Our understanding of the Nordic Late Neolithic (LN) and Bronze Age (BA) in southern and central Norway has developed considerably in the course of the last 15 years. This progress has been in response to theoretical perceptions, refined methodologies, and focused research efforts leading to the establishment of a defined field of research. Source materials, analysis and empirical results from several disciplines have inspired avenues of inquiry in archaeology and within the natural sciences, for example, developments in radiocarbon dating (especially accelerator dating) and paleobotany (Prøsch-Danielsen & Simonsen 2000, Soltvedt 2000, Prøsch-Danielsen & Sandgren 2003). One especially important category of evidence in archaeology, post-supported long houses, became well-known in the wake of new methods of excavation; large scale topsoil removal, in Norway initiated by Trond Løken in 1980 at Forsand in Rogaland (Løken, Pilø & Hemdorff 1996). Though Egil Bakka (1976:38f) uncovered important material in the 1950’s, Løken’s excavations made sites with post-supported long houses accessible on a large scale and led to the dissemination of appropriate methodology.

Despite the initial dramatic impact on Scandinavian and Norwegian archaeology, results from large scale soil removal and mapping of structural remains have not produced data or stimulated results which have developed as far as one would perhaps have expected. The subject has been dominated by a valid concern for the methodology of excavation and documentation, and results, when made available, have to a certain degree been limited to reporting observations and developing typologies. Therefore, it would undoubtedly be profitable to more strongly stimulate interpretative (anthropological and historical) and theoretical contributions, and to explore the challenge of producing more behaviourally oriented data. Taking a number of the broader interpretative developments within LN and BA research into account, publishing results from the excavations promptly and developing applied methodology to generate more behavioural data, would probably invigorate interpretations of domestic architecture in the LN and BA.

The evidence that revolves around house constructions and settlements can certainly offer significant data for the conceptualisation of numerous social, economic, political and cultural facets of these periods. Very compelling cases in point, from various research historical eras, are Egil Bakka’s excavations in Sunnmøre in the early 1950’s (compiled in Johnson & Prescott 1993), the above mentioned large scale excavations at Forsand in Rogaland and the very recent excavations (2001) of fields and house remains at Svinesund in Østfold (Rønne 2003:143ff, 187ff).

Culture-historical research traditions into the 1970’s were theoretically and conceptually influenced by a «megalithic perspective» of the Neolithic and following Bronze Age, i.e. a culture evolutionary view that portrayed cultures as active participants in prehistory. The approach virtually created what amounted to a «battlefield map» of culture. Apart from this now questioned approach to cultures, emphasis was on a wide geographic scale, preoccu-
pied especially with southern Scandinavian. This was definitely a valid stance, though in the wake of radiocarbon the chronological scheme, the application of a southern Scandinavian blueprint and the proposed ordering of Neolithic cultures were shown to be flawed. In the 1970’s the culture-historical approach was often substituted for evolutionary approaches that emphasised local developments, and empirically and methodologically built on and referring to local observations. For a number of reasons, elements of both these approaches live on, though often not expressly argued (see e.g. Prescott 1994, Glørstad 2002).

Especially the Late Neolithic has until recently been implicitly portrayed as a chronologically and culturally diffuse «non-period» – evolutionarily liminal, and of little historical consequence or definition – a period that primarily served as a bridge between the authentic Neolithic and the Bronze Age. With a few exceptions (e.g. Bakka 1980, 1993, Scheen 1980, Johansen 1993), the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age were often not attributed importance in their own right, but served Stone Age studies as an evolutionary bookend for the Neolithic. On the other end of the scale the Late Bronze Age intermittently served Iron Age studies as an evolutionary warm up. Culturally and historically the Late Neolithic and in part the Bronze Age were empirical and methodological doggy bags for loose ends that could not readily be fitted into predominant systems of classification.

These positions supported the theoretically naive concept of «cultural dualism», with its connotations of cultural retardation and acculturation. Although «primordialist» approaches (in Jones’ 1997 terminology), i.e. positions that regard ethnicity to contain a fairly static core and to be an identity into which people are born, are still reiterated from time to time, they have largely been supplanted by Barth’s (1969) concept of ethnicity and emphasis on borders, and recently, if to a lesser degree, by Bourdieu-inspired (Jones 1997:84ff) approaches to identity.

And indeed, latter Neolithic and Bronze Age fields of research have undergone a transformation and are today energetic, especially in terms of studies of interaction, transformations, ritual, social organization, symbolism, economy, landscape and religion. A renewed interest in the European context of northern developments, combined with local conditions and historical developments within the periods, as well as wide ranging cross-disciplinary analysis, has supplanted the synchronous, semi-evolutionary, local perspective (e.g. Prescott & Walderhaug 1995, Larsson 1997, cf. Kristiansen 1998, Hygen & Bengtsson 1999: 66ff, Holberg 2000, Kvalø 2000,}

![Fig. 1. Traces of 3 two-aisled Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age houses uncovered at Sande in Sunnmøre. The houses and arding traces were found under an Iron Age mound – Holerøysa - and were excavated by Egil Bakka 1953-55. Photo: E. Bakka.](image-url)
Interpretative goals for prehistoric archaeology dealing with the LN/BA are:

- A responsive anthropological archaeology, i.e. anthropology of a specific context, developed in dialogue with the empirical foundations.
- An authentic history of the periods, i.e. a history specifically situated in time and place that outlines conditions and developments, not just demonstrates or illustrates (or is represented by) the presence of general trends.

In summary there have been tremendous developments in Late Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeology. The methodological developments in and empirical results from uncovering house remains have also been substantial. The potential for analysis is dramatically increased, but as yet not strongly exploited. To further interpretative goals it would perhaps be useful to examine some of the general premises for research, and below I outline ten points that I believe are especially relevant for contemporary research.

**1. The Late Neolithic represents a major change of historical course and a fundamental transformation of socio-cultural conditions**

The transition to the archaeological conditions initiated around the beginning of the Late Neolithic represents a dramatic historical change of course. Changes include the acceptance and consolidation of a new package of mentalities that go far beyond a simple «introduction of agriculture» (cf. Prescott & Walderhaug 1995). The new elements include two-aisled, post-supported long houses, widespread agricultural production (especially cereals; barley), pastoralism (sheep, goats and cattle), lithic technology (surface flaking, bifacial techniques, and flake technology combined with an abandonment of older technologies) and Metal Age design (daggers, sickles, triangular projectile points, wedge shaped pendants, bone pins). In social terms the evidence suggests that the Late Neolithic introduces an unequivocal trajectory towards social differentiation. In terms of large scale interaction the Late Neolithic represents the incorporation of most of southern Norway into the Nordic – and therefore European - field of interaction. This represents a change from interaction over a major border to interaction within a common cultural field, i.e. a change from «interaction between» to «interaction among». A thereto compatible economic logic of surplus production and participation in prestige networks follows. The package of mentalities that structures and supports participation in Scandinavian and European networks is dialectically both a result of the incorporation of Norwegian peripheries into the Nordic world, and at the same time a necessary precondition for such an incorporation.

On a local and domestic scale, the Late Neolithic ar-
guably transforms smaller scale social interaction, rules and practice. The dialectic interaction between ideologically prescribed European Metal Age ideals, local material and historical conditions, and the continuous negotiations and day-by-day practice between actors, constitutes an important and dynamic field for the production of culture and (re-)generation of social orders. In this respect, studies based on material from domestic contexts, and aimed at illuminating interaction within a household and in the surrounding landscape, would probably be especially relevant for studies of the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age and the earliest Iron Age. There is a need for more detailed studies pursued in a context-responsive fashion, i.e. on the process of change, relationship between social categories, the specific nature of the social organization and the nature of the LN I and II ideology. Producing more data to illuminate «household archaeology» is a challenge to field archaeology that deals with house remains.

2. Chronology: a sharp division
The above proposed change in course can be dated with increasing accuracy. The initial stage can be typologically dated to the Middle Neolithic B - Late Neolithic transition into the early LN I. Radiometric values from throughout most of southerly Norway point to 3800-3600 BP, indicative of dates around 2400-2000 BC, as the time of breakthrough and initial entrenchment. The dated materials (table 1) – bones, seeds, houses, contexts, artefacts - are from numerous site types (houses, open air sites, fields, rock shelters) and from variable environments (coast, inland, alpine), and are in themselves striking expression of the time and impact of this altered socio-cultural and productive-economic order.

The beginning of an epoch can be a short period of time that results from a long process. As also many LN-BA studies demonstrate, contemporary archaeology inherently biases the creation and explanation of patterns that indicate long-term processes, and will seldom «prove» swift transitions. The patterns that have emerged since the beginning of the 1990’s are therefore all the more remarkable. Still, although a moderately coherent picture has emerged - radiometrically, typologically and culturally - there is a need to substantiate and refine the chronology to better generate historical interpretations.

3. Agriculture and pastoralism
Prior to the Late Neolithic there were occurrences of agro-pastoral production, though the geographic extent, scale and socio-economic role of domestic agro-pastoral production is ambiguous (Prescott 1996, Prøsch-Danielsen & Simonsen 2000, Myhre 2002:3 3f). With the transition to the Late Neolithic, agriculture and pastoralism become the referential forms of production and the economic base. This is not to say that other forms of production were not pursued in an economy increasingly geared to multiple

Table 1. The 3800 to 3600 BP transition from Sunnmøre to Østfold. Some published Late Neolithic I data indicating the dates of features interpreted as diagnostic of the Late Neolithic transformation. The selection is made to highlight the early LN I, geographic distribution and occurrences in a wide range of environments. For some categories, such as bifacial lithics and pollen occurrences, numerous additional examples could be listed. Radiocarbon data are referred back to uncalibrated values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age indication (example)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-aisled long houses</td>
<td>Svinesund, Østfold</td>
<td>3790 BP</td>
<td>Rønne 2003:217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voll, Rogaland</td>
<td>3665 BP</td>
<td>Mydland &amp; Soltvedt 1995: 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kvåle, Rogaland</td>
<td>LN</td>
<td>Myhre 2002:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sande, Sunnmøre</td>
<td>LN I/II</td>
<td>Johnson &amp; Prescott 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fields and ardmarks</td>
<td>Hjelle, Sogn and Fjordane</td>
<td>3650, 3690, 3760 BP</td>
<td>Soltvedt 2000:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Håbakken, Rogaland</td>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>Juhl 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saunes, Dalteigane, Rabbane,</td>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>Dinhoff 1999:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hornnes, Sogn and Fjordane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Svinesund, Torpum 9a, Østfold</td>
<td>3635 BP</td>
<td>Ranne 2003:178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals – directly dated</td>
<td>Hjelle, Sogn and Fjordane</td>
<td>3760 BP</td>
<td>Soltvedt 2000:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Austbø, Rogaland</td>
<td>3805 BP</td>
<td>Bakkevig et al. 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Svinesund, Torpum 9a, Østfold</td>
<td>3630 BP</td>
<td>Gjørsdal 2003:347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals – in layers</td>
<td>Skrivarhelleren, Sogn and Fjordane</td>
<td>3610 BP</td>
<td>Soltvedt 2000:53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone – in layers</td>
<td>Skrivarhelleren</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Late MN B-LN I</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skjelsvold 1977:69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 Budalen, Hordaland</td>
<td></td>
<td>Myrhaug 1994:2238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollen</td>
<td>Region B Jæren, Rogaland</td>
<td>3800 BP</td>
<td>Prøsch-Danielsen &amp; Simonsen 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skrivarhelleren</td>
<td>LN I</td>
<td>Prescott 1995:100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bifacial points</td>
<td>Slettabo, Rogaland</td>
<td>Bell Beaker type</td>
<td>Myhre 1979, Skjelsvold 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vikadal 32, Sogn and Fjordane</td>
<td>3760, 3690 BP</td>
<td>Prescott 1986:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell beakers</td>
<td>Slettabo, Rogaland</td>
<td>Late MN B/LN I</td>
<td>Skjelsvold 1977:155, 364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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networks of exchange. Production covered local subsistence needs and probably regional exchanges, but also created objects for direct and indirect participation in the European prestige exchanges (Prescott 1995:137f). The exploitation of various resources has since the introduction of agro-pastoral economies been characteristic of economies in this part of Scandinavia (Brøgger 1925:21).

It is not immediately clear why an agro-pastoral type of production would be accepted around 2400 BC. There are no apparent environmental, economic or demographic explanations to support a functional argument for the swift and widespread consolidation of such production. In light of the cultural transformations at this time and the Nordic quality of the culture, it is reasonable to argue that the initial widespread consolidation of agro-pastoral production was a result of the acceptance of externally provided ideology and cultural practices. Agro-pastoralism was part of a comprehensive ideological and cultural package.

Although it is generally accepted that with the Late Neolithic, agro-pastoral practices become more widespread, there is still some discussion about how important cereal and pastoral production was in the LN-EBA (Myhre 2002:70ff). There is clearly an intensification of production — in both agro-pastoral and other sectors - in the Late Bronze Age, so it could be argued that the LN-EBA represents a long process of consolidation for a final breakthrough for such production in the LBA. However, the fields, the houses, the pollen and the cereal kernels themselves can leave little doubt about the widespread importance of such production already in the Late Neolithic (table 1) and later in the Early Bronze Age (Prescott 1996). This impression is reinforced by the fact that evidence is found over a wide geographic region and in environments with natural conditions not immediately recognized as conducive for early agro-pastoralism, for example the acidic and clay soils at Svinesund in Østfold, the sub-alpine environment at Skrivarhelleren in Sogn and the coastal strandflats in Sunnmøre. The data assembled in table 1 also demonstrate that changes are implemented in the early part of the LN I, probably as part of the transition from the MN B to the LN I. The dramatic change in practice, material culture and ideology suggests that the transformation is a result of a moderately short historical process, and not long term evolution (in a stricter sense of the concept).

There has moreover been some discussion about the importance of sheep, goat and cattle, as well as the concept of the secondary products revolution, based on faunal material. Although indications of animal husbandry have cropped up in several LN-EBA contexts, source criticism primarily allows a face value interpretation of the data to argue the presence of domesticated species. The Skrivarhelleren site (Prescott 1991, 1995), with its large collection of non-burnt and burnt/cooked bone from the LN, BA and Early Iron Age, has therefore been pivotal. It has been claimed (Hufthammer 1995, also Myhre 2002:62) that there are relatively minor occurrences of bone from domesticated species, for example 12-14 % domestic bone in LN-BA layers. There are, however, numerous problems with the calculations concerning the numeral base, compared categories and chronological accuracy. Another site, Skipsheiren in Hordaland, has also been referred to (Hufthammer 1995), but the material from that site is too chronologically inaccurate and contextually dubious to use in a referential quantitative analysis.

For the time being the tentative figures presented by Prescott (1995:98ff) for the LN-BA are the most accurate estimation of the relative importance of domestic mammals (31%-64%) to wild mammals (3-35%) to not species determined artiodactyls (20-40%). In short, the domesticated species were of fundamental importance to life in the sub-alpine Skrivarhelleren environment of innermost Sogn as of the LN I (Prescott 1995:98ff, 106f).

There has also been some contention about the use of Sherratt’s (1981, 1983) Secondary Products concept and whether changes are «revolutionary». The dramatic nature of the changes around the beginning of the Late Neolithic have been argued above. As the totality of data and analysis concerning exploitation strategies in the LN and BA periods stand today, a model incorporating a secondary products strategy still offers the best contextualized explanation of the observed empirical, anthropological and historical patterns. Continued analysis of the nature of the early pastoral production based on faunal materials would definitely be valuable. A referential international study that should influence the design of future studies in this regard is Greenfield's (1988 and following discussion) study of faunal remains from the Late Neolithic of the Balkan as a source for study of secondary product strategies. He makes evident that the study of secondary product strategies based on faunal remains is complicated, perhaps especially when using material from regions that necessitate combined analyses of upland and lowland sites. The analysis must consider holistic exploitation patterns, methodological biases, differential recovery and survival of bone, the historical and/or anthropological context, relevant analogies and the emphases within a secondary products strategy still offers the best contextualized explanation of the observed empirical, anthropological and historical patterns. Continued analysis of the nature of the early pastoral production based on faunal materials would definitely be valuable. A referential international study that should influence the design of future studies in this regard is Greenfield’s (1988 and following discussion) study of faunal remains from the Late Neolithic of the Balkan as a source for study of secondary product strategies. He makes evident that the study of secondary product strategies based on faunal remains is complicated, perhaps especially when using material from regions that necessitate combined analyses of upland and lowland sites. The analysis must consider holistic exploitation patterns, methodological biases, differential recovery and survival of bone, the historical and/or anthropological context, relevant analogies and the emphases within a secondary products economy. The «… [representations of] ideal situations .. may not precisely correspond to real-world conditions» (Greenfield 1988:576). Greenfield demonstrates that pursuing a zoo-archaeological approach to the workings of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age economies demands a comprehensive methodological and theoretical approach (ref. Prescott 1997:164, Oma 2004).
In sum, the evidence from sites from the coast to the uplands in Østfold to Sogn and Fjordane, demonstrates that patterns of production established with the transition to the LN I are reproduced and developed in the following centuries; a cultural package is quickly entrenched and consolidated in the LN and continues to be vigorously developed through the Bronze Age.

4. The meaning of production and its socio-economic role is contextual
A longstanding contribution from Scandinavian archaeology has been its environmental and economic approaches. This has perhaps led to a degree of «environment and production-determinism», i.e. rather direct conclusions from data about environment and production activities to conclusions about general ideological and cultural conditions (and through the concept of «cultural-dualism», ethnic relations). This problem has been especially acute in relation to non-agrarian production, especially hunting, fishing and gathering after the introduction of pastoral-agrarian practices (e.g. Bakka 1973, Hagen 1983:331), but also highland iron production (Johansen 1973:92, 99). Though forms of production are undoubtedly culturally important, there is no one-to-one, mechanically determinative connection. The meaning of production activities varies with the socio-historical context. In southerly Norway the evidence indicates that the role and meaning of fishing, hunting and gathering is substantially different, for example, the Early Neolithic versus the Late Bronze Age. In the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age, ideological emphasis is on the agro-pastoral production. «Wilderness» products were locally consumed commodities, but certain products must have been vital in the geographically large scale prestige exchanges (e.g. Prescott 1995:137f, Johansen 2000:78f, 217ff).

5. Dealing with multiple explanatory and analytic scales: Continental-regional-local-domestic
Traditions within Late Neolithic-Bronze Age research have tended to project a polarized emphasis between local development versus the determinate nature of European developments and events (e.g. within the Bell Beaker horizon, Únetice culture, Mound Cultures, Hallstatt, Nordic Bronze Age). The evidence in Norway cannot be appreciated out of the broader European context. On the other hand, broad Scandinavian and European trends, for example in the economic sector, cannot be mechanically applied in a blueprint fashion to the regions of present day Norway (cf. Prescott 1997:184f). Elements in the archaeological record, for example architecture or gender-related practices, are thus the result of larger scale trends and innovations, but also interpreted, negotiated, adjusted, and utilized in a local context. The tension between large scale cultural and ideological streams within European/Nordic regions, and local traditions, environment and conditions is characteristic of this epoch and probably one of the most important sources of political capital, and a driving force of change in these periods.

6. Regional streams - local variations
There are ideological and cultural streams (cf. Barth 1983), with accompanying interaction, on a large, indeed continental, scale and these are essential for contextualizing specific local expressions in the archaeological record. However, recognizing such cultural streams and communication does not create models of specific modes of practice applicable throughout Scandinavia. There are regional and local variations in the archaeological material; for example in the use of rock shelters, the distribution of asbestos tempered «Risvik ceramics», the distribution of stone shaft hole axes, variation in depots, the ways intensified production is pursued and evidence concerning the relevant importance of agriculture to pastoralism to hunting/fishing. Some of this variation can be explained in source critical terms, for example the absence of Late Neolithic houses in eastern Norway was obviously the result of limited field investigations. Still, there are significant and authentic variations in the archaeological record. These variations in the archaeological record represent variations in practice and material culture (and on some level, identity) within the Nordic region. The variations in the archaeological record along with, for example, highly divergent environmental conditions illustrate some of the dialectics of interpretation: Numerous elements, both material and immaterial, result from innovation and process on a large geographic scale (e.g. metallurgy, architecture, ideology, economy), but at the same time blanket generalizations, e.g. about the relative importance of different forms of production, readily become inaccurate, historically unresponsive – if not outright mistaken.

7. The LN-BA represents a valid comparative framework
The historical era from the Late Neolithic to the earliest Pre-Roman Iron Age can validly be viewed as a historical continuum. However, within this continuum there are historical developments and change. Some archaeological changes represent relatively dramatic historical transitions, crossing a threshold, from one period to another. Interpreting these transformations as the result of swift and dramatic events can be argued based on expressions that are found in the archaeological record. Modern archaeology has, however, been explanatorily biased towards explanations that privilege gradual process more than dramatic change, so the «dramatic alternatives» have probably not been sufficiently appreciated in interpretative syntheses.
For the study of settlement and economy in the LN-BA, long term studies can assume an analytic approach where variables such as production, settlement, landscape etc. in these periods can be compared in a meaningful way. Some important thresholds, and questions tied to the transformations are:

* The MN B to LN transition and questions concerning migration, the initiation of a consolidated agro-pastoral economy, ethnic relations and connections between the cultural streams of the Corded Ware and Bell Beaker cultures.
* The transition from LN I to LN II is an expression of a further entrenchment of Metal Age culture under the influence of the Únětice regions.
* Changes in settlement, house architecture, economy and the evolution of stronger social differentiation take place with the transition from EBA I to II.
* The EBA III to LBA IV represents a shift to intensified production (in all sectors), cosmological and ritual developments and developments in ethnic relationships to the east under the expanding influence of the Ananino Iron Age culture.
* The escalated intensification of production throughout the LBA
* The large scale Nordic Bronze Age system collapse around the Early Iron Age’s beginning and the very conspicuous repercussions on economy, production and settlement.

8. A question of scale: from a delimited site to a concept of the composite landscape

With increasing numbers of excavated LN-BA houses it is analytically crucial to bear in mind that the house is situated in an extended landscape, where fields, forests, sea, highlands and wetlands are in use; the mental concept of landscape in the LN-BA encompasses the whole physical landscape. The range of potential resources is exploited, for example for cultivation, extensive grazing, transportation, hunting, fishing and gathering. Although the cultural and economic package introduces the agro-pastoral economy and settlement patterns that develop into the historical agrarian societies, the LN-BA understandings of agrarian landscapes are probably not identical to that found in more recent agrarian thinking.

The landscape is a stage for the enacting and materialization of social relations. It is allotted meaning through ritual, practice and cognition, but it also generates meanings about itself, and about the social relations in and around it. For example, the domestic landscape in and around a LN-BA long house is certainly conceived of in relation to ideology and practice, but it also structures the inter-household relations; the negotiation and reproduction of thought and practice between household members. It also contributes to the structuring of intra-household relations. Based on recent work in archaeology concerning landscape utilization in the LN-BA, from the highlands to the sea, it is likely that a cosmography encompasses both distinct sections (fields, pastures, hunting grounds, routes of communication, places of ritual), but also creates a continuous entity of the landscape - possibly to a degree unrivalled in the previous and following epochs. Beyond economic exploitation, use of the landscape also projects a comprehensive cosmography that allocates conceptual meaning to different sections of the landscape within a totality (Vogt 1998, Hygen & Bengtsson 1999, Kvalø 2000, Groseth 2001, Eriksen 2003).

Various ritual and economic activities are situated in different sections of the landscape. The LN-BA landscape is divided into sectors in the sense that it contains several niches and environments, but it is also a totality and sectors should not be pigeon-holed, but viewed as a continuum, allowing for fluid movement between them in terms of LN-BA practice, and in our interpretations. In short; any given site is located in and concurrently constitutes elements of a landscape that contains a range of resources in combination with human cosmography. The totality of the landscape represents materialization in space of the Metal Age ideology.

9. The household as an analytic focus: Methodological challenges

The transition to the LN represents a significant and widespread change in ideology and social practice on all scales. The household-members’ associations with each other and their activities in various sections of the landscape are important sources for archaeologically interpreting topics on a more general scale. Such analysis illuminates the specific impact of transformative processes in Europe on the anthropological conditions and the historical developments in different parts of Norway at this time. A valuable element in the analysis of smaller scale social relations is the house:

* The house is an enclosed scene for the enactment of household interaction.
* The walls of the house are an interface between two social stages. The indoors is saturated by ties and actions within the household. Outdoors the stage is increasingly saturated with interaction between households.

A fundamental tenet in archaeology is that ideology and immaterial social relations are portrayed, enacted, bounded and constituted in spatial contexts. Thus, through the spatial patterning of traces and evidence, archaeology can interpret the historically specific constitution of the social world. LN-BA archaeology has developed a substantial
body of large-scale social, economic and cultural data concerning these issues. It has also developed a body of intermediate data concerning different site types and their place in the landscape.

However, despite numerous investigations of house layouts, there is a pronounced deficiency in smaller scale data concerning household relations in and around the long houses. The present day methods of excavating house structures usually means that systematic recovery of artefacts and their provenience are not given priority, whether because of resources, goals or an assumption that contexts will be disturbed and distorted. The house is a fundamental social arena, and therefore a potential source for further understanding – in time and space - the interplay between practice and ideology, the definition of social actors, gender relations, and economic activities etc. Investigation of this primary arena of the domestic sphere poses a challenge to the archaeology that investigates house structures in the field; a challenge to recover more detailed data concerning the activities in and immediately around the house structures.

10. Taking stock of the record
The archaeological record has substantially transformed the conceptual and interpretative platform for interpreting the general LN-BA history, as well as the specific topics of settlement, economy, cosmology and society. Though answers to a number of questions, if not most, cannot be proven through simple empirical approaches, it would still undoubtedly be profitable if the archaeological record was as precise, reliable, up-to-date, comprehensive and comparable as possible. In this regard there are two major stumbling blocks. The first is that data organized in relation to out-of-date or incompatible principles and methodology creates numerous problems. Examples are incoherent chronological systems, radiometric dates that are calibrated in different ways, radiometric dates from sources deemed unacceptable by contemporary standards and dubious reporting that stands uncorrected.

The other problem, highlighted by the conference in 2003 that led to the present publication, is in many ways more serious: A lot of data is not readily accessible, is inaccurately published or is only partially or tentatively published.

Wrapping up
Archaeology must necessarily dedicate substantial resources to uncovering and describing its source materials. The discipline must also dedicate itself to classifying observations and patterning data. There is a constant need for developing methods. Generations of archaeologists have, however, reminded each other that these consuming activities are means to an end: to address humans, their lives and their world.

The thrust in settlement archaeology has produced an overwhelming amount of archaeological material in the course of the last 10 years. In terms of Late Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeology these patterns can become more coherent if they are interpreted in a dialogue with broader results. The challenge to settlement archaeology is to contribute to the creation of an authentic history and anthropology of the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

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