside the local community. It is unlikely that the knowledge and craftsmanship needed for constructing the technologically advanced stone foundations, framework walls, roofs, hypocaust and bath systems were available within local

402 The study of vernacular architecture has a rich tradition, especially in anthropology, and in recent years some important work has been done. For an overview of the recent developments in the study of vernacular architecture, see Blier 2006. Oliver (1997) has published a three-piece overview of vernacular architecture worldwide.
403 Rapoport 1989, XVIII.
404 Oliver 1997, 121.
405 Wilk 1990, 38.
406 Wilk 1990, 38; Rapoport 1989, XVIII.
communities themselves. Likely, building these kinds of houses required formally trained specialists, who were probably town-based. As such, house building thus moved into the realm of the formal architecture, created by educated specialist architects and builders and was no longer highly embedded within the local community. The families building such a new house actually broke with tradition, with existing cultural rules and the ethic of uniformity and collectivism within their traditional communities.

Developments in house building, that are part of broader changes in consumption patterns, thus could be associated with significantly changing relationships, both within local communities as between these and the broader outside world. In general, a development from highlighting collectivity and communality towards an emphasis on the individual or individual family could be reconstructed. This latter way of consuming involved luxury enjoyed by a few and experienced in private, and was aimed at emphasising difference, superiority in a conspicuous way. From the 1st century AD onwards, within the context of the developing Roman provinces, some members of traditional communities were able to break with collectivist ideologies of indigenous society; they became more independent, less interdependent, and could justify their privileged and ostentatious existence. Such a process of diminishing interdependency within local communities was also reconstructed by Wilk in a study on the Kekchi Indians. Wilk identified the integration of this community into a cash-based economy as the main cause of this development. Cash cropping created new goals that were not linked to traditional economic patterns, predominantly focused on the inner community. In the process, the ethic of collectivism and cohesion – and thus communal consumption standards – weakened and the emphasis on uniformity and the taboo surrounding the expression of individual identities decreased. Consequently, the house became an important symbol in the developing economic and social competition. Interestingly, Wilk’s study illustrates that during the primary phases of integration, wealth was mainly invested in personal adornment and consumption of mobile material culture. It was not until later that wealth, rising above a certain economic threshold, was invested in the house. A similar pattern could also be demonstrated with regard to the Roman period, where it is possible to pinpoint changes to the mobile material culture before changes in house building became apparent. How the collection of personal wealth could alter existing social relationships within communities is also illustrated by an example provided by Cohen. In Pueblo communities, the wealthy (los ricos) and the people carrying the honorific title Don were regarded as perverting the (egalitarian) social order by means of their ambitions and were symbolically placed outside the community: ‘He is not one of ‘us’.

Considering the characteristics and implications of these changes in house building nevertheless fails to explain the processes that caused them. It is generally safe to assume that a substantial set of factors will have been involved, among which economic, social, political and cultural. New market relations, new political relationships, administrative structure, the introduction of law, an increased demand for agricultural products, taxation, evolving patterns of proprietorship and the increased connectivity and mobility changed the world in which local communities lived considerably. It is this changing world that undermined existing community boundaries, increasingly making these communities subject to influences from across their boundaries, resulting in significant change.

407 For some thoughts on vernacular versus industrial building practices, see Roberts 1996, 70.
408 See also Martins 2005, 134, Rodman 1985, 271: ‘The meaning attached to the house serves as an important indicator of central structuring relations and of the shift from collectivism to individualism, one of the most fundamental social transformations in history’.
410 Wilk 1990.
411 Schindlbeck 1990.
412 Wilk 1990, 38.
413 Wilk 1990, 37; Rapoport (1994, 467) states that non-fixed and semi-fixed elements respond more easily and quickly to social and cultural changes.
416 Cohen 1985, 44.
4.4.2 Durability, monumentality and representativeness: creating new symbols and new social realities

Some important aspects that, until now, have remained underexposed regard the increased durability, monumentality and representativeness of the house. Contrary to the ephemeral and non-monumental post-built structures, houses on stone foundations existed for several generations, sometimes even spanning centuries. Furthermore, they developed a certain monumentality, aimed at communicating towards the outside world in symbolic ways. I will now explore the backgrounds and implications of these developments further. One of the central considerations concerns the question whether the increasing structural durability and monumentality should either be regarded as a secondary consequence of the adoption of Mediterranean style architecture or as a much more conscious choice to build more durable and monumental houses, related to new social strategies developed by particular groups within the rapidly changing Roman provinces.

The structural character of the house can be viewed in relation to the character of the social system in which it exists. Ephemeral structures are generally associated with egalitarian sharing forms of heritage. Such houses could be pulled down and rebuilt elsewhere. The fact that this was an actual practice was illustrated by Gerritsen’s study on settlement dynamics in the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region. A different story is to be told with regard to perennial structures, build and restored to endure the test of time. These houses were to be passed on to a single heir, thus symbolising the uninterrupted continuity of the settling of the lineage for the landowners. Examining villa development, the use of new building materials may consequently in fact reveal a considerable change to the values attached to the house itself.

In the previous we reconstructed a trend towards the increasing locational stability of settlements. Interpreting this phenomenon, Gerritsen has pointed at the possibility of a developing ‘ideal of permanence’. The rebuilding of houses on the same locations could be regarded as ‘mnemonic bridging’, a strategy that serves to maintain links with previous generations. This allowed the residents to construct narratives of a permanent social group with a fixed place in the world and in time. Furthermore, these developments can also be related to the changing ways in which the farming population thought about resources and wealth. Whereas in the Early and Middle Iron Age resources were largely considered the collective property of a local community, during the Late Iron Age, families seem to have developed strategies to collect resources and wealth and pass these on from generation to generation. The increasing locational continuity and durability of houses reflected the increasingly permanent investment of land rights in family groups. Besides the increasing locational continuity of settlement and house, houses themselves seem to have become more durable as well. The appearance of the sturdy Alphen-Ekeren type house is suggested to have been part of this development. And as we reconstructed in the previous chapter, from around the middle of the 1st century AD, houses were built as even more durable constructions by using stone material foundations, sturdy framework wall constructions and tiled roofs. The development of such ultimately durable houses could possibly be viewed in the light of the creation of a durable ‘social house’, physically and symbolically symbolising the lasting relationship between the family or family group and the land they were settling on. The appearance of such durable houses could then even be understood as part of a more long-term development.

As physically durable houses, built to last, stone-built houses thus became structures with a historical dimension reaching far beyond the single generation. These houses were passed down from the ancestors and in fact became ‘lieux de mémoire’; monuments that symbolised the continuity of the community living in these houses, and perhaps even represented the broader settlement community. They created a tangible link between the past and the present. In fact, linked to a fixed location within the landscape, they could act as a means of fixing history. Monumentality is an important phenomenon in this regard. Monuments ‘…provide stability and a degree of permanence through the collective remembering of an event, person…’ and ‘…are powerful because they appear to be permanent markers of memory and

417 Oliver 1997, 117-120.
418 Gerritsen 2003.
419 Oliver 1997, 117-120.
421 Gerritsen 2007, 163.
422 Gerritsen 2007, 163.
history and because they do so both iconically and indexically, i.e. they can evoke feelings through their materiality and form as well as symbolise social narratives.\footnote{Rowlands/Tilley 2006, 500.}

In addition to this durability and monumentality, houses developed into more representative structures, communicating towards the outside world in more elaborate, visible and conscious ways, simply by being impressive and visible constructions. One of the ways in which this was achieved involved the white plastered walls and red tiled roofs that most monumental houses had. Even from larger distances, they will have been visible within the landscape. Furthermore, it is interesting to return to the development of the façade, discussed in the previous chapter. Contrary to traditional post-built houses, houses on stone foundations commonly boasted facades that literally acted as the house’s face. The development of these facades can be related to the changing purpose and significance of the house. Houses became a factor in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, in social competition, and thus developed a character that was considerably more focused on communicating with the outside world.

With regard to quite a number of houses facades were extended and monumentalised over time. For example, at Kerkrade-Spekholzerheide and Maasbracht, an existing simple rectangular house was extended with two risaliths during a later phase. As a result, the facades of these houses became increasingly monumental and impressive (see fig. 4.8). At Broekom as well, a new, broad portico-risalith façade was added during the third monumental building phase, increasing the monumentality of the house considerably (see fig. 4.8). A fourth, and most impressive example regards the settlement of Voerendaal-Ten Hove. As described earlier on, at this settlement a very monumental façade was created by connecting several buildings by means of a long portico. In quite a number of other cases, house facades were extended over the years as new house sections were added to the existing core (for example at Hamois-Le Hody (fig. 4.8), Rochefort-Jemelle, Merbes-Le-Chateau-Champs de Saint-Eloi and Hambach 512). In many cases, it seems to have been an important objective to increase the width and monumentality of the house’s façade.

Such developments could be identified by means of the ‘aggrandisement’ concept, involving the act of increasing the wealth or power of something, physically as well as socially. By constructing larger, more impressive and monumental facades, the wealth and power of the house, its representativeness, became increased; it was aggrandised. Consequently, the monumental façade constituted a crucial element of house building. It can be regarded as an important symbolic instrument for constructing, communicating and fixing asymmetrical social relationships within (local) communities. The fact that the façade concept was in fact of broader significance, not being restricted to the well-known portico-risalith type, is illustrated by the simple framework houses at Jüchen-Neuotzenrath and Druten, where the construction of facades was also documented.
With the house evolving into a monumental and durable structure in which people were willing to invest, the ideology of the household and house seems to have intensified.\textsuperscript{427} As aforementioned, the house became a monument symbolically holding the memory and expressing the social status and continuity of a specific person or family line and indirectly also relating to claims on land, social power and possession.\textsuperscript{428} At the same time, the house became a significant theme in representations as well. Such can be located in the form of sculptures, wall paintings, and iconographic depictions (see figure 4.9).\textsuperscript{429} With regard to the Mediterranean regions, the practice of depicting villas in wall paintings is interpreted by Bodel as prefiguring the enshrinement of the house in the literary record, a few decades later. ‘Both developments reflect the increasingly important symbolic function that villas came to acquire during the early Empire as architectural entities worthy of artistic commemoration in their own right.’\textsuperscript{430} On the basis

\textsuperscript{427} Wilk 1990, 40.
\textsuperscript{428} Bodel 1997. Bodel (1997, 10) demonstrates that the villa could be so intimately connected with a specific person, that it was to be destructed in case of a damnatio memoriae.
\textsuperscript{429} See also Wickham 2005, 467.
\textsuperscript{430} Bodel 1997, 17.
of the examples mentioned above it seems plausible to suggest that a similar development took place in the provinces.

Viewed from the perspectives discussed in the previous section, the developments in house building reconstructed in chapter 3 should not be regarded as a passive adoption of Mediterranean architectural forms and building practices, but rather as an active social strategy to create new symbols of power and continuity in a changing world. The people building these monumental houses were in fact denying the realities of change, attempting to create and fix new social realities by both linking them to history and their ancestors as well as by creating durable, highly visible and representative symbols that were instrumental in the creation of new social relationships within local communities as well as between these communities and the broader outside world. The monumentalisation of the house can be interpreted as a strategy used in a period during which positions of pre-eminence needed to be maintained and family estates were to be consolidated. Alternatively, in the words of Gerritsen, the development of durable houses can be viewed as a social strategy serving to gain control over material and immaterial wealth.431

Fig. 4.9 Three images of monumental houses: a sculptural model from Fontoy (France), a painted image from Trier and a relief on the inside of the Simpelveld sarcophagus. After Fischer 2001, 83; Gebus/Klag 1990, 88; Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden (photo).

Now we have introduced the symbolic dimension of the monumental house, let us look somewhat closer into symbolism and meaning. In general, objects, including architecture, are invested with meaning by a culture and function within that culture as signs used in a dynamic relationship to articulate cognitive information.432 All sorts of social information is communicated to people in symbolic ways by means of cues and markers, reminding them of appropriate conduct.433 These reminders define boundaries, which often serve to establish, define and maintain group identity.434 Cues can take various forms, all of which tend to be highly culture specific; for example color schemes, texture, size, landscaping, fences, walls, enclosures, the height of the wood pile, indoor plumbing or furnace heating.435 Within the environment in which these cues and markers are employed, the settlement and house, interdependencies and collective relationships are materialised. Breaking with existing building traditions furthermore denoted a defiance of traditional symbolism. As argued before, such symbols predominantly served to underline the coherence of local communities. Developments in house building consequently also implied a significant shift in the symbolic world of the local communities. New cues were ‘created’ for the construction and communication of social identities, within local communities as well as towards the outside world. Apart from the house, traditional symbolic systems were particularly prone to breaking down rapidly with regard to mobile material culture.436 While older generations still adhered to time-honoured objects with their customary meanings, the younger generation broke with traditions and adopted a new range of objects

431 Gerritsen 2007, 169.
432 Jamieson 2002, 12.
433 In other words, environments are mnemonic (Rapoport 1982, 56).
434 Rapoport 1994, 493.
435 Rapoport 1982, 34.
436 Self-evidently, non-fixed and semi-fixed elements are easily moved and changed; as such, they also respond to social and cultural changes more quickly and more easily (Rapoport 1994, 467).
with a new system of meanings much more easily. At the same time, they regarded the traditional objects as old-fashioned and backwards.\textsuperscript{437} Similar processes might have applied to the Roman period as well. New generations were born into a rapidly changing world that they would handle very differently to older generations who stood nearer to their traditional roots. It seems plausible that the relatively rapid transformation from traditional housing into new, non-traditional multi-roomed houses on stone foundations could also be interpreted in this fashion. New generations connected to new practices and new symbols with considerable ease, discarding of the old that they probably even regard as backwards.

It should once more be emphasised, however, that it is the upper social groups that were most likely to determine the use, symbolic meaning and shape of mobile material culture and domestic space.\textsuperscript{438} These people were the first to connect to new lifestyles and the first to be able to construct new material and social realities.\textsuperscript{439} Anthropological studies suggest that objects used to reinforce hierarchical relationships will often be intricate, eye-catching, employing scarce material or include exotic origins.\textsuperscript{440} In this light it is not surprising that, within the rural settlements of the research region, Mediterranean goods and forms were used for this particular purpose. Socially prominent individuals created new symbolic systems first by using mobile material culture, later also by means of house building. With regard to villa development, important symbols include the use of the facade with its visually very prominent portico and risaliths, the presence of a bathing suite as a clear symbol of urban lifestyle, and the characteristic as well as visually impressive appearance of the house with white plastered walls and a red tiled roof. As has previously been stressed, new symbolic systems were also constructed within the houses’ interior, including painted wall plaster, mosaic floors, furniture and the use of luxury materials such as marble.

So far we have focused on the way people constructed, symbolised and communicated identities and social relationships in relation to one another. However, we should not overlook the significance of the construction of the self, particularly as social identities need to be internalised as well. A number of authors have related this phenomenon of self-construction to domestic architecture, viewing domestic architecture as reinforcing the notion of the legitimate social position to the inhabitants of these houses themselves.\textsuperscript{441} In their study on the development of Swahili stone houses, Fleisher and LaViolette argue that the emergence of elaborated private spaces facilitated the construction of elite subjectivity and that it was part of a process during which elites attempted to convince themselves of the validity of their status and the soundness of their house, especially as it was under siege in rapidly changing political and economic conditions.\textsuperscript{442} ‘Some of the social work of stone houses may be processes of self-construction’, they state.\textsuperscript{443} In this light, we could claim that the villa was also an important element regarding the self-construction of rural elites. By means of the construction of villa houses, among other things, they strove to legitimise their newly developing roles in administrative and political positions and their dominant roles with regard to any links to the Roman authorities and in taxation. By establishing new rural lifestyles, involving new material culture, values, and behaviour, elites both communicated new identities towards the outside world and legitimised their new positions towards themselves. In relation to the symbolic way in which new identities were constructed Martins argues that the development of the villa was more about the development of a persona than it was about changing type of construction or change in function.\textsuperscript{444}

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\textsuperscript{437} Lutkehaus et al. 1990, 246-247.
\textsuperscript{438} Donley-Reid 1990.
\textsuperscript{439} In anthropological studies around the globe, the adoption of new symbols of architecture and housing is a relatively well-documented phenomenon. In India, the construction of European-style bungalows and western domestic furniture and equipment was a clear indication of status. Among the first to do this were the elites, marking themselves and creating a distinction between them and others. The European styles they adopted symbolised changing values and attitudes; they were markers of a particular group membership (Rapport 1982, 142). In the Greek town of Eressos, status became to be expressed by means of the degree of modernisation, rather than through a well-defined hierarchical system of size and features that had persisted in previous periods (Pavlides/Hesse 1989, 365.). In addition, in a study on Swahili culture, elaborate stone houses were regarded as active loci through which elites sought to symbolically neutralise fears concerning their position within an increasingly competitive and divided society (Fleisher/LaViolette 2007, 175.). This constituted an attempt to position themselves as a separate social class. In a last example, research on the modernisation in 20th-century Portugal established that the construction of modern bathrooms and kitchens played an important role in the construction and communication of new ideas, norms and identities, although these new elements were not always used the way they were supposed to be (Lawrence-Zuniga 2001, 192-193). In this example it becomes clear that the adoption of kitchens and bathrooms was more symbolic to the adoption of new lifestyles than being simply about the adoption of innovative comfort technologies.
\textsuperscript{440} Demerais 2007.
\textsuperscript{441} Thams 1990, 67.
\textsuperscript{442} Fleisher/LaViolette 2007, 179.
\textsuperscript{443} Fleisher/LaViolette 2007, 179.
\textsuperscript{444} Martins 2005, 134.
Aside from considering personal social identities, the fact that the people who were cohabiting a settlement compound formed a social collective, a local or settlement community, is not to be disregarded. Were such collective identities also constructed and communicated within the context of the settlement?

Following Cohen, we could say that communities were constituted in symbolic ways, especially by marking their boundaries. The community concept is primarily a symbolic construct and does not so much exist within social structures or ‘performing’ social behaviour. It rather lies in thinking about it. Viewed from this perspective, we could argue that the settlement was not only the way in which a community created its physical place in the world, but also part of how a community was constituted symbolically. I will now continue by focusing on a number of elements within settlements that could have carried significance in this symbolic constitution of settlement communities.

Earlier on, it was argued that settlement enclosures defined both settlement space and settlement community. The enclosures held a symbolic significance; they marked the boundaries of the settlement community physically as well as symbolically and in that way helped to bring about this community, both towards the inside as well as towards the outside world. The existence of palisades, earthen ramparts or vegetation along the ditched enclosure would have strengthened the message even further, creating a prominent visual symbol within the landscape as well as a ‘place’ within ‘space’. Enclosures can thus be regarded as important elements in the active creation of well-defined communities within the rural landscapes of the research region and thus within wider society.

Another element that potentially played a role in the symbolic construction of the settlement community was the monumental house itself. As the most eye-catching element of the settlement it might, aside from symbolising the wealth and status of the family inhabiting the house, have served as a symbolic marker for the settlement community as well. It could be assumed that, on a certain level, people experienced their social position as belonging to a settlement community -to a certain villa- and that the monumental house acted as an eye-catching and representative symbol, possibly even creating a sense of belonging. In that sense, the monumental house socially divided as well it unified.

A third element that I would like to highlight regards graves. In quite a number of settlements, basic cremation graves were situated at the outer edges, often directly along the enclosure ditches. The liminal position of these graves is particularly significant. Liminal space often carried particular ritual significance and tended to be marked by ritual depositions. The clusters of graves found here associated the community of the dead, the ancestors, with the community of the living. In this way, the relationship between the community and the settlement was symbolically strengthened, thereby also adding historical depth. These basic graves were however not monumental in any sense, and thus did have functions as visually significant markers or monuments. Another category of graves did. These graves, among which tumuli and pillars, were considerably more monumental and powerful symbolic markers, prominent within the landscape. It is likely that these grave monuments played a part in symbolically constituting settlement community. The association of such monumental graves and settlements is well-documented with regard to a number of cases (see fig. 4.10). In essence, they symbolise ancestral claims on land and the continuity of the community itself.

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446 Cohen 1985, 98.
447 Vegetation was suggested for settlements in northern France by Courbot-Dewerdt (2005, 50-51) and for the botanically reconstructed settlement of Hambach 59 (Hallmann-Preuss 2002/2003). Palisades were found in quite a number of Hambach settlements among others Hambach 403, 512, 516 and Jüchen-Neuholz.
448 Courbot-Dewerdt 2005.
449 See also Bodel 1997.
450 Good examples are Hambach 127, 403, 512, 516 and Jüchen-Neuholz. See Gaitzsch 1993.
451 In essence, they symbolise ancestral claims on land and the continuity of the community itself.
Consequently, it becomes apparent that with the development of settlement enclosures, monumental houses and (monumental) graves directly associated with the settlement, settlement communities were symbolically constructed in increasingly explicit and visible ways. Consequently, the settlement community developed towards a more distinct, perhaps even tightly-closed entity. Viewed from a more long-term perspective, we see people moving from a focus on a broader community during the Iron Age, sharing grave fields and agricultural land, towards smaller social entities, families and family groups, living in separate, stable and enclosed settlements and defining themselves in a more pronounced manner.\(^\text{452}\)

**4.4.4 Constructing new lifestyles, creating new networks**

So far we have predominantly explored villa development on the basis of the organisation of settlement space and house building. However, we should not ignore the fact that it actually reached beyond the spatial and architectural, involving a much broader development of new lifestyles among the upper social groups on the provincial countryside. Lifestyle could be viewed as a useful overarching and integrative concept, covering the way in which people construct their lives (and thus their place in the world) in relation to themselves, each other and their surroundings through the practice of living and by means of behaviour, ideas, values, world views (the cognitive), food, material possessions, form and style (the material).\(^\text{453}\) New value systems define that which is and that which is not considered proper, correct and civilized within a certain lifestyle. Indeed, lifestyles are intrinsically social; they play a role in the creation of social bonds, or in distinguishing oneself from the others by means of different lifestyles. As Daloz states, ‘...especially when it comes to asserting oneself over others, external signs prove to be crucial resources.’\(^\text{454}\)

Returning to the Roman provinces, we can interpret the construction of new lifestyles as a way to create a new place in this changing world. As we saw earlier on, urban lifestyles were expressed in domestic architecture by means of among others baths and monumental facades. The widespread appearance of these elements in house building underlined their important position within developing lifestyles. Besides domestic architecture, however, grave assemblages, iconography, mobile material culture and wall paintings can also shed interesting light on newly developing lifestyles. In this section we will shortly explore how new lifestyles developed during the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, while other, traditional lifestyles...

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\(^{452}\)See also Gerritsen 2003.

\(^{453}\)Rapoport 1994, 476; Rapoport 1989, XVI.

\(^{454}\)Daloz 2010, 61.
were abandoned. In order to do so, a selective number of aspects and elements will be examined, including bathing and bath suites, dining and the *triclinium*, wall paintings and gardens.

An important theme, touched upon in the previous chapter, involves bath suites and the practice of bathing. It was shown that in the majority of existing monumental houses, bath suites were added only during a later development phase. In my view, this phenomenon could be regarded as part of a developing new rural lifestyle. It was also shown, however, that some houses were equipped with bath suites as early as during their first building phases, generally around the middle of the 1st century or the second half of the 1st century AD. I argued that the inhabitants of these houses were most directly connected to urban centres and, consequently, urban lifestyles. Public bathing was an integral part of urban life and wealthy house owners constructed private bath suites also in their urban houses. Probably it was the people most directly involved in urban life that first integrated a bathing section in their rural residences. It was not until later that bathing developed into an integral and more common part of a new rural lifestyle, as the bath suite started to become a general feature of monumental houses on the countryside. The fact that the practice and idea of bathing and bodily care was an increasingly important element of the newly developing lifestyles was also reflected in the richer grave assemblages (fig. 4.11). It is these richer graves that can probably be linked to the people residing in the monumental houses with baths. Assemblages often encompass *strigiles*, used for scraping the oily skin, and *balanaria*, containing oil, relating to the practice of bathing according to Mediterranean fashion. It can in fact be assumed that, generally, certain dominant ideologies about the life of the person interred were expressed by means of the individual's graves. It becomes clear that new ideas and practices concerning bodily care were adopted by upper social groups on the countryside from around the middle of the 1st century AD onwards. These ideas were probably rooted in urban lifestyles.

Another aspect with regard to which changing ideas and practices were to be documented constituted dining and drinking. Similar to bathing, these can be associated with Mediterranean-style ideas and practices that, in all probability, also first arose within the context of provincial urban culture. One crucial concept is the *symposium*, a dining and drinking party, and more specifically a more or less ritualised practice, whereby people reclined on couches for diner, generally in specialised rooms called *triclinia*. From a social perspective, the symposium represents an important social institute in relation to patron-client relationships. At the symposium, social relationships were ritualised and thereby shaped, strengthened and reconstituted. Those invited into *triclinia* were enveloped in an atmosphere constructed by the host, in which he tacitly asserted his identity and position. Several elements of this symposium could be identified in the archaeological records. First of all, sets of dining and drinking ware in grave assemblages are often associated with the symposium. Compared

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455 For a detailed discussion on grave assemblages and their interpretation see Crowley in prep.
456 Slofstra 1995, 81; Dunbabin 1996.
457 Lynch 2007, 249.
to pre-Roman graves, a clear shift can be documented, from the dominance of cooking pots to the use of (sets of) individual plates and bowls as well as bottles and flagons; indicating meals that included people eating from individual plates, similar to the Mediterranean symposium. This would suggest that, apart from the obvious material changes that occurred during this time, practices of dining actually changed during the Roman period as well.

Other objects related to dining, couches and tables, are generally not found in the archaeological record, although a number of wooden table-legs are known to have survived. These legs were decorated with lion heads and, when preserved, the feet generally resembled a lion’s claw. Marble tables that included such legs are known from excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Much more often, however, these tables and couches are found in iconography. One good example regards the Simpelveld cinerary. The so-called ‘lady of Simpelveld’, depicted on one side of the coffin, is reclining on a low couch with high armrests. On the other side, a typical three-legged table with lion heads is depicted (see fig 4.12). Both the couch and table are elements also found on many grave stèles (see fig 4.12). Dressed in a toga, the deceased reclines on a couch with the table containing food and drink placed in front of him. These scenes demonstrate that people on the countryside were at least familiar with these new dining practices as well as the material culture with which it was associated. Furthermore, it appears that the symposium was an important theme in the self-representation of the people belonging to the higher echelons of rural society. However, to what degree did this phenomenon relate to actual practice? Were symposia like depicted actually held in specialised triclinia inside the monumental houses like previously presented in this study?

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

Fig. 4.12 Indications for the symposium within the research region. A tombstone from Dodewaard and the sarcophagus of Simpelveld. After Leemans 1875; Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Leiden (photo).

The basic *triclinium*, as found for example in Pompeii, demonstrated a rectangular arrangement of three couches with a round table at the centre. With regard to the western provinces, Slofstra, studying the larger and most luxurious villas, also identified a range of examples. These apsidal rooms took prominent positions within the house, generally being situated on the central axis. The fact that these rooms were actually used for symposia was underlined by the patterns found on their mosaic floors. However, the examples presented by Slofstra are all situated south of our research area and all constitute part of houses organised around a *peristylium*, a house type generally not found in the more northerly regions. Furthermore, mosaic floors are also found only rarely in the latter regions. As a result, room shape, along with position, remains the most significant indication for identifying hypothetical *triclinia* within our own dataset.

The *triclinium* should be regarded as a relatively private space; it is not used as public reception space or for communal domestic life, only those invited had access to the room. In multi-roomed houses within the research region, the central hall is most frequently interpreted as public and communal space. In the

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459 Liversidge 1950; Fellmann 2009, 85 ff.; see also an example from Oberaden (Horn 1987, 179, fig. 113).
460 Slofstra 1995, 80.
smaller category of houses, this space will have been used for cooking and eating as well as receiving guests. It was probably only the larger, more complex and luxurious villa houses that contained specialised, more private dining rooms, similar to the *triclinium*. In large houses such as Haccourt, Nennig, Basse-Wavre, Maillen-Ronchinne and Aldenhoven-Schleiden (that included a special multi-apsidal room), both the centrally positioned reception hall and the more private dining room could be identified with a degree of certainty (fig 4.13). Interestingly, in the cases of Haccourt and Nennig, these rooms were situated on an open court, similar to *triclinia* in Mediterranean houses that were situated on the *peristylium*.

![Diagram](image)

Fig. 4.13 Indications for the symposium within the research region. Hypothetical *triclinia* in the houses of Aldenhoven-Schleiden, Haccourt, Neerharen-Rekem and Maillen-Ronchinne.

Elsewhere, hypothetical *triclinia* were identified as well. At Neerharen-Rekem, the apsidal room that was added during a later building phase at the back of the existing house has been interpreted as a *triclinium*. This position at the back of the house would furthermore underline an interpretation as a more private dining room (see fig 4.13). At Vechmaal-Middelpadveld and Broekom, apsidal spaces were also added during secondary building phases. These may perhaps also be identified as private dining rooms.

For our region, it might be productive to take a somewhat broader approach and go beyond looking for typical *triclinia*, comparable to those villas of the Mediterranean and the south of the research region. In many monumental houses within the research region, generally during later development phases, special rooms were created, heated by a hypocaust. In quite a number of cases, these rooms also had *opus signinum* floors. Possibly we should regard such rooms as prominent spaces that were solely available to a select number of household members and invited guests. Whether they were also used for dining in ways equivalent to the Mediterranean symposium, however, cannot be established. The fact that they were

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461 Besides the ones mentioned, hypothetical triclinia could be recognised in the monumental houses at Maillen-d’Al Sauvenière, Maillen-Ronchinne, Matagne-la-petite, Bad-Neuenahr-Ahrweiler and Euskirchen-Kreuzweingarten.

462 As Lynch emphasises for the Greek Andron, it should be thought of as a conceptual space, not necessarily as an architecturally distinct space (Lynch 2007).
heated might nevertheless underline such a purpose, as heating would be needed when hosting dinners and such smaller rooms seem to have lacked a fireplace. An example can be found at Champion-Le Emptinne, where, within an existing house, a large square room was constructed, heated by a hypocaust and characterised by an *opus signinum* floor. Could we regard this room as a privileged dining or reception room? Quite similar developments could also be documented at among others Hoogeloon and Vodelée.

Fig. 4.14 Reconstructed scene of the wall paintings found in the house of Maasbracht. After Stuart/De Grooth 1987, 72.

New ideas and practices were also expressed in decorations such as wall paintings. However, within the research region, only little figurative wall decoration has been documented. One of the best examples can be found at Maasbracht (fig. 4.14). Here, a so-called *bestiarius*, the individual fighting wild beasts in the amphitheatre, is depicted in one of the reconstructed figurative scenes. This scene may be linked to the games organised by the villa owner in the urban centre and may therefore symbolise his important position in and relation to the urban sphere. By creating such scenes in his house, the owner displays his wealth and evergetism. Another person in the scene is depicted holding a writing tablet and a *stylus*. This expresses the act of writing as a symbol of civilisation, and possibly as a symbol of belonging to the administrative world of those in power. Some of the ideas and ideals of the villas inhabitants were thus expressed on the wall paintings at Maasbracht. Similar themes were expressed in other rural houses, such as in the case of the mosaic floors at the large house of Nennig.

Fig. 4.15 Documented gardens at Dietikon and Fishbourne, both outside the research region. After Ebnöther 1995, 32; Cunliffe 1971, 75.

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463 Swinkels 1987.
A last element of lifestyle I will mention here concerns the gardens that have sometimes been documented in front of monumental villa houses. Especially in the larger, most monumental complexes, such as the axial complexes known from Belgium and France, gardens were probably created in front of the main residences. These gardens actually constituted an extension of the representative structure of the house. They were also about controlling spatial organisation, controlling movement and even symbolising control over nature if you will. As of course, gardens are generally difficult to excavate, reconstructions remain fairly hypothetical. How we could imagine such gardens is however illustrated by the famous villa of Fishbourne and the axial complex at Dietikon, both situated outside the research region (fig 4.15). Here, ditches for plants were documented demonstrating that a well-structured garden existed in front of the house. Often, water basins will also have been part of such gardens. Such water basins were found at a larger number of settlements, like at Verneuil-en-Halatte, Mercin-et-Vaux and Anthée, but also at smaller villas at for instance Neerharen-Rekem and Simpelveld-Bocholtz-Vaesrade.

The urban connection already has been touched upon a number of times. New bathing and dining practices seem to have been adopted and developed first in urban centers. This is not at all surprising, when realising that these urban centers were the arenas of power with relatively close connections to the core of the empire. It was in these centers that the traditional societies, especially those people with dominant social positions, managed to connect to these new urban and Mediterranean lifestyles for the first time. These people were part of indigenous societies and as such were still connected to the countryside, where their social, cultural, economic and ancestral roots were. In urban centres they interacted with each other, resulting in the development of a new social group, a community of peers if you like, with a specific urban-inspired lifestyle. As such, urban centers actually functioned as mediators between Mediterranean lifestyles and the countryside where traditional lifestyles dominated still during the earlier 1st century AD.

In all probability, a relatively small group of people already created a direct connection to the urban world and developed urban lifestyles at an early stage of the development of the provinces. These people were subsequently the first to introduce urban lifestyles on the countryside. As part of a potential second phase, the newly introduced lifestyle developed further in this rural sphere, reaching those who had less direct connections to the urban centres at their disposal. However, there is no convincing evidence that a significantly early villa development genuinely existed, and particularly little regarding the northerly regions. Unfortunately, the fine dynamics of such a process have become lost in the relatively low chronological resolution, linked to the difficulties of the absolute dating of development phases.

Consequently, connecting to new lifestyles was not a simple and unconscious adoption of new ways, materials and ideas because they were intrinsically better or resulted in increased comfort. Instead, this process was much more about the creation of new social networks, about taking part in these, for creating a position within the changing realities of the developing Roman provinces. In this light, and to emphasise the active role of the agent, we chose the word 'constructing' in the previous. Constructing a lifestyle was about establishing your place in the world. New relationships were created vertically as well as horizontally. On the one hand, the adoption of Roman-Mediterranean lifestyles involved connecting to the world of the powerful at the high end and differentiating oneself from lower echelons of society that adhered to more traditional lifestyles on the low end. On the other hand, with the development of a new rural lifestyle, a new rural community of peers developed. As a result of increased mobility and related globalization processes, the knowledge about other elites' marks of superiority extended. This probably increased intra-elite competition and facilitated the development and spread of certain lifestyles. This would explain the widespread appearance of certain elements in house building and mobile material culture.

Besides existing elites attempting to maintain their power through connecting to new lifestyles, the break with traditional lifestyles and the development of new ones probably also offered interesting opportunities for new aspiring elites. These people now had the opportunity to distinguish themselves by connecting to newly emerging elite lifestyles, without being rooted in established elite families and their respective lifestyles.

466 See Daloz 2010, 128 ff.
4.5 Local and regional heterogeneity and the nature of asymmetrical social relationships within settlements

In this chapter I have chiefly focused on the ways in which asymmetrical relationships were created by means of the reorganisation of domestic space, the break with tradition, the creation of new symbols and monuments and by the construction of new lifestyles. Now it is time to shed additional light on the character of these asymmetrical relationships as such, as well as the people involved in these relationships. Generally, the dependent parties in these relationships have remained underexposed in existing studies of the countryside, those of the villa in particular. These people were less directly related to urban centres, new lifestyles and new building practices and consequently lived lives that were less Roman-style, and at the same time less archaeologically visible. In order to create genuine understanding of the basic character of villa development, however, it is essential to study these less visible non-elite people as well. Furthermore, the different ways in which relationships were created within different types of settlements throughout the research region need to be explored. First, however, local and regional heterogeneity are examined from a social perspective.

4.5.1 Understanding local and regional heterogeneity

The broad approach taken in this study labels discussing the enormous heterogeneity within the dataset an important objective. This heterogeneity developed from the 1st century AD onwards in particular. As has been explored in the third chapter, some settlements remained small and little monumentalised, while others developed towards larger and sometimes very substantial, strictly organised and highly monumentalised complexes. Size, spatial organisation, monumentalisation and degree of luxury varied considerably, both between regions and within a single locality.

In the previous chapter, some general regional patterns were reconstructed. We established that axially-organised complexes were especially dominant in northern France and the Belgian loess region. Furthermore, we saw that the northern sand and clay regions were characterised by not as rigidly organised multi-farmstead settlements. Here, houses showed influences from Mediterranean architectural lexicon and were monumentalised only in a minority of cases. And the German loess plain was particularly characterized by relatively small compound settlements with modest monumental houses. How can these general regional differences with regard to settlement form be understood? Is it possible to obtain additional insight into the factors behind this differentiation? In order to understand more of this regionality, it is crucial to focus on the broader context of the settlements; the specific characteristics of the region during the Roman period (the specific way in which the region developed towards a part of the Roman province) as well as the Iron Age background.

Starting in the Iron Age, an important pastoral tradition existed in the northernmost regions that saw people inhabiting byre houses with their livestock. Generally, no spatially coherent and organised settlement compounds existed; settlement was organized on the level of the individual farmstead. Furthermore, there is little indication for the existence of a social hierarchy; no asymmetrical relationships seem to have been created within the context of these settlements. During the Roman period, the Rhine region became an important military zone. Early military camps were situated at Nijmegen, Velsen and Vechten. Subsequently, a military-controlled corridor developed along the Rhine; the *limes*. This dominant military presence will have had significant influence on the rural areas of this region. Urbanisation, on the other hand, remained at a relatively low level. The centers of Ulpia Noviomagus and Forum Hadriani were limited in size, while the centre of Xanten, located in modern-day Germany, was considerably more extensive. Furthermore, sand and clay soils were not suitable for large-scale production of wheat, the crop demanded by urban and military population on a large scale. And in relation to house building, the availability of building material, or in fact the lack thereof, should not be ignored. Natural stone was not available in these northern regions, and therefore had to be transported from distant sources, generally over the river. As has previously been argued, the generally late date of the stone houses known from these northern regions might be linked to the large-scale transportation of building stone towards these regions, in relation to the monumentalisation of the army camps along the *limes*. The cultural

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467 Roymans 1996.
468 Roymans 2010.
background of the people in these northern regions constitutes another argument that has been employed with regard to the lack of larger numbers of monumental, Mediterranean-style houses and consequential greater continuity. According to Roymans, those with pastoral lifestyles and values were less susceptible to the influences that caused significant change in the more southerly regions, which were predominantly more focused on agriculture. Still, we should be reminded that in fact significant developments did take place in the settlements within this region. The reorganization of space, segregation and changes in house building can be understood in relation to changing relationships within the settlements, changing patterns of control and production and changing relationships with the outside world. For these regions, the role of veterans has often been emphasised. Such veterans could have served as ‘cultural mediators’, as they had lived in army camps within which they were confronted with Mediterranean culture for several years, before returning to their home settlements. It is furthermore likely that these veterans had increased access to social and economic networks outside the local settlement. By building portico-houses as found in several settlements, these veterans expressed their connection to the Roman world as well as their prominent position within the settlement.

In more southerly regions, a different situation may be recorded. These regions were less militarised and more urbanised. Important urban centers, among which Tongres, Cologne, Bavay and Amiens, as well as many smaller rural centers, will have affected social, economic and cultural relations significantly. Furthermore, a well-developed infrastructure connected larger and smaller centers, underlining their importance as centers, while secondary roads linked rural settlements to the main routes. In these regions, settlements generally developed towards well-organised compounds with one or more buildings being rebuilt on stone foundations over time, becoming monumental and Mediterranean-style houses, serving to be durable and representative. As has previously been argued, these houses, representing a specific lifestyle, developed in close association with the urban world. Consequently, the more prominent influence of urban culture in these regions may have influenced the way in which settlements developed here. However, the wealth required for creating such settlements and houses naturally constitutes a precondition. Loess soils were suitable for the large-scale production of wheat. Indeed, it seems logical to connect surplus production of this crop with the accumulation of wealth. Furthermore, building stone for the construction of stone foundations was locally available in most of the cases.

Again focusing on the pre-Roman background, it is remarkable that, as explored in chapter 3, the distribution of Roman period axially-organised settlements seems to generally coincide with the region in which settlements were already being enclosed during the pre-Roman period. A possible explanation of this phenomenon, lies in the idea that a more complex settlement system developed in the southern regions already during the pre-Roman period. As we saw in the model created by Malrain, Matterne and Méniel, some settlements were already organised in a more hierarchised manner, seemingly reflecting direct asymmetrical social relationships an the prominent position of a single family that was able to control others (see paragraph 3.2.3). Possibly, it is these families that were able to control even more families from the Roman period onwards, expressing and fixing this control in newly structured, axially-organised settlement complexes.

Examining the above in more detail, it is possible to list a number of important factors that could be related to regional differentiation in rural landscapes. Attempting to single out one of these aspects in order to explain the regional differences is nevertheless hazardous, as the reality is likely to be more complex. Here I would like to emphasise the following:

- Existing (pre-Roman) lifestyles, traditions in house building and settlement organisation, and societal structures. Within the research region there was a marked differentiation in the way settlements were organized and houses were constructed as well as in the degree of socio-political complexity. Furthermore, there are regions that were not inhabited in pre-Roman times. These varied backgrounds are an important factor in the differentiated development dynamics.
• Existing agrarian regimes. In general terms, it is possible to distinguish between agrarian regimes focused on arable farming on the loess soils and those focused on pastoral farming on the sand and clay soils of the north.\textsuperscript{475} The way that communities lived and worked will have been an important factor with regard to the way that they created a new place in the changing world.

• The physical substrate. This factor is intimately related to the previous one, as the character and quality of the physical substrate determines for a great deal its agricultural use and potential and, indirectly, also the way in which people organised their settlements, built their houses and became integrated into the Roman Empire.

• The degree of urbanisation. As market and consumer centers, towns provided an important economic stimulus. Furthermore, they were the locations at which new lifestyles developed, inhabitants of the countryside took part in the social arena of the town and thus connected to new lifestyles. Urban culture influenced rural culture and, thus villa development, in important ways. In non-urbanised regions, more traditional, tribal forms of organisation remained intact longer. Here, elites were deprived of a way to create direct connections to Roman administration, religious structures and the associated urban lifestyles.

• The availability of building material. A lack of stone might have been a limiting factor with regard to house development. In the sand and clay regions, where only relatively few houses were rebuilt on stone foundations, natural stone could not be quarried locally, but had to be transported from more distant sources. It is consequently crucial to realise that, regarding this region, the investment required to build a house on stone foundations was likely to have been significantly higher.

• Infrastructure. Roads were of considerable importance with regard to the integration of rural settlements and their communities into the wider economy and social networks, and thus to the diffusion of new materials, forms and ideas. Especially high-potential regions, such as the loess region, were disclosed by good-quality infrastructural networks. This influenced the development of the rural settlements here in important ways. Other regions, such as the core of the sandy MDS-region, that were not disclosed as well, however, remained peripheral. Here, only little change can be documented.

In the previous, some general patterns of regional differentiation were sketched. Looking closer, however, it becomes apparent that also within the same locality or micro-region, rural settlement could be significantly differentiated. How is the local coexistence of very large, monumental complexes, simple compound settlements with a monumental main house, and loosely organised settlements with traditional houses to be interpreted from a social point of view? Alternatively, viewed from a development perspective, why do some settlements develop into large, monumental and Mediterranean-style complexes, while others remain essentially small and traditional? Several interpretations and factors of importance can again be advanced.

First of all, it is important to venture a brief look at a few examples from our dataset. What kind of rural settlements are situated within the same locality? One interesting and well-researched area can be found in the western part of the German Rhineland west of Cologne, not far from the Dutch border (fig. 4.16). At Aldenhoven-Schleiden and Eschweiler-Laurenzberg (around 10 kilometers distance from one another) two substantially large monumental houses were documented, each with over 30 rooms. Not far from these large houses, at for example Alsdorf-Hoengen and Broichweiden-Würselen, settlements with much simpler monumental houses were also located. The latter house essentially consisted of a simple hall and a fronting portico with risaliths. Its facade did not exceed 20 m. Similar situations can be found on the Belgian loess. Only 2 km from the large monumental axial complex of Anthée, a simple house is situated.

\textsuperscript{475} See Roymans 1996.
consisting of a hall fronted by a portico-risalith facade. And also near the large complexes of Saint-Gerard-Try Hallot and Mettet-Bauselenne simple houses were documented. Interestingly, in recent excavations on the loess, even simpler settlement forms, dominated by post-built houses, have also been recorded near and alongside monumentalised settlement complexes. Examples are Kesselt, Heerlen-Trilandis, Arras-Delta 3 and Onnaing-Toyota.

With regard to the interpretation of the described local differentiation, the broader factors listed previously are less relevant. Here, we should explore a number of other factors. Traditionally, wealth has been regarded as a key factor. Some people were able to acquire more wealth than others and were consequently able to build bigger houses. While this essentially appears to be true, the situation is in fact more complex. Why were these people able to acquire more wealth? Moreover, what does the variation in settlement form suggest regarding the relationships between the inhabitants of these settlements?

Slofstra, studying the development of the rural settlement system in the first centuries AD, emphasises the fact that the differential access to the various sources of power, which evolved during the period in which relations with the Roman authorities were developing, led to increasing socio-political hierarchisation within the tribal societies of the MDS-area. Consequently, social interdependencies other than kinship relations, dominant in tribal societies, developed. Examples of these clientship and tenancy relations have already been mentioned. With regard to the settlement system, this hierarchisation and the development of new forms of social interdependencies clearly affected settlement development as reconstructed in the previous chapter. The development of relatively large enclosed settlements in the northern regions, such as those at Hoogeloorn and Oss-Westerveld, were, according to Slofstra, ‘the spatial expression of organisation of local communities under elite control’. In small, open rural settlements, however, no indications for such a hierarchy can indeed be distinguished.

Other authors have, for other regions, suggested a kind of domain-structured, dendritic settlement model. Examining the middle Aare valley in Switzerland, Schucany defined three villa categories: large

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476 See Brulet 2009, 547-551.
477 Slofstra 1991, 177.
478 Slofstra 1991, 177.
complexes (over 5 hectares), middle-sized villas (up to 3 hectares) and small farmsteads (up to 1 hectare). She then went on to reconstruct a landscape consisting of domains (termed *fundi* in Latin), centred around the large, mostly axially-organised complexes and controlling between one and three middle-sized villas and a similar amount of small farmsteads. A domain comprised between 150 and 200 people. Quite a number of workers lived on the working compound of the main complexes. The remainder of people inhabited smaller settlements within the domain. The existence of similar domain-structured landscapes has also been suggested in other studies, like that of Wickham. Assuming these to have existed, might large complexes like Anthée, Saint-Gerard-Try Hallot and Mettet-Bauselennne, mentioned in the previous, then be interpreted as centres of such a domain? Within this model, the appearance of settlements and houses is directly related to the social position of its inhabitants. People lower in the social hierarchy, who were probably controlled by landowners living in luxurious villas, were considerably less wealthy. In addition, these people had less access to urban centres and markets and exercised less or no control over workforce (productions) and consumption. Some other authors, however, have argued for a less direct association of appearance and social position and emphasised the agency of people that become consumers.

In the following section, dependency relationships are explored in more detail and factors are listed relating to social differentiation. These factors are intimately related to the way that settlements developed and thus with local differentiation in rural settlements. For example, the degree of control over land and workforce can be associated with the way that domestic space was organised. The same can be said for the access to the urban world and markets. Access to urban centres meant access to the arenas of decision-making, to new urban lifestyles and to urban markets. People that were able to connect to the urban world already during early stages were able to improve and fix their social status on the countryside, at the same time introducing new lifestyles. Many other rural inhabitants will have connected to the urban world and urban lifestyles only later.

4.5.2 Elites and peasants: exploring the character of social differentiation and asymmetrical relationships

Both the reorganisation of settlement space and the development of increasing heterogeneity within the settlement system, discussed in the previous section, have been associated with the development of new, more complex asymmetrical relationships within society, and thus with the process of hierarchisation. This section aims to explore the character and background of this hierarchisation and focus on the asymmetrical relationships that were constructed in this process. Thereby, I will explicitly attempt to shed light on the dependent parties within these relationships, as it is these that as yet have often remained underexposed. This underexposure can be linked to the poor material culture and archaeological visibility of these people. Their houses, graves and material culture were generally less monumental, less durable, less luxurious and less conspicuous compared to those belonging to upper social groups. I would consequently like to focus on those less visible: where and how did they live, and what was their relationship to the elites?

Within the context of the significantly changing socio-political circumstances of the developing Roman provinces, new relationships developed between native elites and Roman authorities as well as within native communities. Slofstra created a general division between patron-client relationships and tenancy relationships. In his view, patron-client relationships were relatively informal and personal. Wightman has however demonstrated that, within the category of clients, considerable variety was likely to have prevailed. Studying early medieval Welsh and Irish legal texts, she created a distinction between free clients and base (or semi-free) clients. While the group of free clients held land of their own, although they still owed renders and services, base clients did not own land and probably lived on the lord’s property. Free clients, then, might have gained the potential to prosper modestly. According to Wightman, they could buy or rent land and even take offices such as service in the auxiliary forces. Tenancy relationships were more formal, impersonal and could even have been contractual. Tenants worked the

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479 Schucany in prep.
481 Martins 2005.
482 Wightman 1978.
483 Wightman 1978, 103.
lord’s lands and had to pay rent in produce or money. Certain well-known iconographic scenes were interpreted as depicting such situations, whereby tenants were paying their landlords.\textsuperscript{484} In general it is important to realise that dependency relationships could take various forms and may furthermore have varied considerably within and between different settlements. The spectrum could range from basically unfree dependants that were very directly controlled and did not have free choice with regard to production and consumption, to basically free farmers that paid their landlord money or part of the produce in turn for the use of land or some form of help or protection. As Whittaker summarizes, ‘Dependence is never a single status but a spectrum between freedom and slavery.’\textsuperscript{485}

As stated, the aim here is to shed more light on the dependent parties within the asymmetrical relationships: the clients, tenants and possibly even slaves. Compared to the higher echelons of society, these groups were less mobile, less wealthy, and had limited or no access to the urban world and new lifestyles. One interesting concept used for approaching such people, especially within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, is that of the ‘peasant’. Peasants are traditional farmers in complex state societies who are generally subject to the demands and sanctions of power-holders outside their social stratum.\textsuperscript{486} They are to be distinguished from tribal farmers on the one hand and citizen farmers, agrarian entrepreneurs highly integrated into a market economy, on the other. Although they function within a state system, peasants are integrated into this system only to a limited degree, lacking full or direct access to the centralized systems of decision-making and the market economy.\textsuperscript{487}

Both Wolf and Wickham contrast peasant societies with ‘primitive’ or ‘tribal societies’.\textsuperscript{488} In primitive societies, production is decentralised, local and familial. Producers control the means of production, including their own labour, exchanging their labour and its products for the culturally defined equivalent goods and services of others. With the development of peasant societies, however, control of the means of production passes to the hands of groups who do not carry out the productive processes themselves. The surplus produced by peasants is transferred to a dominant group of rulers, who uses it both to underwrite its own standard of living and to distribute the remainder to groups in society who do not farm but must be fed, in return for the specific goods and services these people have to offer. To peasants, exchange has become indirect. With regard to the development of this new situation, Slofstra speaks of ‘peasantisation’, involving the integration of tribal societies in a state system.\textsuperscript{489}

Consequently, this integration in a state system involved the development of much more profiled and complex asymmetrical social relationships. The assumption of a simple conceptual dichotomy between elite and peasant would, however, be a mistake. As has previously been argued, a considerable variation may still have existed within the category of dependent peasants -clients-, with respect to personal freedom, the ability to possess land and acquire wealth in particular.\textsuperscript{490} Families owning land could still be directly involved in agricultural production and could thus be regarded as peasants. In all probability, they were themselves free clients, while at the same time they could, as patrons, control people below them on the social ladder. Smaller villa settlements may perhaps be interpreted in this way. Being free clients, these people were able to acquire wealth that they eventually invested in their house. As Woolf has argued, it is unlikely that a tenant who did not own the house he inhabited would invest in monumentalisation.\textsuperscript{491}

In short, it appears that we should look beyond a simple binary opposition of elite and non-elite, or elite and peasant. Both social differentiation and the way that asymmetrical relationships were constructed were considerably more complex. In relation to this differentiation, a number of significant factors can be identified:

- Access to centralized system of decision making; access to social networks of power
- Access to markets
- Control over workforce and production
- Access to new (agricultural) technologies

\textsuperscript{484} For a different view, see Drinkwater (1981) who interprets these scenes as workers being paid by their landlords.
\textsuperscript{485} Whittaker 1980, 83.
\textsuperscript{486} Slofstra 1983, 80; Wolf 1966, 11; see Wolf 1966 for a full discussion.
\textsuperscript{487} Slofstra 1983, 80.
\textsuperscript{488} Wolf 1966; Wickham 2005.
\textsuperscript{489} This hypothesis is inspired on the state formation theory of Norbert Elias (Elias 1982) and Eric Wolf’s ‘Europe and the People Without History’ (Wolf 1982); Slofstra 1983, 75-82.
\textsuperscript{490} Wightman 1978.
\textsuperscript{491} Woolf 1998, 163-164.
• Mobility
• Control of exchange
• Legal position/status (under Roman law)

With these factors in mind, some general categories of people could be defined within society. As has been emphasised earlier, the most powerful people on the countryside were mobile and had direct access to urban centres and thus to the centralised system of decision making, markets and new urban lifestyles. Such people seem to have been able to control workforce, production and exchange. It is highly plausible that these persons even spent part of the year living in urban centres. Other groups of people only had indirect access to urban centres, systems of decision making, markets and new lifestyles, probably by means of patron-client relationships. They lived on the countryside permanently and were probably directly involved in agricultural activities; they could more or less control their own production, although they were subject to rent payment. Yet another category of people were mobile only to a very limited degree, did not control their own production as they were directly controlled by others and did not have access to the urban world, new lifestyles or markets. An interesting illustration of the level of unevenness between the position of different people regards the cadasters from Orange, from which it could be concluded that only eleven people rented approximately 70% of the municipal land and a single person rented as much as 12%.492

Now, is it possible to locate these different categories of people within the settlements explored in this study? And how do the different types of settlements reflect their social position and the way in which asymmetrical social relations were being created? This exploration concerns both the way in which asymmetrical social relationships were constituted spatially, by means of the organisations of settlement space, as well as the way in which new, urban-inspired lifestyles were adopted and integrated. Three data categories will consequently be discussed:

• Settlement compounds with a monumental main residence and secondary houses (villa settlements)
• Non-monumental settlements (non-villa settlements)
• Non-monumental graves (simple cremation graves)

A logical first step would be to identify the dependents in settlements as discussed in the previous chapter. In the section on secondary houses (paragraph 3.3.4), we identified a variety of houses inhabited by people who evidently stood in a more or less dependent relationship to the inhabitants of the main house. In many settlements, post-built houses were documented on the compounds, associated with more or less traditional ways of house building and lifestyles. Here, we need to emphasise that, generally, the main monumental residence had also developed from a traditional house. It consequently becomes apparent that a single family was seemingly able to connect to new lifestyles first, while the other families could not, or only during a later phase. In settlements such as Hamois-Le Hody, Kerkrade-Holzkuil, Vezin-Namèche, Champion-Le Empfinne and a number of settlements in the hinterland of Cologne, traditional houses were still being built, while one house had already been rebuilt as a monumental construction with characteristics adopted from the Mediterranean architectural lexicon. Some of these traditional secondary houses were (partially) monumentalised during a later phase, generally expressing new lifestyles only to a limited extent, while still clearly adhering to traditional ideas of house building, more so than in the case of the main residences that represented a more radical break with tradition (see the semi-monumentalised secondary houses at for example Hamois-Le Hody, Kerkrade-Holzkuil, Vezin-Namèche and Champion-Le Emptinne).

How then, can the relationship between the people living in the main monumental residences and those living in the more traditional secondary houses be characterised, when looking at the varied spatial organisation of settlement complexes? As has previously been argued, asymmetrical relationships were constructed and symbolised particularly rigidly in axially-organised complexes. The peasants living on the working compound were physically separated from the people inhabiting the main residence, who literally and visually controlled those who were directly dependent on them. Control was direct, clearly integrated in the design of such complexes and the (physical as well as symbolic) distance created between the people

492 Whittaker 1980, 76.
in the main residence and those on the working compound was substantial. Furthermore, apart from the organisational uniformity of the complexes -houses being neatly lined on both sides of a courtyard- strict morphological uniformity of such houses may also be identified in quite a number of cases. In settlements such as Famechon-Le Marais, but in axial complexes south of our research region in particular (like for example at Reinheim, Dietikon, Oberentfelden and Neftenbach), uniform and basic residential units -in fact barracks- on stone foundations were situated on the rigidly organised working compound (fig. 4.17).\footnote{493 See also Gaston 2008 on standardisation of secondary buildings.} These barracks were an integral part of a well-designed plan that was carried out under the supervision of the proprietor and thus reflected strong and direct control from above. Dependent families were thus living in residences that they probably did not build and did not own. Furthermore, they were integrated in a spatial structure that strongly embodied their dependency and the control of the landlord. Examining these arguments, it seems that the relationship between the owner of the complex and the people living on the working compound was quite distant, formal and probably impersonal. As they were directly controlled, these people seem to have stood in direct dependent relationship to the landlord, probably as a type of base client. Exactly how dependent these people were is a question that is difficult to answer. Especially with regard to the type of standardised axial complex previously described, the existence of slavery has been suggested by some scholars.\footnote{494 Whittaker 1980.} Direct indications pro or contra are nevertheless not available.\footnote{495 See Roymans/Zandstra in prep.; Whittaker (1980) states that is impossible to prove extensive chattel slavery. According to this author, at complexes like Anthée, ‘the evidence is just as consistent with rural production carried out by traditional clients as it is with a slave system.’} In general, Whittaker states that the extent of change in labour relations ought to be minimised, arguing in favour of continuity in dependency relationships and labour organisation between the pre-Roman and Roman period.\footnote{496 Whittaker 1980, 90.} According to this author, complexes such Anthée suggest that ‘the evidence is just as consistent with rural production carried out by traditional clients as it is with a slave system.’\footnote{497 Whittaker 1980, 79.} In more recent work, a number of sources have been combined to argue that slavery relationships could indeed have existed within rural settlements on the provincial countryside.\footnote{498 Roymans/Zandstra in prep.} Epigraphy and the presence of leg irons are the most convincing of these. Still, however, the best documented cases are found south of our research region.

![Fig. 4.17 Houses on the working compound of large axial complexes at Famechon-Le Marais (left: two phases) and Juvincourt-et-Damary (right).](image-url)
The situation at compound settlements, where the distance between the main residence and the other houses was much smaller, both on a physical and symbolical level, was quite different from the situation at the axial complexes that have previously been discussed. The houses in these settlements were organised around a shared compound and the main house was not separated from the other houses by a wall. Furthermore, housing was generally less uniform and it could be suspected that the inhabitants were themselves involved in the construction of their houses. Some of these secondary houses were monumentalised over time, in most cases probably only after the rebuilding of the main house as a multi-roomed house on stone foundations. A secondary house at Kerkrade-Holzkuil was rebuilt as a two-roomed house with a fronting portico. And at several settlements, a secondary house had a plan, similar to the well-known postico-risalith facaded houses. On the basis of the spatial character of these types of settlement, I would like to argue that these asymmetrical relationships were relatively informal, personal and direct. Indeed, it certainly does not seem implausible that the families living together on the compound were biologically related, possibly even representing different generations of the same extended family. Traditionally, however, monumentalised secondary houses have often been interpreted as the residence of a vilicus (bailiff) or servant family (Gesinde in German), especially within German villa studies. Such interpretations fit in with the Italian Model, mentioned earlier in this chapter, and would imply the existence of more formal relationships between the inhabitants. In my view, this model is somewhat too far-fetched regarding this type of settlement. Consequently I choose not to follow such interpretations. However, this is not to say that such interpretations could not apply to other types of settlements, such as the axially-organised complexes, altogether.

Yet another, but until now relatively underexposed category of settlements is the small, non-monumental settlements (fig. 4.18). Contrary to the larger villa settlements, these are not strictly organised and do not contain monumentalised houses influenced by Mediterranean-style architecture. Within the so-called villa landscapes, such settlements could have existed on a relatively large scale, but until recently, no archaeological attention was bestowed upon them. At both Onnaing and Arras, mentioned earlier on, larger parts of the landscape were excavated, demonstrating the presence of such small, non-monumental settlements. In recent years, similar non-monumental settlements were also discovered in Dutch Southern Limburg and Belgian Limburg: Veldwezelt, Kesselt and Heerlen-Trilandis. This, way more light is shed on the real differentiation in rural settlement on the provincial countryside. The families inhabiting these settlements can clearly be regarded as peasants, as they were directly involved in agricultural practice. With regard to their social position we could possibly regard them as tenants living on their lord’s land. Using the dendritic model previously discussed, these settlements are at the bottom of the settlement hierarchy within the domain, which was probably controlled by the landlord, residing in a large monumental, potentially axially-organised settlement complex. Contrary to the dependent families living on the working compounds of these large complexes, however, the families living in the small rural settlements were, in all probability, relatively free in the sense that they were not directly and physically controlled. It is highly likely that their obligations towards their landlords took the form of rents in kind and seasonal work on his land. Still, they controlled their own production and consumption; they were relatively autonomous.

Fig. 4.18 Simple non-monumental enclosed settlements within the ‘villa landscape’ at Onnaing. After Clotuche 2009, 54.

499 See also Wightman 1978.
Attempting to interpret the dataset, the suspicion arises that a social reality is to be expected that is more complex than we are able to reconstruct archaeologically, both between and within settlements. A number of settlement categories may have been inhabited by a range of people with different social statuses. In other words, their dependent relationships towards their patrons or landlords were essentially different. Some people were living on the rigidly organised axial complexes themselves, being highly dependent, directly controlled and possibly even unfree. Within this category of people living on the working compounds of such complexes, social differentiation might also be suspected, however. In many cases, at the top of the working compound, close to the residential compound, a larger, monumentalised house could be assumed to have been inhabited by a person with a higher social standing, related to the proprietor in a closer, more personal way (see fig 3.41). This person, possibly a *Libertus* (freedman), may have had coordinating tasks with regard to the settlements production. In the literature, such a person is generally referred to as a *vilexus*. Once again, a different dependency relationship can be suspected with regard to the people living in the most basic post-built settlements near the larger monumentalised settlements. These people were subjected to a more indirect level of control.

Another data category that may some light on the peasants living in the settlements studied here is that of graves. Especially with regard to Germany, graves are documented in direct association with the settlement compound, clustered around the settlement enclosure ditches in most cases. As has previously been described, these graves constituted simple cremation graves with no apparent monumental markers above ground, no luxurious containers for the ashes and no extensive sets of grave goods. No themes were expressed such as we found in the elite graves, touched upon previously. As such they reflected different lifestyles. It seems plausible to assume that the people interred in these small grave clusters belonged to the lower echelons of society, living their local lives on the settlement compounds, probably in dependent relationship towards a dominant family. Such is also reflected in the position of the simple grave clusters in relation to the richer graves that are sometimes found. In a number of cases, separately enclosed graveyards were documented (Hambach 34, 230, 303 and 503). These can probably be related to the prominent family within the settlement. At Hambach 303, it could even be anthropologically established that the walled graveyard (7 by 6.6 m) contained a family grave. In other cases, rich graves were spatially separated from the simple grave clusters (at Cologne-Müngersdorf and Hambach 69 for example). These observations underline the social position of the people interred in the simple graves in relation to the more prominent persons buried in richer and more monumental ones.

### 4.6 Some concluding thoughts

This chapter has attempted to explore villa development from a human perspective. It has been argued that the reorganisation of settlement space and the transformation or break with house building traditions were an integral part of the changing social relationships on the provincial countryside. Existing structures were actively and creatively manipulated on the level of the rural settlement, within the context of changing world of the developing Roman provinces. Within this developing, socio-politically and economically much more complex world, new social identities as well as new asymmetrical relationships were created, communicated and fixed in the built environment and through the adoption of new lifestyles. Villa development consequently was a way of settling in a changing world; a social strategy to create and fix new social, economic and cultural relationships within the local settlement communities as well within broader society.

For the sake of convenience I will now provide a summary of this chapter’s key points:

- The enclosure of settlements may generally be linked to developments in agriculture, intensification of production and increasing pressure on land. As early as during the pre-Roman period, pressure on land increased, seemingly in the southern part of the research region in particular, where settlements were already enclosed during the pre-Roman period. In the northern parts, settlements were not enclosed until during the course of the 1st century AD, probably also as a result of the increasing pressure on land.

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500 Whittaker 1980, 83, 89.
• Communities became well-defined and highly fixed within the landscape, both physically and symbolically, reflecting stable and continuous claims on land. Settlement communities developed towards relatively closed entities.

• Breaking with tradition denoted a break with existing structures and did not constitute a logical and passive adoption of new forms, but an active way to create new social realities, a new place within a changing world.

• The increasing socio-political complexity in communities is notable at various levels. On a household level, it becomes apparent that social space within multi-roomed houses on stone foundations was more complexly organised, segmenting space and creating more complex ways to differentiate space symbolically by means of decoration and furniture. At the level of the settlement, space was also more rigidly organised and hierarchised, indicating centralised control over design and consequently over access and exclusion, movement and experience. On a higher level, it becomes evident that on the countryside a significant differentiation in rural settlements developed. This differentiation could be interpreted as reflecting asymmetrical relationships between settlement communities.

• The creation of more durable and monumental houses implied changing ways in which people related to the past. Settlement and house in fact became ancestral objects and symbols for the continuity of the family and perhaps even the settlement community. In this light, the monumentalisation of the house could be regarded as a strategy to construct stable family lines and emphasise continuity and existing claims rooted in the past.

• On the countryside, the concentration of power and control increased. The settlement and house were instrumental in the creation of asymmetrical relationships of control over people and produce. While some people gained power and control and could take advantage of new possibilities, others became increasingly dependent, their possibilities being limited. Exploring these relationships, it is important to think beyond basic dichotomies between elites and peasants. Within rural communities throughout the research region there is considerable differentiation in the degree of control over production and exchange, of mobility, of access to the urban world with its administrative and political institutions and new lifestyles. Furthermore, the character of asymmetrical relationships is differentiated as well.

• New ways of house building were part of the broader development of new lifestyles. These lifestyles, strongly influenced by the urban sphere, were actively ‘created’ as strategies serving to construct new social identities. Dining and bathing also constituted an important part of such villa lifestyles, reflected in houses, graves and iconographic representations.

• In some regions, socio-political complexity seems to have increased more than in others. Large axial complexes, typical for the southern parts of the research region, were highly hierarchised, differentiated and segmented (both symbolically and physically). In the northern regions, settlements organisation and house building were transformed to a significantly lower degree, probably reflecting a lower level of socio-political complexity. It is highly likely that these settlements had an even more substantial communal focus.